

# Fond du Lac

# Tribal & Community College



## Focus Visit Report

### August 29 - 30, 2011

Prepared in partial fulfillment of the college's reporting obligations for a focused visit by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools



In April 2009, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College's (FDLTCC) underwent its decennial visit for reaccreditation. The college received five years of full accreditation and was placed on-notice by the Higher Learning Commission in four areas: Administrative structure, finances, planning, and teaching and learning. A visit focused on the sanctioned areas will take place on August 29-30, 2011. This report is submitted to Higher Learning Commission in preparation for the focused visit.



## A Note to Readers

This report is focused on actions, results, and when applicable, continuing actions based on evaluation of results. It contains four sections, one for each sanction. Each section begins with text taken from the "Assurance Section" of the *Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit to Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, April 27 -29, 2009* and is followed by bulleted lists of actions and the results of actions taken by Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (FDLTCC). This is followed by a brief discussion, noting highlights and explanations of some of our actions and results in each sanctioned area.

FDLTCC chose this somewhat unconventional format for four reasons: 1) It reflects how the college approached the necessary repairs. 2) It is representative of the college practicing data-driven, results-oriented thought, which was called for in the sanctions and which we have chosen to practice literally as we root a complex change process into our institutional culture. 3) We believe the format lends itself to evaluative writing and makes it easier for evaluators to identify what FDLTCC has accomplished; we also hope it enables evaluators to identify their questions early so the college has an opportunity to fill in any gaps that might exist in the information before the focused visit in August 2011. 4) Finally, this format was well received by our HLC staff liaison, Karen Solomon, and our colleagues in the Chancellor's office of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system during our quarterly updates between fall 2009 and spring 2011.

FDLTCC reported its progress in writing in December 2009 and June 2010 to the MnSCU's Chancellor's office and to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). In addition, FDLTCC gave an in-person progress report to Karen Solomon in Chicago during June 2010 and held a "surprise" visit (no preparation of faculty and staff) from her in October 2010. We hosted MnSCU's Chancellor, Interim Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, and Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs for an update on our progress in March 2011.

FDLTCC gratefully acknowledges the advice and support it has received throughout this time from the Chancellor's office of the MnSCU system and from Karen Solomon of HLC. It has been extraordinary.



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Submitted separately:

Appendix B: Basic Institutional Data and Resource Room List

Supplemental Material: FDLTCC Catalog 2011 – 2013, Student Handbook/Planner 2010

(In consultation with the team chair, we are using the resource room in place of Appendix A. These materials have been sent to HLC and the team members on jump drives.)





## **I. Basic Institutional History**

### Vision

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College offers a postsecondary education to honor the past, for those living in the present and dreaming the future, through a spirit of respect, cooperation, and unity.

### Mission and Goals

The mission of Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College is to provide higher education opportunities for its communities in a welcoming, culturally diverse environment. To achieve this mission we will:

- Promote scholarship and academic excellence through transfer and career education, and to provide access to higher education by offering developmental education.
- Respectfully promote the language, culture and history of the Anishinaabeg.
- Provide programs which will celebrate the cultural diversity of our community and promote global understanding.
- Promote a sense of personal respect and wellness.
- Provide technological opportunities and experiences, preparing students for the future.
- Provide programs and baccalaureate degrees that fulfill our commitment to American Indian communities, our land grant status, and the union of cultures.

### Brief History

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College is a unique institution, created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1987 and chartered as a tribal college by the Fond du Lac Reservation that same year. Its commitment to meeting the educational needs of a diverse population is reflected in its mission statement.

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College opened its doors in the fall quarter 1987, eight years after the Fond du Lac Reservation Business Committee first voiced the need for a community college as part of a comprehensive educational plan for the reservation. The tribal-community college idea gained momentum in the early 1980s as the Reservation Business Committee documented a need for higher educational opportunities among the residents of both Carlton and St. Louis counties in Minnesota.

In 1985, Mesabi Community College accepted the Reservation Business Committee's invitation to hold college classes at the Ojibwe School site on the Fond du Lac Reservation. The collaboration was immediately successful, and in 1986, the Minnesota Legislature funded a feasibility study for a community college operated as a joint venture of the Fond du Lac Reservation and the Arrowhead Community College Region.

In 1987, the Bureau of Indian Affairs determined that Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College was eligible for funding under the Tribally Controlled Community College Act (Public Law 95471), and the Minnesota Legislature appropriated money for the college's first two years of operation. The college utilized classroom and office space in the Garfield Building in Cloquet. In 1989, the Minnesota Legislature authorized the beginning of design development for a college campus. A planning committee representing tribal and civic government, business, the Arrowhead Community College Region, college

students, faculty, and staff worked with architect Thomas A. Hodne, Jr., to produce a concept reflecting both American Indian and non-Indian cultural values. The Minnesota Legislature approved the plan later that year. Architectural plans completed in 1990 called for a campus built in phases. Construction of the first phase began in July 1991. Plans included classrooms, library, computer labs, and student services, faculty and administrative offices. The new campus, able to accommodate the equivalent of 500 full-time students, opened its doors fall quarter 1992.

In 1994, the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs reconfirmed Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College as a tribal college under the Tribal Community College Act. Congress passed legislation giving Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College status as a Land Grant Institution, and the Minnesota Legislature approved Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College as a full college by state standards with cogovernance language between the state and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The Minnesota Higher Education Board confirmed Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College as a full community college, according to state system standards for funding:

**Minnesota Statute 136F.10 Designation**

The following are designated as the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities: the community colleges located at Austin, Bloomington, Brainerd, Brooklyn Park, **Cloquet** [emphasis added], Coon Rapids, Ely. . . .

At that time, legislators also wrote into statute, Minnesota Statute 136F.12, the college's unique mission to serve lower-division students in the immediate area, with a specific focus on serving American Indian students throughout the state, especially in northern Minnesota:

**136F.12 Fond du Lac campus Subdivision 1. Unique missions.**

The Fond du Lac campus has a unique mission among two-year colleges to serve the lower division general education needs in Carlton and south St. Louis Counties, and the education needs of American Indians throughout the state and especially in northern Minnesota. The campus has a further unique mission to provide programs in support of its federal land grant status. . . .

In 1995, planning funds were appropriated by the legislature for the development of phase two in the building program. Plans included the construction of on-campus student housing. The on-campus student housing project moved forward during 1996 as the Minnesota Legislature appropriated funding for construction of the new housing complex at the college. Groundbreaking for the on-campus student housing facility took place in September 1998. The housing facility was completed in August 1999.

In 1997, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College celebrated its tenth year of operation. It was a decade of excellence, evident in the rapid growth and expansion of the college, and its acceptance by local, state and national governing bodies and education boards. Starting with the new academic year in the Fall of 1998, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College changed from a quarter term system to a semester term system. In June 1998, the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service partnered with the college to establish on campus a national Center of Excellence emphasizing soil science map compilation.

In May 1999, after an intensive self-study process and site visit evaluation, the college was recommended for accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. In August, the new residence hall on campus was completed and the first students moved in for fall semester.

With the growing popularity of the college and the increasing enrollment creating extra demand for classroom and office space, the Minnesota Legislature approved a \$4.5 million bonding request to expand the academic classroom building on campus. Combined with an additional \$3 million of privately raised

funds, the expansion project added nearly 40,000 square feet of classrooms, faculty offices, student meeting and casual space, tutoring center, conference rooms and storage areas. Groundbreaking occurred in August 2002, and the building expansion was completed one year later in August 2003.

In 2006, a plan was set into motion to offer intercollegiate athletics for women and men. The inaugural football game was celebrated in September 2007, and the first softball game was played in March 2008. Women's and men's basketball, and women's volleyball programs were added during the following year. In July 2007, groundbreaking was held for the construction of the Lester Jack Briggs Cultural Center and the expansion of the Ruth A. Myers Library/Ojibwe Archive. Both projects were completed during the fall semester 2008, adding nearly 37,000 square feet to the campus infrastructure.

While FDLTCC experienced its greatest physical and academic growth during the first decade of the twenty-first century, it also experienced its greatest institutional challenges, as reported in the *FDLTCC Self Study Report, 2009*. Though parts of a stable path were becoming visible to FDLTCC in April 2009, this was not readily apparent during the comprehensive evaluation. In October 2009, FDLTCC was placed on notice by HLC in four areas: Administrative structure, finances, planning, and teaching and learning. The result of this action was to focus our attention intently on these primary facets of the college's infrastructure. The remainder of this report highlights the actions and results that compose part of our history from 2009 to the present time.

## II. Administrative Structure

At the time of the comprehensive site visit in April 2009, approximately two percent of Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College's budget was allocated to administration; the remaining ninety-eight percent was devoted to teaching, learning, and the facilities in which teaching and learning take place.

The Higher Learning Commission placed FDLTCC on notice in this area of operations, specifically with regard to Criterion 1, Core Component 1D, of the five criteria for accreditation, which states: "The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission."

To adequately resolve this area of concern, FDLTCC must take the following necessary action: "The review and re-allocation of resources to ensure that an adequate administrative structure is in place that possesses the necessary experience and expertise to address the college concerns identified" (p. 27, Assurance Section, *Final Report*).

FDLTCC's self-study process during spring 2008 identified some of the concerns expressed by Commission evaluators in April 2009, and thus, the college had already begun work in the area of administrative reorganization. The college's primary actions and the results of those actions to date are summarized below.

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### Actions and Results 2008 - 2009

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#### Primary Actions

- July 2008: Larry Anderson appointed Interim President
- October 2008: Appointed new Chief Financial Officer
- February 2009: Created Sponsored Programs position and appointed director
- July 2009: Appointed new Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs
- July 2009: Leadership Team attended introduction to educational lean efficiency model
- August 2009: Hired two intermittent workers to assist with special projects, clerical work, and coverage in offices experiencing heavier traffic
- August 2009: Partnered with the Cloquet Work Force Development Center to address shared needs
- August 2009: Planning of summer 2010 student services staffing began
- September 10, 2009: Larry Anderson raised to President
- September and October 2009: Staff attended lean efficiency model training
- October and November 2009: Administrative review of organizational structure and meetings with MnSCU Chancellor's office to assess possibilities
- November 2009: Staff began work on implementing ideas generated at lean training sessions
- Working on two energy-related grants for EUT/Clean Energy program
- Reinvigorating involvement with U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Meeting fall 2009 goals for building institution-level of general education assessment

#### Primary Results

- 2008: Created broad-based (campus-wide), transparent budget process
- 2008: Operational budget posted publicly at Business Office service window
- 2008: Strategic plan posted publicly at Business Office service window, including contact information of leaders in each work group
- 2008 – 2009: Moved from \$236,000 deficit to balanced budget and small reserve of \$12,000
- 2008 – 2009: Reduced audit findings from 19 to 12. Of the 12,
  - 4 demonstrate significant progress
  - 3 currently being tested
  - 4 include processes or subject matter that is currently under discussion with the MnSCU system

- August – September 2009: Served students efficiently and during regular hours during the significant fall enrollment increase with no increase in comp time
- September – October 2009: Identified time-saving, labor-reducing options for Student Services
- September 2009: Received Title III grant, business emphasis
- September 2009: Received NSF grant

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## Actions and Results 2010

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### Primary Actions, January – May 2010

- Created and posted Dean of Workforce position
- Created and posted Director of Institutional Research and Planning position
- Created Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness position
- Created Interim Dean of Student Services position
- Did not renew two probationary faculty positions
- Appointed one probationary faculty as unlimited full-time faculty
- Complied with MSCFA bargaining unit requirements, and posted three new unlimited full-time faculty positions
- Reviewed and revised FDLTCC organizational chart
- Held Default Management meetings with U.S. Department of Education (USDE) representatives regarding USDE's new calculation of student loan default rates
- Complied with Perkins' Monitoring Site Visit by Minnesota Department of Education and representatives from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system
- Created and implemented 5-year campus-wide budget planning
- Calculated and reported budget outlook for 2012 and 2013
- FDLTCC President took lead for 2010 – 2011 Northeast Region Presidents' group
- FDLTCC Vice President of Academic Affairs took lead for 2010 – 2011 Northeast Region Chief Academic Officers group
- Attended and participated in MnSCU Labor Relations summits
- Attended and participated in MnSCU Leadership Council
- Attended and participated in MnSCU Chief Academic Officers' Winter assembly
- Attended and made presentation at the Minnesota Institute on Student Engagement about intrusive advising
- Attended annual meeting of the Higher Learning Commission: Presidents' Program, Consultant-Evaluator Program, Self-Study Workshop, and General Program
- Reviewed and reported 2008 – 2010 progress on FDLTCC Strategic Plan
- Reviewed and reported progress on 2009 – 2010 Lean Plan
- Reviewed and reported progress on President's Work Plan 2009 – 2010 to MnSCU Chancellor's office

### Primary Results, January – May 2010:

- Positioned the college to focus more effectively on priority areas, including data-driven decision making and planning, student preparedness, retention and completion, fiscal health, and building collaborations with external constituencies
- Aligned faculty hiring with priority areas, including planning, assessment of student learning, retention and completion, and student preparedness
- Determined faculty hires based on instructional budget data regarding adjunct credits
- Revised position postings to align with priority areas, including planning, evaluation, and improvement based on evaluation
- Established working relationship with U.S. Department of Education financial aid team; created anew or revised primary documents for students regarding loans, loan debt, default, and default management
- Received positive final report from evaluators during Perkins Monitoring Site visit and were commended on several points
- Exceeded goal of \$150,000 at end of FY10
- Projected positive FY2011 budget

- Continued to build campus awareness of the financial challenges posed by 2012 and 2013 and laid groundwork for future decision making related to how such challenges will be met
- Continued to build relationships and practice exercising our responsibilities with our external stakeholders
- Received positive feedback on FDLTCC's intrusive advising and retention projects
- Proposed, wrote, and submitted three projects related to intrusive advising and retention projects for potential funding through MnSCU-led initiatives
- In partnership with FDL tribal college education director, submitted portions of retention-related projects for AICF funding
- Registered to deliver SENSE survey of first-year students during fall 2010
- Continued preparation for fall 2011 HLC focus visit and possible HLC comprehensive site visit in 2013 - 2014
- Acknowledged the positive achievements on the 2008 – 2010 strategic plan, learned that not achieving some benchmarks is also “good data,” and produced a more specific strategic plan for 2010 – 2012
- Folded Lean Planning into 2010 – 2012 Strategic Plan
- Implemented a portion of Lean-related projects, including office redesigns, revisions of forms, summer coverage plan, and staggered lunch hours

#### **Primary Actions, May - December 2010**

- Filled Dean of Workforce position
- Filled Director of Institutional Research and Planning position
- Filled Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness position
- Filled Interim Dean of Student Services position
- Hired four new unlimited full-time faculty positions: 2 nursing faculty, 1 English, and 1 American Indian Studies
- Created Presidential Work Plan 2011
- Hosted HLC Staff Liaison Karen Solomon for “surprise” (no faculty and staff preparation) evaluation test-drive
- Hosted Gates Foundation two day community and campus think tank
- Held workshop for supervisors on "Decision-Making"
- Implemented project storyboards in Student Services and budget committee
- Determined use of final Federal stimulus monies
- Met with State legislators (Senator Tony Lourey and representatives Bill Hilty and Mary Murphy) for an update on our progress on HLC sanctions and general discussions of higher education matters
- Met with U. S. Representative James Oberstar to discuss creation of a regional law enforcement training center at present site of FDLTCC law enforcement skills training and LSC aviation training
- Hosted U.S. Senator Al Franken for a "Getting to Know Us" lunch
- Celebrated the life of our housing director who passed away unexpectedly in autumn
- Continued to follow budget plan and report campus-wide
- Continued to report progress with strategic plan action items
- Coordinated Northeast Leadership Council and Northeast Chief Academic Officers meetings

#### **Primary Results, May - December 2010:**

- Filled Dean of Workforce position, with results that include new grant awards in clean energy, Building Performance Institute's national certification, FDLTCC leading the train-the-trainer in home energy auditing for the Minnesota Office of Energy Security, and increased offerings of continued education and customized training offerings
- Filled Director of Institutional Research and Planning position, with results that include the development of project storyboards, Brio training, the creation of a variety of data sets regarding student learning and success, the foundation for public reporting of institution- and program-level assessment data, the foundation for making more efficient assessment of student learning, the foundation for creating an FDLTCC public accountability dashboard, and the foundation for regularized reporting of program data
- Filled Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness position, with results that include a reduction in student behavioral issues, increased academic success of student athletics, increased completion of student athletes, the creation and implementation of Nandagikendan Summer Academic program, the creation and implementation of Late Night Academics

- Filled Interim Dean of Student Services position, with results that include continued monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of retention efforts; improved academic suspension process; improved student orientation; involvement in system-level work on developmental education; earlier registration; and student services strategic planning
- Hired four new unlimited full-time faculty positions: 2 nursing faculty, 1 English, and 1 American Indian Studies, resulting in curriculum changes in nursing program, pursuit of National League of Nursing private accreditation, improved completion rates in developmental English courses, collaborative student writing competition with Lake Superior College, filled sections of American Indian studies courses that had never before filled, positioned to begin work on American Indian Studies program
- Received positive feedback from HLC's Karen Solomon; began drafting a visual portrayal of the alignment of FDLTCC's major planning activities (strategic, budget, assessment, and presidential)
- Met jointly with community leaders, K-12 educators, legislators, college students, other postsecondary institutions to explore possibilities regarding joint projects leading to student success that the Gates Foundation could possibly fund
- Clarified organizational chart; reconfigured Wednesday leadership team meetings into bi-weekly Wednesday Forums to clarify that entire campus is welcome; established bi-weekly supervisor meetings on Tuesdays
- Initiated a new method of documenting work on goals and projects and drawing connections to plans, HLC criteria, budget, and mission via Project Storyboard
- Identified final use of stimulus funds through campus-wide discussions, prioritized by the budget committee and referred to the President's work group; final decision made by the President; funds were used for program equipment purchases, IT upgrades and renovations, and assessment of student learning software.
- Maintained forward progress on transparency, financial management, assessment of student learning, planning, and building relationships

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## Actions and Results 2011

### Primary Actions, January – May 2011

- Held initial meetings on Academic Plan 2011 - 2016
- Held initial meetings on Facilities Plan 2011 - 2016
- Continued reporting out progress on strategic plan
- Hosted Noel-Levitz consultant on retention and enrollment planning
- Continued coordinating Northeast Leadership Council and Northeast Chief Academic Officers meetings
- Participated in MnSCU "Promising Practices" initiatives
- Wrote application for funding for Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program 2011 for entering students
- Hosted MnSCU Chancellor, Interim Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, and Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs for Progress Report on HLC sanctions
- Reported FDLTCC's budget at MnSCU's annual Trends and Highlights meeting
- Received additional training on CFI
- Provided on-campus training sessions on purchasing
- Held two campus-wide brainstorming sessions and two sessions with supervisors regarding proposed budget cuts, as well as potential State government shut-down
- Convened first meeting of the President's advisory board
- Accepted Title III grant funds working with Fond du Lac reservation to support expanding Nandagikendan Summer Academic Programs for American Indian high school students, further developing cultural resource center, improving student preparedness in information/technology literacy and financial literacy
- Reviewed and discussed purchase of TracDat assessment software
- Began strategic planning in Student Services
- Posted position and hired new housing director
- Represented FDLTCC on MnSCU Task Force on Developmental Education
- Presented FDLTCC's work on redesigning developmental English and math to MnSCU Board of Trustees
- Presented FDLTCC's results of Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program 2010 to MnSCU's Chief Diversity Officers

- Attended HLC's annual meeting, including President's meetings, Self Study Workshop, Peer Evaluator training, and General Program

### **Primary Results, January - May 2011:**

- Preceded facilities planning with academic planning to provide consistency between the two plans
- Stayed on course with planning activities (ahead of calendar on facilities planning)
- Maintained forward progress on strategic planning
- Received results of Noel-Levitz consultation and began discussion of related projects and changes based on results
- Made FDLTCC a strategic part of the other Northeast region's colleges; held three Northeast CAO meetings focused on developmental education, assessment of student learning, and collaborations with K-12 partners; as a result, the region's CAO's are producing a document about Promising Practices in Student Success in the Northeast region and will be holding a fall math conference for the region's math faculty.
- Submitted fall 2011 targets for MnSCU's Promising Practices application to Gates Foundation
- Awarded \$15,000 for Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program 2011 for entering students, including "advanced" track for returning students and two pilot one-day "Nandagikendan abridged" orientation sessions
- Received positive input on FDLTCC's sanction-related work from Chancellor's office and focused on developing a better visual approach to the alignment of FDLTCC's major planning documents and data-driven decision-making
- Received positive remarks and useful information on FDLTCC's annual Trends and Highlights budget report to MnSCU's Vice Chancellor of Finances and three other MnSCU colleges; shared CFI questions and answers; discussed risk assessment on our campuses, with student mental health issues identified as an increasing concern across the colleges
- Reduced audit findings to 1
- Positioned to financially withstand proposed budget cuts during FY12; positioned college respond to final State budget decision within one week; positioned college to be in compliance with potential shutdown affects on contracts and to respond to potential logistical challenges for students, faculty, and staff
- Began identifying potential projects with President's Advisory Board (4/26/11) and scheduling choosing projects (7/26/11) and monitoring project results (10/25/11)
- Created and posted 4 Title III grant positions to support expansion of Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program to high school students, language immersion, technology training for faculty and students, and improving student financial literacy
- Purchased TracDat assessment software to support institution- and program-level assessment of student learning and planning activities
- Began expanding Competencies Across the Curriculum to Student Services as part of strategic planning
- Welcomed new housing director in time to prepare for fall housing
- Maintained focus on transparency, building relationships, budget, financial management, assessment of student learning, and planning
- Began to address new compliance areas based on attending HLC's annual meeting; brought in two new faculty for the first of three years of self-study training; rotated three faculty out of self study training and into general program
- Began arranging a faculty development activity for August based on attending HLC's annual meeting; began implementing ideas regarding how we can highlight and "market" assessment of student learning at FDLTCC

### **Brief Discussion: Sanction 1, Administrative Structure**

Since 2008, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College has been addressing concerns related to administrative structure that were brought forward during the college's self-study process and in April 2009 by the Higher Learning Commission. The college's demonstration of improvement in this area is reflected not simply by overt actions and results, but also by the nature of the actions, which move from broad in the beginning of the improvement process and narrow as time progresses to the present. In addition, the breadth of actions across the past two years reflects a consistent focus on finances, planning, student success in its many dimensions, and relationship-building.



## Organizational Structure

Improvements in FDLTCC's administrative structure is fundamentally demonstrated by changes to and additions of positions. At the broadest and least recent point, Larry Anderson was appointed as new interim president in June 2008. He replaced the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Academic Officer; developed a leadership team, established clear goal areas and a theme of transparency; was appointed permanently as FDLTCC president (fall 2009); and released two of three full-time probationary faculty. These broad changes created the groundwork necessary to focus on priorities in the areas of finances, academics and other learning opportunities, planning, and building relationships. This narrowing of focus on priorities is reflected in the positions created from 2009 to the present and in the position descriptions on the job postings (see examples in Resource Room: Administrative Structure). Each hiring decision has been guided by discussion regarding how we can best use limited financial resources to maximize our ability to effectively address the college's present priorities and future directions.

The results of some of the hiring decisions: 1) Moving from a deficit of \$236,000 in 2009 to a reserve of \$600,000 in 2011, 2) Reducing from twelve administrative interventions into student behavioral issues in 2009 - 2010 to zero in 2010 - 2011, 3) Reducing from several complaints between 2009 - 2010 to zero the number of RN nursing student complaints in 2011 4) Increasing completion rates in developmental English by over fifteen percent and overall retention rates by ten percent, 5). Increasing the number of learning-centered student activities, such as "Late Night Academics" and the creation and implementation of Nandagikendan Summer Academic program for entering students, 6) Establishing of focused on-campus technology training for faculty and students, and financial literacy and financial aid training for students, 7) \$9 million in grant awards since 2009, some of which has been awarded by working in partnership with Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

The new administration also clarified FDLTCC's organizational chart during 2009 - 2010, which has led to clear lines of supervision and, consequently, clearer lines of accountability among supervisors (see Resource Room: Administrative Structure). The president and supervisors meet twice monthly in a reporting and decision-making capacity, which is followed by twice monthly open-campus forums to make announcements, report progress on pertinent subjects (strategic planning and budget, for example), and share matters of importance, success, or concern. On a daily basis, each supervisor sends the president an "Urgent" and "Important/Must Do" e-mail message, which the president monitors; supervisors tally their "completion rate" on an approximately monthly basis. These actions have enabled us to maintain focus on the college's plans and priorities and improve campus-wide communication, particularly on finances.

## Planning

The administration of FDLTCC is planning-focused. The 2008 - 2013 Strategic Plan is a central guide for the college, and the administration has reinforced its importance by making it a regular part of meetings with supervisors and campus forums. In addition, each member of the administration has taken responsibility for work areas in the plan. The president's work plan, on which the president is evaluated annually by the Chancellor of the MnSCU system, is closely aligned to FDLTCC's strategic plan, which provides an additional motivation to ensure that the college is focused on enhancing partnerships, delivering responsive education, and supporting service capacity. Assessment, facilities, and academic planning are also embedded in the strategic plan, which assures that attention to planning in smaller sectors of the institution is maintained.

In the history of planning at FDLTCC, the period between 2008 and the current time has been the most focused on realizing planning goals in the history of the college. The structure of our plans is built of

measurable actions, providing a clear view of our progress. Specific to administration, however, the college's planning documents have provided the impetus to focus on relationships, assist with the building of a deeper and stronger assessment of student learning, make hires and monitor work based on the college's priorities, and use the college's realization of goals to showcase the college in a meaningful way to others.

### Building Relationships

A significant theme undergirding administrative actions and results is that of building relationships, which has been a priority of President Anderson and is part of the vision and work in FDLTCC's 2008 - 2013 Strategic Plan. Since April 2009, FDLTCC administrators have stood before chairs of Tribal governments, State legislators, U.S. senators, representatives from the Minnesota Department of Education, representatives from the U.S. Department of Education; the Chancellor, Board of Trustees, and presidents of the colleges of the MnSCU systems; faculty and administrative colleagues from within and outside the MnSCU system; city government officials; heads of industry; area school board members; area superintendents; community members; and students. We have informed them of our on-notice status with the Higher Learning Commission. In this experience, we have not lost a single friend; not a word of doubt about the integrity of FDLTCC has been uttered; not a question about the quality of the education we provide has been asked. Instead, our relationships have strengthened, and the college's possibilities have broadened. These have been demonstrations of the effectiveness of administration's commitment to building relationships, as well as well as demonstrations of the public's perception of the college and the value of transparency in such relationships. It also reaffirmed for us our knowledge that the college's relationships prior to April 2009, despite challenges in some, had been fundamentally good and sound, a knowledge that supported the campus community as it moved forward to address the sanctions.

The administration's emphasis on building relationships has yielded direct, positive results for the college. For example, as a result of building closer collaborations with other colleges in the Northeast Region, our assessment of student learning practices will become more efficient through the purchase of TracDat assessment software, also being purchased by four other regional colleges. Our increased presence in system-related meetings led to delivering the SENSE survey of entering student engagement in fall 2010, experimenting with mapping CCSSE results to FDLTCC's core competencies, and giving presentations about our Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program and FDLTCC's redesign of developmental English and math to the MnSCU Board of Trustees and the chief diversity officers in the MnSCU system. Our annual meetings with local legislators have assisted us with financial planning, STEM goals, K-12 partnerships, and community events. Our Gates Foundation meetings (see Resource Room: Administrative Structure) created deeper ties with the business community; created the motivation for two local superintendents to attend MnSCU's Native American Educators forum in May 2011, a significant step for our communities' K-12 schools; provided the incentive to create two courses focused on entering student success; and caused one faculty member to have her SPCH 1010: Public Speaking students deliver speeches about college to students at the local Ojibwe School on the Fond du Lac reservation.

The president's focus on building a strong working partnership with the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa has been continual since 2008, beginning with "What's Possible" meetings, which provided some common ground on which the partners could stand. The president has attended all Tribal College Board meetings; a Fond du Lac reservation band member now is the advisor of FDLTCC's Drum council; FDLTCC's financial aid office and the FDL reservation Scholarship Office work jointly on reviewing student success data regarding students from FDL and on the distribution of American Indian College Funds; and the college and reservation work collaboratively to determine the appropriateness and acceptance of the college's grant applications. The college has employed several members of the Fond du Lac Band in adjunct teaching and other positions and has worked with the reservation to hold a variety of

community-based events. The incoming Chancellor of the MnSCU system will be visiting the college and the Fond du Lac Reservation Business Committee in June 2011.

FDLTCC's relationships with K-12 schools continue to develop. Since 2009, local K-12 educators have participated in the college's Gates Foundation meetings, attended with FDLTCC the MnSCU Minnesota Engagement Institute, participated in FDLTCC's Summer Robotics Workshop, participated in Native American Educators Forum with the college, and participated in FDLTCC's Perkins Grant monitoring site visit. FDLTCC has continued to offer placement testing for seniors on-site at several area high schools and placement testing for sophomores at Albrook High School, the results of which are used by Albrook to improve student preparedness for college. The college's Perkins Program of Study in health occupations, which provides high school participants with one college credit, an emergency responder's certificate, and CNA preparation, has been used as a State model for Program of Study design. FDLTCC's math faculty have hosted the American Mathematics Competitions for local area high schools since 2009 (visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/FDLTCCMedia#p/a/u/0/sj0A-tMIlx> for a 2011 highlights video). Over 800 students, primarily from local area high schools, attended FDLTCC's 17th annual Career Fair (visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/FDLTCCMedia#p/u/4/yyRhdYOs46U> for a 2011 highlights video).

## Finances

As noted above, and throughout this document, the college's financial management has been a priority since 2008, when the college began its self-study process preceding the April 2009 comprehensive visit. FDLTCC's administration formed a budget committee composed of a cross section of the campus community, adopted a broad-based participatory budget process, has posted the operational budget publicly since 2009, improved budget planning, incorporated budget considerations in its other major planning endeavors, and refined decision-making regarding the instructional budget. At the same time, the administration participated in training forums regarding the composite financial index and began a close working relationship with MnSCU's Office of Internal Auditing to begin the elimination of audit findings.

The results of administration's efforts have been positive. Through regular budget reporting to and discussion with the campus community, knowledge about and attention to the college's budget exists campus-wide. Beginning in fall 2009, the administration committed all excess tuition receipts to building a reserve that meets MnSCU Board policy and the mandate of the April 2009 evaluating team; as the FY11 closes, the college will have a reserve of \$600,000 compared to the \$236,000 deficit in April 2009. By refining our ability to monitor the instructional budget, the college has been able to increase its returns each semester and summer session since fall 2009. By building awareness to budget in all major planning activities, the college has been able to provide opportunities that focus on student success, improve the assessment of student learning processes, and make hires that align with the college's priorities and needs. We have reduced audit findings from thirty-two to one at the time of this writing. The college's Chief Financial Officer was awarded the Chancellor's Outstanding Service award in spring 2011.

Despite these positive actions and results, the turbulent State economy will remain a challenge for at least the next three - five years. As a result, the administration continues to carefully review scenarios that will enable the college to grow and to be effective and prepared for the future. The college's broad-based participatory process has laid the groundwork for continued campus-wide discussions and for garnering creative solutions from the campus community. The administration's emphasis on building relationships also assists the college in the same manner. The college's response to challenging times, as well as our improvements to financial management, are discussed more completely in section 2 of this document.

Since 2009, the administration of FDLTCC has been focused on finances, planning, building relationships, becoming transparent, and restoring our status with HLC. As a result, the college's financial management has improved, rendering a reserve compliant with MnSCU Board policy and HLC's expectations. We have focused intently on delivering our strategic and other planning goals, leveraging the power of aligning plans and the power of monitoring and evaluation. As a result, the administration has followed through with support for improving the assessment of student learning, student preparedness, and training opportunities that increase classroom effectiveness. We have deepened our relationships with our external partners and with our Tribal and State colleagues, positioning the college to take advantage of future opportunities to grow and enhance our services to students. We have clarified reporting lines, and through bi-weekly meetings and daily "must-do" messages to the president, we have maintained a focus on accountability and responsibility in administration. Ultimately, the effectiveness of this administration's work since 2009 will be evaluated by the focus visit team during August 2011.

### III. Finances

FDLTCC's self-study process during spring 2008 identified some of the concerns expressed by Commission evaluators in spring 2009, and thus, the college had already begun improvements in the area of financial management. Of particular concern during the evaluation were the college's composite financial index score, reserve funds, and audit findings unresolved from previous years.

The Higher Learning Commission placed FDLTCC on notice in this area of operations, specifically with regard to Criterion 2, Core Component 2B, which states: "The organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future."

To adequately resolve this area of concern, FDLTCC must take the following necessary action: "Financial stability including stable financial reserves, appropriate internal controls, and an appropriate staffing structure with financial experience and expertise necessary to ensure effective management of college resources and an appropriate separation of duties" (p. 27, Assurance Section, *Final Report*).

The college's primary actions and the results of those actions to date are summarized below.

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#### **Actions and Results, Financial Management, 2008 - 2009**

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##### **Primary Actions, 2008 - 2009**

- 2008 - 2009: Created and implemented broad-based participatory budget process.  
Primary components:
  1. Budget wheel: Breaks out by month FDLTCC's schedule of reporting obligations, drafting cycle, and monitoring cycle
  2. Oversight by FDLTCC Budget Committee
  3. Weekly input from Leadership Team
  4. Campus-wide budget planning, drafting, and commenting
  5. Public posting of operating budget—good or bad news—outside FDLTCC's business office
- October 2008: Administrative changes in position of Chief Financial Officer
- 2008 – 2009: Followed the budget wheel on FY10 budget drafting and creation process
- 2008 – present: Exceeded self-imposed monitoring and reporting requirements
- 2008 – 2009: Working through the MOU, the college and tribe began applying for mission-related, appropriate grants again (not possible between 2005 -2008)
- August 2009: Reported to campus FY10 goal of 820 FYE
- August 2009: Reported to campus administration's decision to commit any excess tuition revenue to building reserve
- Summer 2009: Applied for MnSCU Access and Opportunities funds
- Planning for FY11 and "unallotment," with FY12 on the horizon

##### **Primary Results, 2008 - 2009**

- Moved from \$236,000 deficit at beginning of FY09 to balanced budget and small reserve of \$12,000 at end of FY09
- September 2009: Received letter from MnSCU Chancellor's office in recognition of FDLTCC's significant progress
- Committed excess tuition to building reserve
- Completed FY10 process according to plan
- Transparency and broad-based participation led to heightened attention to recruitment and was additionally supported by strategic planning work group
- Campus-wide ownership has built campus-wide sense of responsibility, resulting in increased use of state vehicles, campus-initiated conversation about budget in committee meetings, campus-initiated conversation about the FY11 budget

- Received Access and Opportunity funds, which offset some personnel costs and will be used toward building reserve.
- Restored relationship with Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and renewed MOU has yielded a Title III grant, which offsets some instructional costs that will be used toward building reserve.
- In moving toward FY11, established an improved method of analyzing instructional budget; this, coupled with lean planning, recruitment and retention efforts, and grant initiatives, is beginning to lay the groundwork for FY11 budgeting.
- Have started conversations about FY12 budget scenario with MnSCU and with area legislators
- Created process to spread longer-term budget planning across the campus

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## **Actions and Results, Financial Management, 2010**

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### **Primary Actions, January – May 2010**

- Created and implemented campus-wide 5-year budget planning
- Drafted and created budget for FY11
- Calculated and reported to campus budget outlook for 2012 and 2013
- Consistent with FDLTCC's Budget Wheel, reported campus-wide current budget status
- Maintained system of monitoring instructional budget
- Maintained financial transparency with public by posting updated operating budget outside of FDLTCC's business office
- Maintained commitment to use excess tuition to build reserve
- Hosted and participated in annual Trends and Highlights budget report with Vice Chancellor of Finance of MnSCU and Lake Superior College
- Participated in strategic planning review and development of 2010 - 2012 benchmarks
- Maintained budget discussions at weekly Leadership Development Team meetings
- Held Default Management meetings with U.S. Department of Education (USDE) representatives regarding USDE's new calculation of student loan default rates
- Participated in Perkins' Monitoring Site Visit by MN Department of Education and representatives from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system
- Revised Absent from Campus report form and revised travel forms
- Completed implementation of electronic timesheets
- Continued working with Fond du Lac reservation on mission-related grant opportunities
- Targeted a portion of stimulus monies to teaching and learning improvements on main campus and at Red Lake outreach site
- Met with program coordinators to jointly determine appropriate fees for designated courses
- Created and posted Dean of Workforce position
- Created and posted Director of Institutional Research and Planning position
- Created Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness position
- Created Interim Dean of Student Services position
- Complied with MSCFA bargaining unit requirements, and posted three new unlimited full-time faculty positions

### **Primary Results, January – May 2010**

- Continued to practice and deepen broad-based, participatory budget process
- Achieved goal of \$150,000 at end of FY10 (final figure was \$500,000)
- Projected positive FY11 budget
- Continued to build campus awareness of the financial challenges posed by 2012 and 2013 and laid groundwork for future decision making in relation to how such challenges will be met
- Received positive acknowledgement in annual Trends and Highlights meeting and useful input regarding FY11 and future planning
- Developed new strategic benchmarks for finances in 2010 – 2012 Strategic Plan

- Evaluated financial status of FDLTCC athletics in Leadership Development Team and demonstrated the usefulness and effectiveness of such reviews to assist with decision making
- Revised Default Management plan and materials to pre-empt possible challenges posed by new USDE calculation of default percentages
- Established working relationship with U.S. Department of Education financial aid team
- Reduced use of paper in Absent from Campus business form by eliminating triplicate format and making copies only at the request of the person submitting the form
- Reduced travel forms from three to one
- Reduced costs and time spent on processing paper timesheets
- Installed and made operational FDLTCC's first ATM machine
- Based on MnSCU system-wide comparative data and input from program coordinators regarding program plans and needs, set special fees for designated courses that meet student, program, and institutional needs
- Reduced audit findings to eight
- Received new positive acknowledgements from the Internal Auditor office regarding FDLTCC's progress and commitment
- Purchased twenty laptops for classroom use at Red Lake outreach site
- Worked with program coordinators to develop Program Advisory Guidelines to monitor Perkins grant-funding
- Received exemplary marks from Minnesota Department of Education and MnSCU evaluators during Perkins Monitoring Site Visit
- Based on budget data, and in alignment with institutional plans, created new positions match priority areas, including planning, assessment of student learning, retention and completion, and student preparedness

**Primary Actions, May - December 2010**

- Posted updated operating budget outside of FDLTCC's business office
- Filled Dean of Workforce position
- Filled Director of Institutional Research and Planning position
- Filled Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness position
- Filled Interim Dean of Student Services position
- Hired four new unlimited full-time faculty positions: 2 nursing faculty, 1 English, and 1 American Indian Studies
- Participated in meetings with HLC Staff Liaison Karen Solomon for "surprise" evaluation test-drive
- Participated in Gates Foundation two day community and campus think tank
- Maintained budget updates and reporting campus-wide
- Maintained system of monitoring instructional budget
- Maintained commitment to use excess tuition to build reserve
- Determined use of final Federal stimulus monies

**Primary Results, May - December 2010:**

- Maintained commitment to financial transparency with the campus community and general public
- Clarified and completed organizational charts and adjusted budget planning to cover filled positions
- Monitored effectiveness of new hires as important financial investments aimed toward achieving college goals
- Received positive input and guidance from HLC staff liaison and was able to see positive results from our work
- Positioned to include informed budget considerations in future developments that emerge from the Gates Foundation meetings
- Continued campus-wide budget reporting and up-to-date campus awareness of State budget discussions; as a result, although somewhat scary, the campus community will avoid budget-related surprises and understand the potential impact of State budget decisions on the college
- Continued monitoring of instructional budget; as a result, revenues for fall 2010 and spring 2011 improved
- Continued growth of reserve fund toward meeting \$600,000 goal
- Dedicated final stimulus dollars toward activities consistent with strategic planning goals and serving students
- Increased revenue generated from summer and fall instructional budgets
- Awarded MnSCU Chancellor's Outstanding Service award in finances

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## **Actions and Results, Financial Management, 2011**

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### **Primary Actions, January – May 2011**

- Participated in initial meetings on Academic Plan 2011 - 2016
- Participated in initial meetings on Facilities Plan 2011 - 2016
- Participated in Noel-Levitz consultant on retention and enrollment planning
- Participated in visit from MnSCU Chancellor, Interim Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, and Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs regarding progress on HLC sanctions
- Reported FDLTCC's budget at MnSCU's annual Trends and Highlights meeting
- Received additional training on CFI
- Provided on-campus training sessions on purchasing and invoices
- Participated in posting of 4 Title III grant positions to support expansion of Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program for high school students and development of cultural resource center
- Participated in meetings regarding application for funding for Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program 2011 for entering students
- Reviewed and discussed purchase of TracDat assessment software
- Consistent with FDLTCC's Budget Wheel, reported campus-wide current budget status
- Maintained budget discussions at weekly leadership meetings and Wednesday campus forums
- Sent campus-wide e-mail updates regarding legislative higher education budget discussions
- Maintained system of monitoring instructional budget
- Maintained commitment to use excess tuition to build reserve
- Requested 5-year budget plans from departments
- Began drafting FY12 budget

### **Primary Results, January - May 2011:**

- Continued to keep budget a part of major planning discussions
- Continued to stay abreast of retention, recruitment, and enrollment planning activities as a source of revenue generation
- Received positive recognition and guidance from the MnSCU's Chancellor's office regarding sanction-related work in finances
- Received positive recognition and guidance at MnSCU's annual Trends & Highlights reports and continued to stay abreast of State budget discussions, which resulted in more accurate scenario planning at FDLTCC
- Reported new CFI score to campus and maintained attention to it during planning meetings
- Implemented stricter guidelines and consequences for violations regarding purchases and invoices as a result of spring 2011 round of training sessions; reduced audit findings to one as a result
- Provided budget input regarding Title III positions and began setting up associated cost centers
- Awarded \$15,000 from MnSCU's Diversity Office for Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program 2011 for entering students
- Will purchase TracDat assessment software with remaining stimulus funds based on review of quotes and include in budget plan opportunities to cover additional future costs
- Continued campus-wide budget reporting and up-to-date campus awareness of State budget discussions; as a result, although somewhat scary, the campus community will avoid budget-related surprises and understand the potential impact of State budget decisions on the college
- Continued monitoring of instructional budget; as a result, revenues for summer session 2011 will increase
- Continued growth of reserve fund toward meeting \$600,000 goal
- Created multiple FY12 budget scenarios

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## **CFI Actions and Results 2009 - 2011**

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### **Primary Actions: Composite Financial Index (CFI) Score, 2009**

- Sought education about and reviewed FDLTCC's CFI score and the four ratios that make up the CFI



**Primary Results: Composite Financial Index (CFI) Score, 2009**

- Learned Commission evaluators used score from 2007, calculated by the State's process (-.05) and not the Commission's (+.20)
- Learned the CFI can vary greatly from year to year
  - 2007 score changed from -.05 to +.20, based on MnSCU's recalculation according to HLC's process
  - 2008 score was +2.01, which included a \$5 million capital appropriation
  - 2009 draft score is +2.68, reflecting peak and beginning of decline of FDLTCC's interest payments on construction debt + balancing budget and building small reserve
- Learned that the 2006 – 2008 average CFI was +.68, reflective of the challenging time when FDLTCC no longer received monies from the Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Learned that the 2007 – 2009 average CFI was 1.63, reflective of the beginning of changes made as a result of the loss of Bureau of Indian Affairs monies, improved budget process, reduction of debt, and building small reserve; have shown college can stand on its own without the BIA funds.

**Primary Actions: Composite Financial Index (CFI) Score, 2009 - 2010**

- Based on knowledge garnered in 2009, continued to monitor FDLTCC's CFI score and the four ratios that compose the CFI

**Primary Results: Composite Financial Index (CFI) Score, 2009 - 2010**

- Confirmed correctness of and reported in Trends and Highlights meeting FDLTCC's 2009 CFI: +2.62
- Decided not to submit a facilities capital request for the next Minnesota bonding bill based on the negative effect it would have on the college's debt ratio

**Primary Results: Composite Financial Index (CFI) Score, 2010 - 2011**

- FDLTCC's CFI in FY11: +.97, a decline attributed to end of capital appropriation funds and depreciation.
- Confirmed correctness of and reported in Trends and Highlights meeting FDLTCC's 2011 CFI
- FDLTCC will very likely not seek capital bonding for facilities expansion during the next five years but will focus on classroom improvements

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**Audit Findings Actions and Results 2009 - 2011**

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**Primary Actions: Audit Findings, 2008 - 2009**

- October 2008 – present: Established close working relationship focused on problem-solving with MnSCU's Office of Internal Auditing.
- Implemented transparent approach to communication about audit findings, consistent with budget process
- Educated and continue to educate campus staff and faculty about processes related to audit findings and the prevention of such findings

**Primary Results: Audit Findings, 2008- 2009**

- September 2009: Received letter from Internal Auditing in recognition of FDLTCC's significant progress on the work
- Reduced audit findings from 19 to 12.
- Of the twelve findings remaining:
  - 4 demonstrate significant progress and are currently in process
  - 3 are currently being tested during fall semester 2009
  - 4 include processes or subject matter that is currently under review and discussion with the MnSCU system

**Primary Actions: Audit Findings, 2009 - 2010**

- Continued campus-wide education and attention to audit findings
- Continued to implement and test strategies to resolve audit findings

**Primary Results: Audit Findings, 2009- 2010**

- Reduced audit findings from 12 to 8.

- Continued to test regularly and to receive positive feedback regarding progress from MnSCU's Office of Internal Auditing

**Primary Actions: Audit Findings, 2010 - 2011**

- Continued to test regularly and to receive positive feedback regarding progress from MnSCU Office of Internal Auditing
- Held campus-wide training sessions on purchasing and invoices
- Implemented more stringent rules regarding purchasing

**Primary Results: Audit Findings, 2010- 2011**

- Reduced audit findings to 1 as of May 2011, with another test scheduled for June 2011, and show satisfactory progress

**Brief Discussion: Sanction 2A, Finances**

Since 2008, FDLTCC has been addressing concerns related to finances that were brought forward during the college's self-study process and in April 2009 by the Higher Learning Commission. The fundamental areas of focus have been to provide an open discussion of the financial issues that face the college, to be transparent to all constituencies of the institution, and to root an effective budget process that includes monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. FDLTCC has moved from a \$236,000 deficit in FY09 to a \$600,000 reserve at the end of FY11. In the same time period, we have reduced audit findings from nineteen to one at the time of this writing. From a cash and compliance perspective, the college has made significant improvements in its financial management since April 2009.

In fall 2008, a Budget Committee was formed composed of staff representation from all units within the college as well as administration and faculty. In summer 2009, the committee developed a "budget wheel" that helps define the budget process and sets timeframes for reporting, requesting departmental budgets, and developing the annual budget. While this is specific to FDLTCC, the benchmarks and timeframes also take into consideration the requirements and needs of MnSCU. In addition, we adopted a "broad-based, participatory process" that spreads across the campus community. We have been following this process since fall 2009, and thus far, it has been effective. In fall 2009, we also began to publicly post our budget outside our business office window, and we are the only college in the region to do so. The budget committee continues to play a lead role in monitoring and evaluating FDLTCC's budget and has been key to improving campus-wide communication, organizing educational sessions, and leading discussions regarding proposed budget cuts.

During spring 2010, in order to better ascertain the needs of all departments and prioritize spending, the college's five-year budget planning process was extended to the rest of the campus, and faculty and staff were asked to submit budget plans for a five year period to create a better informed approach to institutional financial planning. This also has assisted with building a campus-wide knowledge of and attention to the college's budget. Attention to financial management is also one of the strategic directions of the college's strategic plan 2008 - 2013 (see Resource Room: Planning), which reinforces the college's specific commitment to continued improvement in financial management; it has also reinforced the presence of the budget in the three strategic directions of the plan. For example, in the direction of delivering responsive education, the budget is frequently a part of student retention and recruitment discussions, and student retention and recruitment is frequently a part of budget discussions. The same is true in discussions regarding increasing student success and providing more flexible options for students. In addition to the strategic plan, financial management is also a part of the president's annual work plan (see Resource Room: Planning). Building financial management into the college's primary planning documents has helped ensure that the college continues to improve the management of its financial responsibilities, and it has begun to root a budget process that is based on monitoring, evaluating, and reporting. It has also helped to prepare the college to address the current challenges and unknowns related to State funding.

Since fall 2009, we have monitored our instructional budget on a much more frequent and closer basis. Class enrollments, and associated gains and losses, are reviewed regularly during registration periods, and decisions on cancellations are made much earlier and more precisely than in the past. As a result, we have consistently made gains in this revenue generating facet of the college's budget each semester since fall 2009. In addition, in fall 2009, the administration made a commitment to place into the reserve fund all excess tuition, which has enabled us to bring the college's reserve fund into compliance with MnSCU Board policy and the mandate given to us by the evaluating team during the comprehensive site visit.

Because over seventy-five percent of FDLTCC's budget is committed to personnel expenses, the college's CFO is closely involved with hiring. Between spring and fall 2010, the college filled the Dean of Workforce position, the Director of Institutional Research and Planning position, the Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness position, the Interim Dean of Student Services position, and four new unlimited full-time faculty positions: 2 nursing faculty, 1 English, and 1 American Indian Studies. From a financial perspective, the administration views these positions as investments toward achieving the college's goals. Consequently, effectiveness in these positions is monitored. Some initial results of these most recent hires include the award of five grants in the area of national certification and train-the-trainer activities in home energy auditing with the Building Performance Institute; the development of a wide variety of data sets and projects used in assessment, evaluation, and decision-making; new extra-curricular student learning activities, the development of summer bridge programming, and improved retention and student success among student athletes; significant improvements to the nursing program; a fifteen percent increase in course completion by students in developmental English classes; and increased enrollment in our American Indian Studies courses, a new working relationship with our tribal partner regarding the college Drum, and increased student and community involvement in events.

In 2009 - 2010, FDLTCC also began work on the educational lean process. In terms of cost-savings, FDLTCC has evaluated where redundancies may be occurring, particularly within the student services area, and has attempted to streamline processes in order to serve the students more efficiently. For example, a more focused concentration on early registration and early completion of FAFSAs has enabled the college to monitor and make decisions about the instructional budget in a more timely manner while also easing the stress level of student services personnel during the last few weeks before a semester begins and positioning students for a more organized and successful start to their studies. During 2010 - 2011, the college's lean plan was absorbed into the college's strategic plan; its continued practice is most recently evident in the college's discussion of how to handle the proposed budget cuts of FY12, a central question being "how can we become more efficient" if resources become more scarce.

While we know we need to remain vigilant in our budget process and limit spending, we also recognize the need to have the tools available to build more effective services, instruction, and training in order to produce successful learners. We have used our ARRA stimulus funds carefully and invested in data-imaging technology that makes our records office more efficient and lowers the risk of audit findings related to records, upgraded instructional and student computer labs, funded the second phase of work on enrollment management and retention with Noel Levitz, and purchased TracDat assessment software that will enable the college to more efficiently collect, organize, and report data related to classroom- and program-level student learning, as well as strategic and other planning goals. In addition to focusing stimulus money in areas consistent with our institutional priorities, we have also focused grant funds in the same direction, most recently to fund positions in summer academic programming, technology training for students and faculty, financial aid and financial literacy training for students, and campus and community cultural resource development. When possible, we have been able to offset instructional costs with grant funds focused on certain programs, such as electrical utilities technology, business, and nursing, which enables the programs to achieve their goals, increases opportunities for students when

applicable, continues to build the college's relationships with the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and other external stakeholders, and temporarily eases pressures on the college's budget.

Although the five-year budget planning process will help FDLTCC during the next biennium and beyond, and although we anticipate and plan for fewer State resources, we also know we need to maintain focus on what we do best: Serving our students. Since 2009, we have held numerous discussions regarding various budget cut scenarios. We held four such sessions in May 2011. To date, we have implemented or continue to discuss the following strategies: Make thoughtful, smart hires, which is particularly important for us as a smaller institution as we need our staff/faculty to be able to perform in a variety of areas. Faculty and administration have worked through Shared Governance to increase control numbers for certain classes, and part of the facilities planning discussions included a focus on the need for two to four larger classrooms. Programs, academic as well as athletic, offered at FDLTCC have been and will continue to be reviewed to see where efficiencies can be created and money can be saved while at the same time not limiting success. We have reduced course offerings on Fridays to between three and six and continue to look at eliminating Friday offerings and possibly mandating furloughs for staff during December or over the summer months. Depending on the depth of State cuts, the college is also prepared to eliminate positions that do not directly affect service to students. In alignment with our work on student preparedness, programming, and retention, we continue to investigate and monitor the financial effectiveness of team teaching, stacking courses, combining courses, building partnerships with Adult Basic Education and K-12 to prepare students for entry into college, building a more effective approach to online offerings, and creating more flexible options for students. In alignment with the facilities portion of the college's strategic plan, we are discussing facility efficiencies and investigating avenues to reducing utility costs, such as significantly limiting the use of heating and cooling systems during the summer; in addition, we are also discussing the possibility of closing the campus completely on Sundays. With the exception of hiring, the above list largely represents sacrifices, and therefore, we approach the ideas slowly and carefully, without rushing to final decisions. We attempt to look at all of the possibilities, keep them on the table in our scenario planning, and proceed with caution.

#### Audit Findings

In fall 2008, FDLTCC had thirty-two audit findings, some longstanding and others products of complicated internal control challenges due to a small staff. Larry Anderson, then interim president, hired a new chief financial officer who began addressing the audit problem by working closely with MnSCU's Office of the Internal Auditing. By September 2009, FDLTCC was noted by the Office as having made significant progress, reducing the findings from thirty-two to nineteen; however, coupled with other concerns related to financial management, the audit findings were an expressed concern of the HLC evaluating team. Since April 2009, the college has continued to work toward eliminating the findings (see Resource Room: Finances).

Cleaning up the audit findings, particularly with regard to purchasing and the timely payment of invoices, has been a campus-wide endeavor. The chief financial officer and business office staff have held several training sessions regarding purchasing and the prompt turning in of invoices for payment; in addition, representatives from the Office of the Internal Auditor have participated at campus-wide meeting days and held trainings for supervisors. The budget committee has also assisted with drawing attention to the need for improved attention to purchasing and prompt submission of invoices to the business office. The president has also assisted by sending campus-wide messages and implementing consequences for not following purchasing procedures. At the time of this writing, the findings have been reduced to one. In June 2011, there will be another test, and the focus visit team will be updated on the results at the time of the visit.

## Composite Financial Index (CFI)

Of all the positive work that has been done to improve FDLTCC's financial management, the college's CFI has been the most challenging learning ground. In FY10, after two years of increases, FDLTCC's CFI decreased. Between 2007 - 2010, the CFI was calculated at .20, 2.02, 2.62, and .97, with a three-year average score of 1.86. Two of the four CFI component ratios improved over that same time frame: The viability and primary reserve ratios. These two measurements assess our liquid net assets that are directly available, or through additional borrowing, to cover emergency expenditures or invest in innovation. They represent available liquidity or borrowing capacity, and are not dependent on current operating results in the short-term. The viability ratio doubled from 2009 to 2010 although it still remains low. The primary reserve ratio increased by 67% between those same years.

<b>Composite Financial Index</b>			
	<u>2010</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
Primary reserve	0.35	0.21	0.06
Return on net assets	0.26	1.74	2.00
Viability	0.28	0.14	0.05
Operating margin	0.08	0.53	(0.10)
<b>Composite Score</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>2.02</b>

However, the return on net assets and the operating margin ratios declined this past year. The return on net assets dropped significantly but still remains positive, as does the operating margin. These components measure the level of return on net assets and the extent that operating revenues cover operating expenses. The return on net assets ratio of .26 is significantly less than the 2009 ratio of 1.74. This indicates that the college's financial return on net assets was minimal. The biggest contributor to this decline was the change in net assets. In FY10 the change in net assets was \$.55 million as compared to \$3.1 million in FY09. Our capital appropriations went from \$2.6 million to just under one half million from 2009 to 2010. The operating margin ratio was calculated at .09 for FY10, a decline of .44 from the previous year. The main factor contributing to this decline was a lower income before other revenues, expenses, gains, or losses. This figure decreased from \$405,000 in 2009 to \$73,000 in 2010.

Our strides in building a reserve that is consistent with MnSCU policy and the mandate given by HLC evaluators in April 2009 is noteworthy progress; it has been our primary focus in relation to the CFI, and our results have been good, especially in the present economy. Although we have been urged to focus on the positive three-year average of +1.86, the need for improving our performance in each of the ratios continues to be evident to us. While another capital project would improve the number, it would be an artificial inflation, and therefore, we are unlikely to expand facilities for the next five years. For the sake of preparation, however, we have gone ahead with facilities planning that includes the expansion of the east wing of the college. Consistent with our budget strategies heading into the immediate future, we will emphasize increasing revenue generation through improving retention and recruiting and continuing to focus on leveraging the instructional budget while increasing savings in other areas to improve the operating margin ratio.

FDLTCC has moved from a \$236,000 deficit in FY09 to a \$600,000 reserve at the end of FY11, a budget reserve that meets MnSCU Board policy and the mandate of previous HLC evaluators. In the same time period, we have reduced audit findings from nineteen to one at the time of this writing. We have made significant improvements in existing processes and created new ones while also performing our day-to-

day work. We are the only college in the region that publicly posts its operating budget, and our budget reporting to the campus community is frequent. While the college has been looking for savings and building a reserve, we have focused available money on building our capacity in areas consistent with planning priorities, such as delivering responsive education, enhancing relationships, and supporting our service capacity and facilities. As we move toward 2012 and 2013, like all the colleges in the MnSCU system, FDLTCC will continue to face a difficult economy. We will maintain focus on our priorities and on our strengths, one of which is creativity, and we will continue to utilize this strength and focus as we move forward.

## IV. Planning

FDLTCC's self-study process during spring 2008 identified some of the concerns expressed by Commission evaluators in spring 2009, and thus, the college had already begun improvements in the area of strategic planning. At the time of the Commission's comprehensive evaluation in spring 2009, the college's strategic plan had been operational for only six months; as a result, Commission evaluators were unable to assess with certainty the effectiveness of the college's work in that area.

The Higher Learning Commission placed FDLTCC on notice in this area of operations, specifically with regard to Criterion 2, Core Component 2A: The organization realistically prepares for societal and economic trends. Core Component 2C: The organization's evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement. Core Component 2D: All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill its mission.

To adequately resolve this area of concern, FDLTCC must take the following necessary action: "Strategic Planning that includes full implementation and continues the engagement of the college community. It should provide evidence of the allocation of resources and the development of institutional measurements to assess the fulfillment of the college mission and effective planning for their future" (p. 27, Assurance Section, *Final Report*).

The college's primary actions and the results of those actions to date are summarized below.

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### Actions and Results 2008 - 2009

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#### Primary Actions

- 2008 – 2009: Five of seven work groups completed 80 to 100% of benchmarks for 2008 – 2009
- 2009: Conducted enrollment study, in alignment with strategic plan and budget process
- 2009: Fortified staffing, in alignment with strategic plan and budget process
- 2009: Piloted new academic alert process, analyzed results, reported and discussed with campus, in alignment with strategic plan, budget process, and retention committee
- Currently work groups have reconvened during fall semester 2009, revisiting previous results and reporting work plans through the Leadership Team meetings

#### Primary Results

- Increased base enrollment of tuition-paying students during fall semester 2009
- Continued adherence to budget process and related financial decision making mechanisms
- Effectively managed serving students during registration peak and enrollment increase through strategic use of intermittent employees
- Positioned college to meet FY10 budget goal of 820 FYE
- Piloted and evaluated orientation process for temporary faculty during fall 2009
- Currently refining and implementing again orientation process for temporary faculty during spring 2010 based on fall 2009 evaluation
- Reviewing summer 2010 staffing
- Reviewing credentialing process
- Reviewed, revised, and implemented campus policy regarding weather/emergency-related class cancellations/campus closures
- Awarded Title III grant
- Continuing work with the tribe on identifying joint academic opportunities
- Implemented retention and recruitment work goals established in 2008 - 2009
- Reviewed, evaluated, and monitored academic alert process
- Increased involvement in academic alert process in spring and again in fall 2009

- Currently reviewing and updating articulation agreements
- Currently reviewing transfer success data
- Began discussion of facilities planning slated for 2011
- Began discussion of academic planning to coincide and align with 2011 facilities planning
- Currently reviewing academic program inventory for accuracy
- Currently reviewing workforce data, including trends 2006 – 2016, in relation to future academic program planning
- Currently reviewing opportunity to establish broad-based Associate of Science degree in the Health Sciences
- Currently developing more defined process for data-driven academic program planning that also includes campus-wide and community input
- Conducted assessment of IT services
- Currently evaluating results of IT assessment, the outcome of which will drive decision making during spring 2010
- Improved and expanded access to website
- Reviewing compliance with HLC policies and new regulations in the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

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### **Actions and Results 2009 - 2010**

#### **Primary Actions, 2009 - 2010**

- Created and posted Dean of Workforce position
- Created and posted Director of Institutional Research and Planning position
- Created Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness position
- Created Interim Dean of Student Services position
- Held Default Management meetings with U.S. Department of Education (USDE) representatives regarding USDE's new calculation of student loan default rates
- Created and implemented 5-year campus-wide budget planning
- Calculated and reported budget outlook for 2012 and 2013
- Reviewed and reported 2008 – 2010 progress on FDLTCC Strategic Plan
- Reviewed and reported progress on 2009 – 2010 Lean Plan
- Reviewed and reported progress on President's Work Plan 2009 – 2010 to MnSCU Chancellor's office
- Completed FDLTCC 2010 – 2012 Strategic Plan
- Completed the Assessment Plan 2009 – 2012
- Began conversation of facilities/academic planning scheduled for fall 2010
- Targeted a portion of stimulus monies to teaching and learning improvements on main campus and at Red Lake outreach site
- Met with program coordinators to jointly determine appropriate fees for designated courses

#### **Primary Results, 2009 - 2010**

- Positioned the college to focus more effectively on priority areas, including data-driven decision making and planning, student preparedness, retention and completion, fiscal health, and building collaborations with external constituencies
- Aligned faculty hiring with priority areas, including planning, assessment of student learning, retention and completion, and student preparedness
- Determined faculty hires based on instructional budget data regarding adjunct credits
- Revised position postings to align with priority areas, including planning, evaluation, and improvement based on evaluation
- Estimated reserve in excess of \$150,000 at end of FY10
- Projected positive FY2011 budget
- Continued to build campus awareness of the financial challenges posed by 2012 and 2013 and laid groundwork for future decision making related to how such challenges will be met
- Estimated reserve in excess of \$150,000 at end of FY10
- Developed new strategic benchmarks for 2010 – 2012 Strategic Plan



- Revised Default Management plan and materials to pre-empt possible challenges posed by new USDE calculation of default percentages
- Shifted Foundation position duties to include assistance to Financial Aid office
- Established working relationship with U.S. Department of Education financial aid team
- Purchasing Camtasia software to assist improvement efforts in online learning
- Purchasing twenty laptops for classroom use at Red Lake outreach site
- Based on MnSCU system-wide comparative data and input from program coordinators regarding program plans and needs, set special fees for designated courses that meet student, program, and institutional needs
- Based on budget data, and in alignment with institutional plans, created new positions aligned with priority areas, including planning, assessment of student learning, retention and completion, and student preparedness
- Conducted Employer Survey of area health care providers
- Began review of regional workforce trend data with program coordinators
- Reviewed and updated FDLTCC's MnSCU Program Inventory
- Reviewed FDLTCC articulation agreements
- Pulled outdated articulation agreements from MnTranser.org website and determined agreements to be added
- Continued preparation for fall 2011 HLC focus visit and possible HLC comprehensive site visit in 2013 - 2014

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## Actions and Results 2010 - 2011

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### Primary Actions

- Hosted Karen Solomon and members of the Chancellor's office for a "surprise" visit in October 2010
- Hosted MnSCU Chancellor and academic affairs leaders in March 2011 to review of progress on HLC sanctions
- Hosted two days of meetings with Gates Foundation representative, Linda Baer.
- Developed mapping drafts of FDLTCC core competencies with CCSSE results and HLC criteria
- Attempted to develop mapping drafts of FDLTCC core competencies with results from State licensure exams in law enforcement, human services, and nursing
- Placed two sets of paired courses on spring 2011 schedule
- Piloted an accelerated approach to Beginning Algebra and Higher Algebra
- Revised two courses aimed at first-year student success
- Created and posted Title III positions in financial literacy and technology training
- Created and posted Title III positions for Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program expansion
- Maintained regular reporting on budget and strategic plans
- Began academic planning (five-year focus) preceding facilities planning
- Began facilities planning
- Conducted hazardous waste training for science faculty
- Convened new presidential advisory board
- Maintained emphasis on building and improving relationships with Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Held student/faculty-lead public forum on mining, sulfites, and wild rice
- Held annual meeting with area legislators and met with U.S. and other State legislative representatives
- Based on assessment activities, identified need for a more efficient collection and reporting system at classroom and program levels
- Hosted Noel Levitz consultant for next phase of retention and recruitment work
- Maintained transparency with the campus community and MnSCU system colleges regarding CFI figures
- Tightened monitoring of instructional budget and generated several scenarios for cuts and revenue generation

### Primary Results

- Tested the results of our sanction-related work by hosting Karen Solomon and representatives from the Chancellor's office, and received helpful and positive feedback from the visit, which generated confidence and the creation of a visual to illustrate the alignment of our major plans
- Received helpful feedback and positive direction from Chancellor McCormick, Interim Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs Scott Olson, and Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs Manuel Lopez; visual

regarding draft of the alignment of plans was well-received and a new idea regarding our data-driven decision making went to our drawing board

- Met jointly with community leaders, K-12 educators, legislators, college students, other postsecondary institutions to explore possibilities regarding joint projects leading to student success that the Gates Foundation could possibly fund
- Test drove FDLTCC core competencies map with CCSSE results to mixed reaction; however, as a result, student services is considering adopting the core competencies in their strategic plan, and the MnSCU IR office is reviewing our idea for possible application in public accountability dashboard
- Found that State agencies do not have the human capacity to provide us with FDLTCC's individual results on State licensure exams, each of which contain sections pertinent to FDLTCC's core competencies
- Created path for academic planning to inform facilities planning
- Identified short-term academic priorities focused on student success, improvement of technology training, and current and future program sustainability and possibility
- Positioned college to make informed short-term budget decisions regarding academics and to discuss facilities planning with attention to revenue generation
- Positioned college to be ahead of schedule on facilities planning
- Brought into compliance science labs; faculty developing a plan for a more rapid response rate should a chemical accident occur
- Identified long-term facility expansion of East wing after economic forecast brightens; designs currently being drawn
- Dedicated a portion of remaining ARRA funds to computer lab remodeling and upgrades
- Continued budget planning process, continued to campus informed regarding State and system budget decisions, continued to keep abreast of progress and work regarding strategic plan
- Began identifying potential projects with President's Advisory Board (4/26/11) and scheduling choosing projects (7/26/11) and monitoring project results (10/25/11)
- Continued to work closely with Fond du Lac reservation on student success measures of students from FDL, participated in two FDL planning committees, worked cooperatively on grant initiatives
- Stimulated broader learning and discussion of a local environmental concern regarding mining, sulfites, and wild rice; positioned a variety of voices to address and monitor the issue; positioned some to pursue science grant funding related to sulfites and wild rice
- Maintained positive relationships with legislative leaders and reported progress on sanction-related work to local legislators; received valuable early direction on State higher education budget concerns and helpful push to "measure, measure, measure"
- Confronted the logistical difficulties of pairing general education courses
- Increased student enrollment in Critical Thinking from zero to twenty-three; based on positive results, pairing public speaking and critical thinking is continuing during fall 2011
- Continuing in fall 2011 the accelerated versions of Beginning Algebra and Higher Algebra, based on results from fall 2010 pilot
- Placed on fall schedule "Computing Essentials" and "College Success," consistent with our focus on student preparedness and success and centered on improving student's technology literacy and their knowledge of planning for college and career
- Based on default management work from 2009 - 2010, will have in place financial literacy programming and financial aid advising; based on information/technology literacy assessment results, will have technology training in place for students and faculty
- Will pilot in 2011 - 2012 two orientation sessions based on Nandagikendan model in its abridged form; will pilot an "advanced track" for returning students who participated in Nandagikendan 2010
- Purchased TracDat assessment software as a result of challenges posed with classroom-based rubrics and program-level assessment; as a result, the college is positioned to make a significant stride in its measurement of student learning as well as its planning endeavors.
- Identifying possible new retention and recruitment actions, and already have implement first-year student success courses and earlier orientations
- Continued education about CFI and applied concerns to decision-making regarding long-term facilities expansion
- Positioned the college to make FY12 budget cuts within a week of final State decisions

- Increased summer session revenue

### **Brief Discussion: Sanction 2B, Planning**

When FDLTCC was evaluated by the Higher Learning Commission in April 2009, FDLTCC's major plans (strategic and budget) were less than one year old. Since 2009, our focus has been to align major plans with each other and to become more concrete in order to realize our goals. The bulk of the actions and results in this document are a demonstration of our focus on alignment, a primary reason for the repetition of items across the lists noting actions and results in each sanction. Please see Resource Room for copies of the following:

1. FDLTCC's 2008 - 2013 primary strategic planning document
2. FDLTCC's 2010 - 2012 strategic planning progress reports from 2008 - 2010 and action plan for 2010 - 2012.
3. President's Work Plan 2009 - 2010 (In 2010 - 2011, the format of the President's work plan was changed to an electronic format)
4. FDLTCC's Assessment Strategic Work Plan, 2009 - 2012
5. Facilities planning results (currently in process)
6. Academic planning results (currently in process)

### **Reading FDLTCC's Strategic Plan: Vision, Goals, and Action Plan**

FDLTCC's primary strategic plan, 2008 – 2013, contains a thorough description of the strategic planning process the college undertook in 2008, the comments and concerns of internal and external stakeholders, our strategic vision (directions), the goals for each direction, and the work plans that address each of the goals. After the plan's inception in 2008 - 2009, we publicly posted an abridged version next to the operating budget; we continued to use that format in our 2010 - 2012 iteration.

The actions taken to achieve the goals of the plan through 2008 – 2010 are outlined on pages 13 – 26 of the 2008 – 2013 plan. We reported our progress in spring 2010, and the results of that work are summarized on page 7 of the 2010 – 2012 document and are individually enumerated according to goal areas on pages 20 – 27. The actions we are currently taking to achieve the goals of the 2010 - 2012 iteration of the plan begin on page 16 of the 2010 - 2012 document. To date, the only goal area not currently in production is to “Establish common expectations for a respectful learning environments.” This goal was reserved for work during 2011 – 2012 across the campus community. It will be informed, in part, by work undertaken by a committee from our lean projects in 2009, and also by several years of anecdotal discussions among faculty regarding classroom behavior, attendance, and student preparation in general.

The primary vision areas (directions) we work with are illustrated below. They compose a “practical vision” for a college that had been through a series of turbulent events. A practical vision coupled with achievable actions helped us gain steady footing between 2008 – 2010 and our stability (and achievements) continues to deepen:



### 3-5 Year Practical Vision

Where do we want to be in 3-5 years? What are our goals?

#### *“Being the best Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College”*

Embody and demonstrate the respect for all cultures and promotes the unique role and mission of the College

FDLTCC's 3 vision areas

<p><b>I.</b> Enhancing <b>PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATIONS</b> between the state, tribe and community</p>	<p><b>II.</b> Delivering <b>RESPONSIVE EDUCATION</b> to the students and community</p>	<p><b>III.</b> Supporting <b>SERVICE CAPACITY</b> for student-centered education delivery</p>
<p><b>C.</b> <b>TRIBAL and COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP</b> Keep the tribal and state partnership as the essential “heart” that makes the college healthy, unique and supported by many community partnerships</p>	<p><b>A.</b> <b>EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES</b> Strategically expanded and improved education opportunities that support student employability and transferability and the needs of the community</p>	<p><b>F.</b> <b>SERVICE PERSONNEL</b> Sustained staff and faculty capacity to deliver legendary customer service</p>
<p><b>D.</b> <b>LAND GRANT EMPHASIS</b> Understand and expand the unique opportunities of a Land Grant institution and make them an integral part of the college.</p>	<p><b>B.</b> <b>MANAGED ENROLLMENT</b> A responsive, managed and competitive enrollment plan that is responsive to community needs, understood by all and self-sustaining</p>	<p><b>G.</b> <b>FISCAL STABILITY</b> Proactive vs. reactive fiscal health, stability and sustainability</p>
<p><b>E.</b> <b>CULTURAL LEADERSHIP</b> Constantly live, create, grow and promote a visible and holistic culture of respect that is rooted in Anishinaabe culture</p>		<p><b>H.</b> <b>QUALITY FACILITIES</b> Functional facilities that are people and environment-friendly</p>

FDLTCC's goals areas that help us bring our visions to realities

Our achievements have been accomplished by a broad spectrum of the campus community. In 2008 – 2010, specific committees were assigned to each goal area. In this current round, some of the original committees continue their work and, primarily because of aligning plans, the assessment committee, retention committee, budget committee, and others are involved either implicitly or explicitly. For example, assessment goals are included, in part, on the strategic plan and the assessment plan; goals related to retention are included in the strategic plan and form a part of the work of the retention committee. As explained below, aligning different plans with each other adds another level of accountability and focus on our priorities. Administrative involvement in some of committees is a common thread that also supports the focus on achieving our planning goals.

#### Alignment of Plans

Because FDLTCC operates with several plans, the sanction in this area provided the opportunity to consciously focus on the alignment of plans in order to affect a stronger capacity for accomplishing our goals and carrying out our responsibilities to our students, internal and external constituencies, and the future of the college. FDLTCC's strategic plan is a common point that links our other plans, both narrow and broad. At the broadest level, we are responsible to meet goals laid out in the MnSCU system's strategic plan. We do this, in part, through the president's work plan, which feeds into the system's strategic plan and is fed by FDLTCC's strategic plan. Thus, the college is able to work on its institutional goals while being held accountable to the president, and the president and the college are able to uphold their system-related responsibilities while working on institutional goals. FDLTCC's academic,

assessment, and facilities plans, which are more narrowly focused, are fed by FDLTCC's strategic plan. Parts of the assessment plan are built into the strategic plan. All of FDLTCC's institutional plans are undergirded by the college's mission and budget.

Based on input from Karen Solomon during her October 2010 visit, and by input from the Chancellor's office during their visits in October 2010 and March 2011, we created a visual that captures the alignment of the major plans we have worked with between 2009 - 2011 (see Resource Room: Planning). This visual does not include our facilities and academic plans, which are currently in the process of construction.

The alignment of plans has enabled the college to achieve concrete results based on actions that are rooted in accountability spread across plans and across categories within the strategic plan. Because the strategic planning work groups are led by members of the president's leadership team, and the monitoring of strategic planning work is reported regularly, making decisions based on the results of our efforts is much more likely to occur. Figure 1 on the following page (page 29) demonstrates how this approach has worked for us. The figure illustrates how a very focused retention project in 2008 - 2009 gradually caused action in recruitment and then fed into student preparedness, student success, technology training, and wound in grants, hiring, and budget along the way. The retention and recruitment projects continue and the new actions have begun a measurable life of their own. It is a good example of how useful communication across sectors of the college has facilitated thinking across planning categories and how alignment across categories is created. In addition, it demonstrates how a lone idea concerning a single issue can spur creativity and new projects in other areas when we share results.

The results of our strategic planning are mentioned throughout this report, and the repetition of items in the bulleted lists of actions and results are representative of the alignment of our planning work. Our strategic plan takes visionary directions, assigns them goals, and grounds achievement of those goals in specific actions. It is not a plan that is sitting on the shelf. It has been a central guide to our work on creating a stable and successful future for FDLTCC.

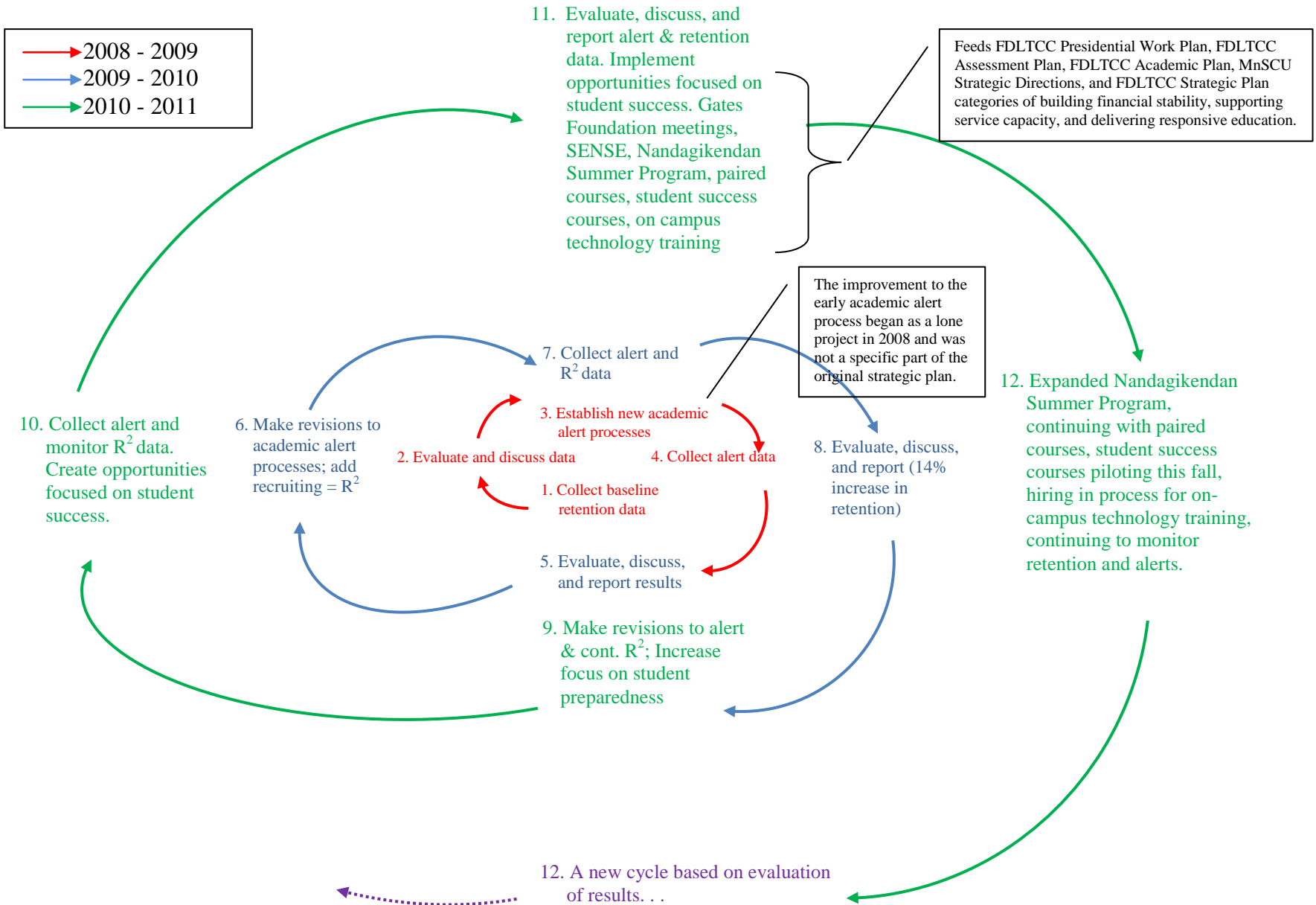
#### Facilities and Academic Planning

The initial results of our academic and facilities planning, which took place during spring 2011, appear in the Resource Room: Planning. Academic planning preceded facilities planning in order to draw a consistent line between academic priorities and possible facilities expansions or renovations. As directed by the MnSCU system, facilities planning was primarily focused on a five-year timeline due to present State economic conditions. Academic planning also primarily focused in the short-term. In both cases, however, we did venture into longer-term possibilities. Budget discussion was included in both planning sessions.

FDLTCC's current composite financial index score does serve as a brake on short-term facilities expansion. As part of preparing for the future, however, we are cognizant that the college must be prepared if an opportunity arises to make a capitol bonding request in the future; therefore, we are having designs created for the expansion of the college's east wing. Both academic and facilities planning also included discussion about academics as the primary vehicle for future revenue generation. As a result, the long-term facilities design will include the construction of at least two classrooms seating sixty students. Our current capacity in most classrooms is forty. During discussions between faculty and administration throughout the past two years, class size has been identified as a limitation in some academic areas in relation to FDLTCC's budget.

Figure 1: The Power of Alignment and Data-Driven Discussion

The Evolution of a Series of Data Collections, Results, Evaluations, and Decisions Spurred by One Retention Project (from managing enrollment in 2008 - 2009 to increasing student success, flexible options for students, enhancing support capacity, and financial management in 2010 - 2011)



The State's economic situation pursuant to higher education funding could constrain the money available to pursue academic innovations; however, because the chief financial officer and administration participated in each of the planning sessions, we are able to keep in mind other possible funding sources as we move forward, and we have already been able to address one of the academic planning discussions using another funding source. Online education and other points related to technology were a major focus of the academic planning results; we have been able to address some foundational goals in this area by dedicating some grant funds toward putting in place on-campus technology training for students and faculty. This is also consistent with our strategic planning goals related to increasing student success.

The complete summary of the first academic planning meeting is located in the Resource Room, as is the PowerPoint presentation titled "Now and Then" that introduced materials to guide the discussions. We utilized a variety of data sets to form the context for the discussions, including FDLTCC's abridged strategic plan, SENSE and CCSSE data, regional K-12 enrollment and ethnicity data, regional population trends, high growth and high pay trends in the Northeast region, and materials from MnSCU's public accountability dashboard. Although we are rightfully wary of "future forecast" data, the college's current academic programs continue to have relevance in the region's future workplaces, and there does not appear to be any enrollment declines on the horizon, with the exception of a very slight dip in the immediate future. The role of technology in higher education appears to accelerate. All of these data led into and contributed to the discussions held throughout the afternoon.

Because our strategic planning is a central guide for the college, we were able to maintain focus on the college's strategic priorities during academic and facilities planning. Our emphasis on aligning plans contributed to consistency between academic and facilities planning. Having broad involvement of the campus community in both planning sessions, including administration, we were able to use discussions from other areas of our work to inform our planning activities and to continue to engage budget in our planning endeavors.

### Assessment Planning

During the comprehensive site visit in April 2009, FDLTCC did not have an assessment plan in place. In fall 2009, we created the Strategic Assessment Work Plan, 2009 – 2012. Like the college's strategic plan, the assessment plan is grounded in actions and is particularly focused on addressing the need for the college to build a stronger foundation of institutional-level assessment. The assessment plan contains attention to four areas: General Education/Competencies Across the Curriculum assessment of student learning, academic programs, academic outreach, and student success. As noted above, elements of the assessment plan are linked to the strategic plan, and like FDLTCC's strategic plan, the assessment plan is a living document intended for use.

The effectiveness of and the results yielded by the assessment plan are discussed thoroughly in the next section of this document. From a general planning perspective, however, there are notable high points. As demonstrated by our approach to strategic planning, grounding the assessment in specific measurable action items focused in specific areas has helped us maintain a steady emphasis on our work and evaluate more clearly the results of our efforts. It has enabled us to put into place the foundation for a complete model of institution-, program-, and classroom-level of student learning. The persistent focus on Competencies Across the Curriculum in the assessment plan has increased campus awareness of the competencies enough to trickle into FDLTCC's student services sector; currently, that unit is exploring how their work applies to the core competencies and how the competencies might be incorporated in their strategic plan. This has the potential to create another dimension of the assessment of student learning at FDLTCC. In addition, due to strategic, academic, and budget planning efforts, the college will be well-positioned to explore that potential without some of the logistical challenges posed by assessment. The

college's purchase of TracDat software will enable us to set up a technological infrastructure that can bridge measurements between plans.

Because we built into the assessment plan specific attention to academic outreach efforts at Red Lake reservation and in our College in the High Schools program, we have been able to begin bridging our main campus assessment of student learning with our offerings at Red Lake, and we have applied for and begun work toward National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Programs (NACEP) accreditation for our College in the High Schools program, which we anticipate receiving in 2012. These actions are also supported by the emphasis on enhancing partnerships in the college's strategic plan. Finally, by building student success into the assessment plan, faculty (and the campus community as a whole) increasingly views retention and recruitment as a campus-wide responsibility; in addition, we have been able to identify the necessity of building a better bridge between student services and faculty with regard to serving students identified as being at risk by classroom instructors.

FDLTCC's assessment plan is discussed more thoroughly in the next section of this document. From a general planning perspective, however, it is useful to note that the college's emphasis on aligning plans has helped push through the hurdles that assessment of student learning sometimes raises. The assessment plan does not exist as a solitary plan separate from the college's other priorities and, therefore, receives vital life support from more than one source.

The college's plans have been vital guides during the past two years. FDLTCC's work on its strategic and other major plans since 2009 has been focused and intentional. Our plans are grounded in actions and results, and because they are "living" plans, most of the content of this report is a direct result of our planning-related work. By aligning our strategic plan with others, both broad and narrow, we have been able to accomplish our institutional and project goals, while also fulfilling our responsibilities to the MnSCU system. In addition, by building regular reports of progress into our bi-weekly meetings, we have been able to create new projects and find support to further develop work related to the college's priorities.



## V. General Education: Institution- and Program-Level Assessment

Through its twenty-two years of development, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College has built a significant tradition of excellence, as demonstrated by the success of its graduates and programs. Achieving some of the highest rankings in the State and in national competitions, however, is only an indirect measure of student learning. Evaluators from the Higher Learning Commission noted specific concern that the college lacked a formal assessment plan and that its data collection and data-driven decision mechanisms were not adequate.

The Higher Learning Commission placed FDLTCC on notice in this area of operations, specifically with regard to Criterion 3, Core Component 3A: The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible, and Criterion 4, Core Component 4C: The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who live and work in a global, diverse and technological society.

To adequately resolve this area of concern, FDLTCC must take the following necessary actions: "The development of an Assessment of Student Learning Plan and demonstrated progress on full implementation, data collection, and appropriate attention to instructional and college decision making based on assessed outcomes. In addition, the college needs to provide evidence that it has embraced the value of the assessment of student learning and has integrated it into their overall curriculum and instructional processes" (p. 27, Assurance Section, *Final Report*). The college also needs "demonstrated evidence that general education and program outcomes have been fully integrated into program development and the evaluation of programs is driven by data informed decisions" (p. 27, Assurance Section, *Final Report*).

The college's primary actions and the results of those actions to date are summarized below.

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### Actions and Results 2009

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#### Primary Actions, April 2009 – December 2009

- April 2009: Informed area legislators of the Commission's assessment-related concerns
- July 2009: Replaced Vice President of Academic Affairs
- July 2009: Faculty of cornerstone course met and revised, in content and format, pre- and post-survey
- August 2009: Faculty and staff met for assessment-related discussions and presentation of general work plan
- August 2009: Academic Affairs and Standards Council met for general discussion of improvements necessary in the area of assessment of general education curriculum.
- August 2009: Administration met with area legislators to update them on the Commission's assessment-related concerns
- September 2009: Academic program coordinators met to begin addressing program-level improvements.
- September 2009: Academic Affairs and Standards Council discussed program review agenda for 2009 – 2010.
- September 2009: Administration met with three faculty designated to lead general education assessment work.
- September – December 2009: Continued reporting on assessment-related work in Leadership Team, Academic Affairs and Standards Council, and Shared Governance meetings

#### Primary Results, April 2009 – December 2009

- September 2009: Academic program coordinators developed list of work items, including reviewing and revising program learning goals and outcomes, reviewing and reporting program advisory boards activities and composition, engaging additional budget process education, reviewing program review policy, establishing data sets necessary for routine program coordination, reviewing the scheduling process, improving communication—internal and external—regarding learning goals, outcomes, and results.
- September – October 2009: Academic program coordinators met weekly to review and revise program learning goals and outcomes.

- Academic program coordinators completed work on program learning goals and outcomes
- Implemented revised AMIN 1050 pre-/post-survey
- Established two programs for review in 2009 – 2010, including general education/AA degree.
- Established VP of Academic Affairs as key figure accountable for general education/AA review and faculty will serve as evaluators.
- Established that data from fall 2009 general education assessment will inform, in part, 2010 review of general education/A.A.
- Established general education assessment work goals for fall semester 2009
- September – October 2009: Broadened the four general education competencies to four “Competencies Across the Curriculum”
- September - October 2009 Revised Competencies Across the Curriculum assessment tool
- November 2009: Delivered Competencies Across the Curriculum assessment tool
- Set foundation for spring 2010 analysis and discussion of results of Competencies Across the Curriculum assessment
- October 2009: Developed process for revising common course outlines, specifically addressing learning goals and outcomes under the four Competencies Across the Curriculum
- October 2009: Revised course outline forms to explicitly address the Competencies Across the Curriculum
- October – November 2009: Held eight open work sessions for revising student learning goals and outcomes stated on course outlines
- Revised course outlines
- November 2009: Developing four holistic rubrics, one for each competency, to be used voluntarily in classrooms
- November – December 2009: Developing institutional data collection method for competency-based rubrics
- Laid foundation for comparing broad-based assessment of competencies with classroom-based competency rubrics
- Began discussion of building bridges between core course assessment and program-level assessment of learning goals and outcomes
- Laid foundation for three to five year assessment plan for finalization in spring 2010
- Laid groundwork for “mapping” the general education curriculum in spring 2010
- November – December 2009: Began discussion of establishing three academic divisions, each with division heads, to further direct FDLTCC’s assessment development

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## **Actions and Results 2010**

### **Primary Actions, January – May 2010**

- Completed the Assessment Plan 2009 – 2012
- Prioritizing Educational Strategies work group and Managing Enrollment work group reported their 2008 – 2009 progress on the 2008 – 2013 Strategic Plan
- Began conversation of facilities/academic planning, taking place during fall 2010
- Based on budget data, and in alignment with institutional plans, created positions matched with priority areas, including planning, assessment of student learning, retention and completion, student preparedness, and building collaborations with external stakeholders
- Created and posted Director of Institutional Research and Planning position
- Created Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness position
- Created Interim Dean of Student Services position
- Did not renew two probationary faculty positions
- Appointed one probationary faculty as unlimited full-time faculty
- Complied with MSCFA bargaining unit requirements, and posted three new unlimited full-time faculty positions
- Began discussions of improving online course offerings
- Attended and made presentation at the Minnesota Institute on Student Engagement
- Attended two MnSCU-initiated events on assessment and student learning outcomes
- Held three teaching and learning seminars devoted to classroom assessment and using data for classroom decision making

- Continued to work, report, and monitor the academic alert process
- Embedded core competency learning goals and outcomes in approximately 90% of course outlines
- Reported and discussed results of CCSSE 2009 and CCFSSSE 2009 at campus-wide duty day
- Reported and discussed results of Competencies Across the Curriculum (CAC) general education assessment at February 2010 Duty Day
- Discussed classroom-based rubric project at February 2010 Duty Day faculty meeting and explored rubrics and competency features in Desire 2 Learn online course software
- Completed classroom-based rubrics for two core competencies
- Piloted classroom-based rubrics for two core competencies: Information/Technology Literacy and Communication

### **Primary Results, January – May 2010**

- Positioned the college to focus more effectively on priority areas, including data-driven decision making and planning, student preparedness, retention and completion, fiscal health, and building collaborations with external constituencies
- Aligned faculty hiring with priority areas, including planning, assessment of student learning, retention and completion, and student preparedness
- Revised position postings to include attention to priority areas, including planning, evaluation, and improvement based on evaluation
- As a “pre-planning” activity, began collecting ideas from faculty for facilities and academic planning in fall 2010
- Proposed, wrote, and submitted three projects related to “intrusive advising” and retention projects for potential funding through MnSCU-led initiatives
- In partnership with FDL tribal college education director, submitted portions of retention-related projects for AICF funding
- Conducted Employer Survey of area health care providers
- Began review of regional workforce trend data with program coordinators
- Reviewed and updated FDLTCC’s MnSCU Program Inventory
- Reviewed FDLTCC articulation agreements
- Pulled outdated articulation agreements from MnTranser.org website and determined agreements to be added
- Continued preparation for fall 2011 HLC focus visit and possible HLC comprehensive site visit in 2013 - 2014
- Created a research and planning position to specifically focus on rooting data-driven decision making, evaluation and assessment, and planning
- Purchasing Camtasia software to assist improvement efforts in online learning
- Purchasing twenty laptops for classroom use at Red Lake outreach site
- Reduced reports of logistical frustrations at Red Lake outreach site from many in fall 2009 to zero in spring 2010
- Eliminated late arrival of textbooks at Red Lake outreach site
- Maintained visits to Red Lake outreach site every three weeks
- Jointly coordinated contacts with students on academic suspension at Red Lake outreach site
- Attended 2010 graduation celebration at Red Lake outreach site
- Based on MnSCU system-wide comparative data and input from program coordinators regarding program plans and needs, set special fees for designated courses that meet student, program, and institutional needs
- Invited and collected “Ah Ha” moments from faculty regarding learning-as-teachers and classroom assessment
- Received \$435,000 Minnesota Department of Energy grant to become the lead BPI (Building Performance Inventory) train-the-trainer certification site in Minnesota
- Adopted broad-based A.S. in health sciences
- Hosted national American Indian Business Leaders meeting
- Based on discussion of CCSSE 2009 and CCFSSSE 2009 results, registered to deliver SENSE survey of first-year students during fall 2010
- Included in AICF proposal a request for phase two funding of Noel Levitz managing enrollment and recruitment services

### **Primary Actions: May - December 2010**

- Piloted accelerated delivery of developmental math (beginning algebra and higher algebra)
- Expanded assessment committee
- Revised CAC Assessment Measure
- Gave CAC Assessment Measure
- Maintained focus on communication and information/technology literacy classroom rubrics
- Reported assessment results at Faculty duty day
- Distributed and piloted classroom rubrics across faculty
- Piloted the use of D2L software for data collection of classroom rubric results
- Delivered SENSE survey
- Participated in two days of community meetings with Gates Foundation
- Piloted mapping CCSSE results to HLC criteria and FDLTCC competencies
- Piloted mapping state licensure exam results to FDLTCC competencies
- Continued the Assessment Connection newsletter
- Piloted Word of the Week
- Held 3 Center for Teaching and Learning sessions on assessment and student learning
- Piloted Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program
- Maintained collection and reporting on early academic alerts
- Became certified to provide the Building Performance Institute's national certification in home energy auditing
- Hosted HLC Staff Liaison Karen Solomon for “surprise” (no faculty and staff preparation) evaluation test-drive

### **Primary Results: May - December 2010**

- Increased completion rate of Beginning Algebra
- Achieved results on CAC that were useful
- Achieved results on CAC Assessment Measure, classroom rubrics, and SENSE survey that together point to a problem with our students' information/technology literacy; consequently, two positions dedicated to developing training for students and faculty in D2L and other technologies were posted with Title III grant funds and Student Services is adding hands-on computer activities to orientation
- Increased faculty participation in classroom rubrics from 5 to 17 (consequently, some first-time users saw classroom rubrics as useful tools)
- Found that using D2L with the classroom rubrics is cumbersome and disappointing with regard to building an efficient data collection tool for the purposes of institutional assessment of student learning (consequently, two faculty designed another, leaner possibility; in addition, the purchase of TracDat software is being considered)
- Developed an idea through the Gates Foundation meetings to have college students make presentations to high school students about college (consequently, students from FDLTCC's Weekend College delivered such presentations during spring semester 2011 at the Ojibwe School on the Fond du Lac reservation)
- Presented results of mapping CCSSE to core competencies and HLC criteria to student services meeting (consequently, student services is discussing the possibility of adopting the core competencies into their work)
- Found that although the licensure exams given by state agencies governing nursing, law enforcement, and chemical dependency have components that parallel FDLTCC's core competencies, getting the data on our specific students' performances is not a possibility because the agencies do not have the capacity (time) to do so
- Achieved positive results from Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program pilot; identified logistical challenges related to timing of registration and student access to e-mail, accounts, and D2L; results formed basis for new application for funding and for expansion of the idea
- Became one of only two colleges in the five state region able to provide BPI national certification in home energy auditing
- Became the train-the-trainer provider for BPI national certification for the Minnesota Office of Energy Security, delivering training to ten other colleges across the state
- Engaged a consultant from Noel Levitz to evaluate and make recommendations for improvements to our retention efforts, including early alerts, 0-40, and other projects
- Received positive feedback from HLC's Karen Solomon on sanction-related work on assessment of student learning

## Actions and Results 2011

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### Primary Actions: January – May 2011

- Compiled and reported out CAC and classroom rubric data
- Reported SENSE results from fall 2010
- Delivered CCSSE 2011
- Delivered CCFSSSE 2011
- Offered two paired courses: Critical Thinking with Public Speaking and Efficient Reading II with Intro to Sociology, resulting in improved completion rate in Critical Thinking
- Created new forensic biology course through a partnership with UMD and FDLTCC's law enforcement program and biology faculty
- Placed on fall 2011 schedule the pairing of Efficient Reading II with General Biology I
- Revised computer literacy and college transitions courses to be offered in fall 2011
- Evaluated positively by State Nursing Board reviewing the RN program
- Redesigned delivery of two key courses in Nursing Mobility (RN) program and revised and implemented Nursing Role Transition course.
- Revised portions of the Electrical Utilities Technology program curriculum
- Added reading prerequisite to Early Childhood program courses
- Began identifying gateway courses in programs
- Distributed to and discussed program learning goals and outcomes with general faculty
- Began discussion of purchasing TracDat assessment software
- Continued to distribute Assessment Connection newsletter
- Joined NACEP as a preliminary step before sending in our request for NACEP accreditation of FDLTCC's College in the High Schools program
- Developed surveys for College in the High Schools students and staff
- Scheduled professional developmental opportunity at FDLTCC, slated for August 16th
- Delivered CAC Assessment Measure at Red Lake for the first time
- Assisted with developing curriculum review process and course outline process at Red Lake
- Began developing articulation agreement with Red Lake
- Held first academic planning session
- Created two Title III positions specifically focused on Desire to Learn online course software and other technology training for students and faculty
- Gave presentation on Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program at MnSCU's Chief Diversity Officers training
- Gave presentation on FDLTCC's developmental English and math redesigns at MnSCU Board of Trustees subcommittee meeting on developmental education
- Held meetings with Noel Levitz consultant for two-day visit
- Held 3 Center for Teaching and Learning sessions on assessment and student learning
- Attended HLC general program, self study workshop
- Began training two new faculty in HLC Self Study process
- Shared "results" of HLC Annual Conference at faculty duty day
- Participated in facilities planning meeting
- Met with Andy Wells, CEO of Wells Technology, to explore the Wells Academy and opportunities for partnership
- Participated in Promising Practices RSP conference
- Organized Northeast CAO discussions of K-12, developmental education, and assessment across the nine colleges
- Drafted Northeast Region's Summary of Promising Practices with NE CAO's
- Hosted MnSCU Chancellor, Interim Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, and Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs for progress report on HLC sanctions
- Maintained data collection of early academic alert retention activity
- Wrote for continued funding of Nandagikendan Summer Academic program
- Reviewed Assessment Strategic Work Plan 2009 - 2012

### **Primary Results, January - May 2011**

- Identified positive effect on CAC scores of completion of core general education courses; identified completion of math and science courses as having the most positive impact on CAC scores; continued to see low scores in information/technology literacy
- Continued to focus on and monitor options for students that enhance student success in general education courses and in programs
- Purchased TracDat software in order to resolve some logistical challenges and make assessment-related data collection more efficient at institution- and program-levels
- Raised completion rates in developmental English by fifteen percent in 2010
- Redesigned delivery of two key courses in Nursing Mobility (RN) program and revised and implemented Nursing Role Transition course.
- Revised nursing program applications and program documents
- Placed on fall 2011 schedule Efficient Reading II course paired with two sections of General Biology I
- Repeating accelerated sections of Beginning Algebra and Higher Algebra on fall 2011 schedule
- Identified that Assessment Connection was not being sent across the campus community but only to faculty; expanded distribution
- Positioned FDLTCC to receive Gates Foundation monies related to promising practices if an award is made to the MnSCU system
- Created opportunity to improve information/technology literacy of students and to enhance faculty's knowledge and use of technology in classrooms
- Began initial work on bridging assessment practices to Red Lake outreach site; identified challenges with CAC assessment and with articulation
- Received results of Noel-Levitz consultation and began discussion of related projects and changes based on results
- Began to address new compliance areas based on attending HLC's annual meeting; brought in two new faculty for the first of three years of self-study training; rotated three faculty out of self study training and into general program
- Began arranging a faculty development activity for August based on attending HLC's annual meeting; began implementing ideas regarding how we can highlight and "market" assessment of student learning at FDLTCC
- Created groundwork for future project with Wells Academy, an academy that focuses on training people who are not considered "college material" by the broader society for high tech production jobs at Wells Technology
- Submitted target goals for MnSCU's Promising Practices initiative with the Gates Foundation and positioned FDLTCC to receive funding if monies are awarded to MnSCU
- Positioned FDLTCC and the Northeast Region's colleges to gain some competitiveness with the Metro Alliance during a time of system restructuring and scarce resources
- Received positive input on FDLTCC's sanction-related work from Chancellor's office with regard to assessment of student learning; drafted visual of how retention data has led to spin-off projects
- Reported retention data to campus community
- Made revisions to Assessment Strategic Work Plan 2009 - 2012 based on results of review
- Awarded \$15,000 to continue Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program for entering students
- Identified completed work and work not completed (as of May 2011) on the Assessment Strategic Work Plan 2009 - 2012

### **Brief Discussion: Sanctions 3 & 4, Teaching and Learning**

During the April 2009 comprehensive site visit, the weaknesses in FDLTCC assessment practices focused on institution- and program-levels of the assessment of student learning; classroom practices were considered sound. When we began addressing this sanction, we had in place a foundation for the institutional assessment of student learning; however, the infrastructure for program-level assessment was not in place. Through our work during the past four semesters, the faculty has driven significant changes to FDLTCC's assessment model and, for the first time, yielded direct evidence of student learning that has been used in institutional decision-making in hiring, programming for entering students, and

purchasing. The discussion below addresses our assessment-related work, what we have learned and identified along the way, and our future direction based on the results of our work.

### Assessment Planning and the Assessment Committee

In 2009 – 2010, three primary tasks needed to unfold simultaneously: 1) Create a new assessment plan that effectively charted a course of rebuilding and building anew a model for the assessment of student learning; 2) Revive, revise, and implement the college’s institutional general education assessment tool; and 3) Begin construction of program learning goals and outcomes. We achieved each of these goals and many more along the way. The creation of the assessment plan provided the opportunity to think about the assessment of learning beyond our classrooms and eight academic programs and into our academic outreach efforts and our student success initiatives. As a result, the assessment plan covers goals in four areas relevant to student learning rather than two. The resurrection of the college’s institutional measurement of general education assessment and the building of program-related learning goals and outcomes provided the opportunity to think more deeply about FDLTCC’s four core competencies, which resulted in a major structural change to the college’s course outlines. The work in total helped us to identify logistical challenges in data collection and to explore further how indirect evidence of student learning can be made more relevant to our overall knowledge about student learning at FDLTCC.

The assessment committee, led by three core faculty and six focused on the institutional measurement of student learning, met weekly during 2009 – 2010 and twice weekly during 2010 – 2011. In addition to their immediate focus on measuring student learning, they also created a monthly newsletter called “Assessment Connection,” featuring stories and events related to assessment activities on campus. They piloted in 2009 – 2010 a “Word of the Week” regarding assessment and student learning on the college’s information kiosk. They worked with the faculty responsible for the college’s Center for Teaching and Learning efforts to create twelve in-house assessment-related lunch hours for faculty during 2009 – 2011. They gathered two sets of “Aha Moments,” general end-of-the-year faculty reflections about what they had learned over the course of the year. They gave three presentations regarding assessment results during faculty duty days (mandatory faculty gatherings held prior to and during a semester). In addition, they insured that assessment was a topic of discussion at faculty association meetings (contract-mandated bi-weekly meetings). They attended strategic, academic, and facilities planning meetings. They met with faculty individually to assist work on creating and/or revising student learning goals and outcomes and created and piloted a second institutional measure of student learning (classroom-based rubrics). They reviewed their work related to the goals of the assessment plan and forwarded the review to the vice president of academic affairs. The FDLTCC assessment committee has been unyielding in its commitment to improving the college’s assessment practices, and the results of their work is evident in the discussion below.

### Competencies Across the Curriculum (CAC)

In 1998 – 1999, FDLTCC created five core competencies that each graduate should attain through the general education curriculum. They were: Information/Technology Literacy, Problem Solving, Communication, Culture, and Human Experience. The institutional measurement of these competencies was limited to the English and math departments. In 2003, FDLTCC narrowed the list of competencies to four: Information/Technology Literacy, Problem Solving, Communication, Culture, and after much discussion of appropriate measurement systems, developed a broad assessment tool focused on the competencies. After 2005, the data collection process stopped due to time and staffing constraints. The college primarily relied on student performance results from State exams and from data regarding student success in transfer to measure the health of its general education curriculum. In fall 2009, FDLTCC renewed its focus on institutional assessment and undertook major foundation-building actions, including implementing again its institutional assessment of the core competencies.

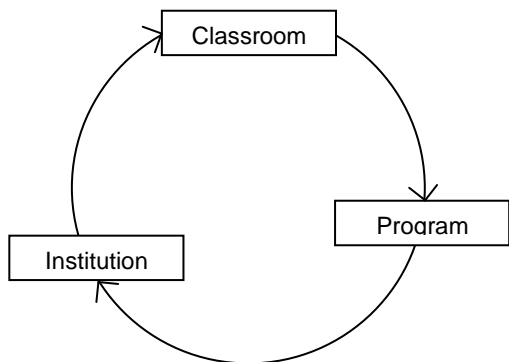
During fall 2009, as program coordinators began work on revising and/or creating anew program learning goals and outcomes, the question was raised: If the core competencies are “general education competencies,” do they apply to program-specific courses or only to courses considered part of the general education curriculum? After some discussion, program coordinators adopted the competencies as the focus of their learning goals and outcomes and suggested renaming the General Education Competencies to “Competencies Across the Curriculum” (CAC). Faculty moved the name change through process and CAC was adopted. This change provided the opportunity to build a link between classroom-, program-, and institution-level assessment of the core competencies by creating the opportunity to embed learning goals and outcomes specific to the competencies across all of the college’s course outlines.

<b>Competencies Across the Curriculum</b>	
<b>Competency definition 1: Information and technology literacy:</b>	The student will be able to demonstrate the ability to use print and non-print tools effectively for the discovery, acquisition, and evaluation of information as well as core computer tools for the manipulation and presentation of information.
<b>Competency definition 2: Ability to communicate:</b>	The student will be able to demonstrate the ability to listen, read, comprehend, and deliver information in a variety of formats.
<b>Competency definition 3: Problem solving:</b>	The student will be able to conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information to formulate and solve problems.
<b>Competency definition 4: Culture:</b>	The student will be able to demonstrate knowledge of Anishinaabe traditions and culture, knowledge of his/her own traditions and culture, knowledge of other’s traditions and cultures, and respect for global diversity.

**Course Outlines**

By collective bargaining contract, each course at FDLTCC is accompanied by a course outline, which serves as a public document defining the course, its structure, and content, including learning goals and outcomes. This helps to ensure that each section of the course, no matter the instructor, achieves the same minimal set of learning goals and outcomes. FDLTCC course outlines are reviewed on a three-year cycle, the next of which is scheduled for 2011 - 2012 (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning for examples of course outlines, pre-2009 and post 2009).

In fall 2009, FDLTCC faculty agreed to revise the course outline form and focus on embedding the four core competencies across the curriculum. Although several other institutions in the MnSCU system have core competencies, few have embedded the competencies into their course outlines, and fewer have embedded competencies complete with learning goals and outcomes. Typically, such an action is controversial among the faculty, and FDLTCC’s undertaking, led by faculty, is a rarity. Embedding the core competencies formally into the course outlines, however, is most significant because it lays the groundwork for more measurement possibilities. It most obviously assists in classroom-based assessment; however, because programs are built of courses, and because our new program learning goals and outcomes are built of the core competencies, a bridge between program- and classroom-level measurement is created; finally, because classroom and program level assessment are linked, and because the institution-level assessment tool is built on the competencies, a third link is created.



The changes to course outlines focused solely on embedding the competencies and associated learning goals and outcomes. This specific revision of course outlines has been completed for most of the curriculum; the outlines remaining to be completed are courses that have not been offered for the past three or more years. During the revision process, we scheduled seven in-house opportunities to receive



assistance and clarification regarding the task at hand. Assessment committee members also assisted faculty individually. The most significant outcome of the revision was the fact that we put into place across the curriculum a common groundwork for the assessment of student learning at multiple levels. Based on what we learned, we know that the 2011 – 2012 revisions will include another round of attention to student learning goals and outcomes, and with this, we will include a training opportunity with personnel external to FDLTCC to look more deeply at how to effectively write and measure learning goals and outcomes.

Shortly after we began our work on the course outlines, the MnSCU undertook a project called "Students First," a major system-wide initiative that includes the public posting of each institution's course outlines for the benefit of student transfer. The revisions we made to our outlines fit the system's template well, and FDLTCC will be posting its course outlines during summer 2011.

### Assessment of Core Competencies

Between 2003 – 2005, FDLTCC faculty developed and implemented a broad measure for assessing the general education curriculum. It was structured according to the core competencies, and we had received high marks from the Higher Learning Commission on our 2005 monitoring report. Though our attention to classroom-level assessment maintained a solid presence between 2005 – 2008, the institutional-level assessment stalled, which was a primary concern of the evaluating team during the April 2009 visit. As we headed into our sanction-related work, we had the advantage of our previously successful efforts. During fall 2009, and based on the results of work occurring between 2003 – 2005, the assessment committee revised its broad assessment tool for measuring the core competencies (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning for CAC instruments 2009 and 2010). The revisions consisted included:

- Rounding each competency to fifteen questions, so each question set consisted of the same number of questions
- Eliminating the list of feeder high schools, which had not previously revealed any correlations between student performance and feeder schools
- Expanding list of courses taken to more adequately reflect the foundational curriculum in which students would acquire the skills associated with the core competencies
- Expanding ethnic categories, which had become an interesting piece of “side data” during 2003 – 2005, coupled with CCSSE data, regarding our students’ sense of personal identity and its importance
- Delivering in fall semester rather than spring, which was a significant logistical shift from previous years but was necessary to ensure two years of complete results that could be shared with and discussed by the faculty
- Renamed the tool from General Education Assessment instrument to the CAC instrument

In 2009 – 2010, the CAC instrument was completed by 250 students. Two questions were duplicated, one in Communication and one in Information/Technology Literacy, and the final fifty-three copies that were distributed were missing some questions due to a copy machine error. These were counted as blank. Consistent with previous years of delivering the assessment, the demographics of the students completing the instrument largely mirrored the institution’s overall student demographics, based on FDLTCC’s statistical profile:

**Fall 2009 CAC Assesment: Student Demographics**

	<b>CAC</b>	<b>FDLTCC</b>
	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	52% (130)	43%
Female	44.4% (111)	57%
Transgender	1.2% (3)	
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian or other Native American	14%	15%
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	1.6%	2%
Black or African American, Non-Hispanic	2.8%	2%
European American	52.8%	76%
Hispanic, Latino, Spanish	2.8%	1%
Mixed	4%	
Other	16.8%	4%
<b>Student Age</b>		
16 to 18	12.4%	29%
19 to 24	53.2%	33%
25 to 30	12%	13%
31 to 35	6.0%	
36+	14%	25%

The most significant revision made to the instrument was the addition of questions to build each of the four areas into fifteen question sets. Previously, we realized that the uneven and small number of questions for each competencies perhaps skewed the scores negatively. We anticipated the revision would improve scores overall by increasing the likelihood of correct answers on an increased number of questions. Our hypothesis was incorrect.

The scores on the fall 2009 broad assessment of the core competencies were approximately the same as those produced in previous trials between 2003 - 2005:

**Fall 2009 CAC Assessment: Overall Results**

<b>CAC October 2010</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Problem Solving</b>	<b>Information/ Technology Literacy</b>
At or above 70 percent of respondents answering correctly	29%	27%	20%	.07%
At or above 60 percent of respondents answering correctly	50%	27%	27%	29%
At or above 50 percent of respondents answering correctly	57%	60%	33%	29%
	Majority passed with a D or higher	Majority passed with a D or higher	Majority did not pass	Majority did not pass

These overall results were discussed by the faculty during FDLTCC's February 2010 Duty Day. The faculty decided to not abandon the instrument and to focus, in 2010 – 2011, on an examination of connections within the data regarding other aspects of measurement, including performance differences based on credits completed and completion of core courses, such as first-year English and math.

In addition, the lack of "useful" results led to thinking about developing an alternative broad measure that could be used with the CAC instrument already in place to locate if in fact our students really were seriously deficient in the competency areas. The assessment committee and faculty discussed the development of classroom-based rubrics to more specifically measure the core competencies. Ideally, a classroom-based approach is a more targeted measure of the competencies and could be used in a

comparative manner with the CAC assessment tool. The results of this pilot are discussed on pages 46 - 47 below.

During fall 2010, the assessment committee was expanded to include math and music faculty, and they undertook a new round of revisions to the CAC assessment tool. They chose not to make major changes in the content of the sixty questions; rather, they applied a more mathematical approach and used some basic principles from psychometrics to make the instrument more effective as a measure of achievement in the four curriculum areas and less of an aptitude test. They made consistent four selections to each question; the 2009 CAC had a mixture of 4-selection, 5-selection, and 2-selection (true-false) questions, and each competency area had its own mix of these. They randomized the correct selections (a, b, c, or d) throughout the test and balanced the number of each a, b, c, or d. They also changed the style of answering questions. Whenever possible, they posed questions in a way that could be answered directly without selections, which improves the chance that the instrument measures knowledge and skills, not multiple-choice test-taking skills.

The assessment was given in November 2010. The committee avoided distributing it in classes that had already given the SENSE survey in late September 2010. As in previous distributions, the CAC was anonymous, and it was difficult to know which students worked on it to the best of their ability. Some students "protested" the CAC 2010 - 2011. Of 202 CAC tests returned, nine tests were tossed out, leaving 193 tests for analysis. This pruning was easy to do at a glance from the interesting geometrical patterns, such as every bubble in some rows filled in or neat zigzag patterns. The committee corrected the instruments by hand when student corrections or stray marks on the bubble forms were obvious.

The committee worked with the results in a manner that offered a much improved, more meaningful view of the data. The average score was 53.62 percent (32.2 raw). The distribution of scores, out of sixty, was as follows:

0-5	1	21-25	32	41-45	33
6-10	0	26-30	30	46-50	9
11-15	4	31-35	35	51-55	2
16-20	17	36-40	38	56-60	0

For a sign of validity, ninety-four percent answered question 2 correctly, an "easy" question; on the other hand, twelve percent answered question 35 correctly, which is a tricky question with most answering B rather than D.

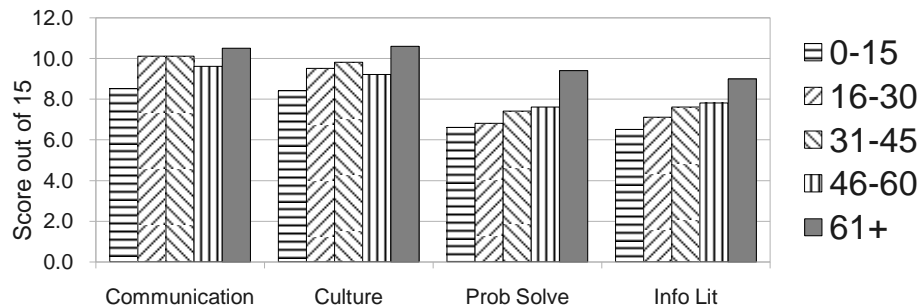
The revisions to the questions did not boost the overall scores of the assessment.

<i>(N = 193)</i>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Prob Solve</b>	<b>Info Lit</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mean	9.4	9.2	7.2	7.3	33.1

Despite this, a more specific view of how the data correlated with various factors provided results that, coupled with results from other data sources, have been useful to further inform discussions and/or to make decisions. The CAC data correlated to credits completed was purposely examined due to noting consistent differences in the CCSSE scores in 2007 and 2009. These indirect data, in part, have informed our efforts to focus on entering students, which has included making decisions about curricular changes, developing the Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program, and delivering the SENSE survey. The CAC data are our first direct measurement of the difference between students who have completed 0 - 30 credits versus those who have completed 30 or more credits.

Credits	Communication	Culture	Prob Solve	Info Lit	Total
0-15	8.5	8.4	6.6	6.5	30.0
16-30	10.1	9.5	6.8	7.1	33.4
31-45	10.1	9.8	7.4	7.6	34.9
46-60	9.6	9.2	7.6	7.8	34.3
61+	10.5	10.6	9.4	9.0	39.5

Subgroup Score by FDLTCC Credits



The highlight of these data is the progressive improvement in the information/technology literacy and problem solving competencies. The students who continue to pursue their studies demonstrate growth. The almost three-point increase in scores is significant given the students' starting points when they are in their first semester with us. The fourth-semester dip in scores in the communication and culture competencies is difficult to explain; however, given that each dip precedes an improvement by over one point, perhaps we are seeing a moment in time right before an "aha moment" in which their knowledge base finally comes together. Monitoring how these figures change across time should create a trend that sheds light on the data.

Student performance on the CAC instrument based on number of credits completed also helps us to think about the logistics of the assessment itself. If our students are taking the assessment in the fall, and it is their first semester, the scores are likely be low. Given the variety of improvements we are making with regard to focusing on entering students and improving student preparedness, we should be able to see some positive change in future CAC scores for students with 0 - 30 credits.

The 2010 CAC assessment results also provided the first direct indication that completing our core general education courses positively impacts student performance on the instrument. Students who have completed math, logic, and/or science are especially more likely to perform better on the assessment:

**COURSE COMPLETED OR NOT**

	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Prob Solve</b>	<b>Info Lit</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>math1010</b>	10.2	9.7	8.9	8.6	37.4
not	9.2	9.0	6.7	6.9	31.8
<b>math1025</b>	9.5	9.4	6.7	7.6	33.2
not	9.4	9.2	7.3	7.3	33.1
<b>math1030</b>	9.8	10.1	8.2	8.6	36.7
not	9.3	9.0	7.1	7.1	32.6
<b>math2001</b>	11.3	11.8	11.3	8.8	43.3
not	9.3	9.1	7.1	7.2	32.8
<b>chem1001</b>	10.6	10.6	9.7	9.0	39.9
not	9.3	9.0	7.0	7.1	32.4
<b>biol1010</b>	10.3	9.4	7.6	7.7	34.9
not	9.2	9.2	7.2	7.2	32.8
<b>biol1101</b>	10.2	9.5	8.3	8.4	36.3
not	9.0	9.1	6.8	6.8	31.7
<b>engl1001</b>	9.6	9.6	7.7	7.9	35.0
not	8.9	8.7	6.7	6.6	31.0
<b>spch1010</b>	9.7	9.3	8.6	8.0	35.6
not	9.4	9.2	7.1	7.2	32.8
<b>spch1020</b>	9.7	9.3	7.4	7.3	33.7
not	9.2	9.1	7.1	7.3	32.8
<b>phil1020</b>	10.7	9.6	8.7	9.0	38.0
not	9.3	9.2	7.2	7.2	32.9
<b>amin1050</b>	9.9	9.6	7.6	7.6	34.6
not	9.1	8.9	7.0	7.1	32.2

This evidence supported the pairing of SPCH 1010: Public Speaking with PHIL 1020: Critical Thinking during spring 2011. In fall 2010, PHIL 1020 was cancelled due to zero enrollment. In spring 2011, the pairing resulted in an enrollment of twenty-three students, seventeen of whom completed and fourteen passed with a C or better. This is a significant success for the students who completed their symbolic logic/math requirement, as well as a financially productive approach to offering the course. It is also one example of how our strategic planning work on providing flexible options to students is working. Based on these results, the paired offering is on the fall 2011 schedule. These results help us to think about our core general education curriculum, how a student's progress through it, and why it is advantageous for students to complete their symbolic logic/math requirement early on their academic path.

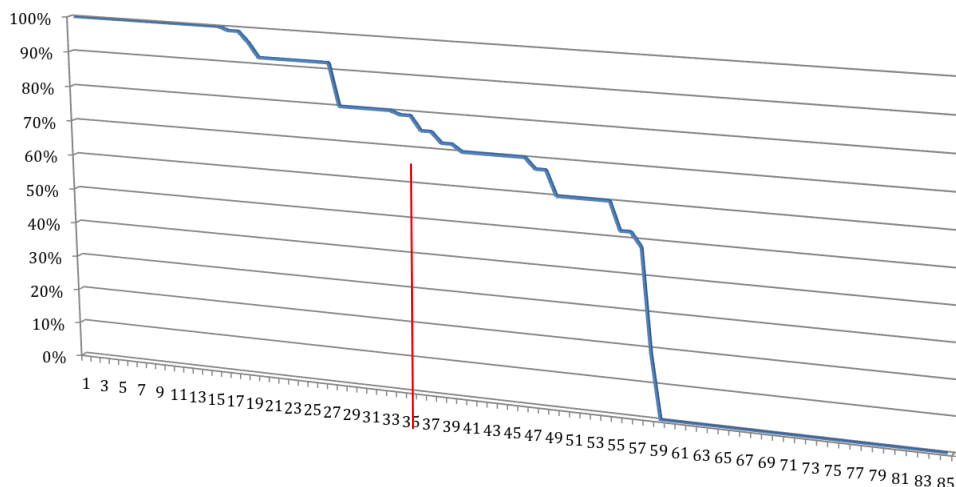
Work on the CAC instrument since 2009 has been productive. Most significantly, we have yielded results for the first time that enabled us to use direct evidence of student learning in decision-making and to begin monitoring the effectiveness of some aspects of our institutional decision-making, such as flexible options for students, through direct evidence from our institutional assessment of student learning.

**Classroom-Based Rubrics**

During fall 2009, the assessment committee researched classroom-based rubrics in an attempt to identify a method that might effectively measure FDLTCC's core competencies alongside the CAC instrument. In addition, they researched methods of measurement that could be used efficiently by FDLTCC classroom faculty while, at the same time, be efficiently used as aggregate results at an institutional-level. These efforts were discussed with faculty during the February 2010 Duty Day.

The assessment committee presented a method in FDLTCC's Desire 2 Learn (D2L) online course software, in which all FDLTCC faculty have accounts, that seemed to provide a ready-made capacity to create rubrics for each competency. This capacity had not been turned on by FDLTCC's D2L administrators, but working with the assessment committee, they enabled the feature across all courses. Two important challenges were presented, however. The D2L terminology and structure of the competencies and rubrics differed from FDLTCC's. The faculty agreed that the assessment committee should develop a clear procedure that can be consistently spread across all of the courses. In addition, the software did not include an administrative feature that allowed rubric scores to be collected at an institutional level for broad use as a measurement of learning of the core competencies. At the time, another MnSCU institution was struggling with the same issues with the software. We hoped that it would be resolved in the summer 2010 by D2L system-wide updates and improvements. The assessment committee and faculty also agreed to pilot classroom-based rubrics for the communication and information/technology competencies during spring 2010. The results of the pilot were as follows:

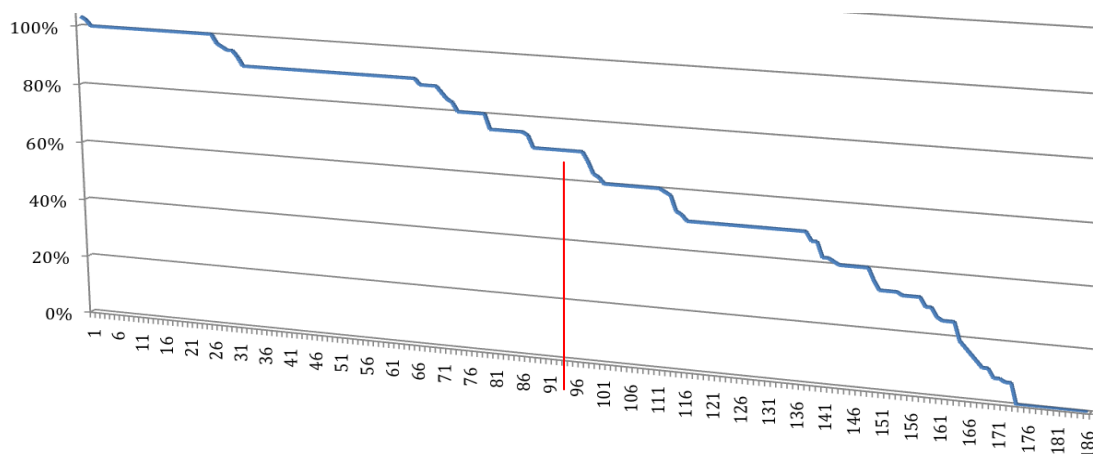
**Classroom-Based Rubric: Communication Pilot, Spring 2010**



The assessment committee found that approximately fifty-four percent of the students performed at a C-level or higher across classes in English, early childhood development, and philosophy. The assessment committee was surprised by the disappointing results. It was expected that a classroom-based rubric would naturally produce higher results simply because the assessment is more specific and controlled in a classroom environment. The fact that the results were lower than expected also drew immediate comparisons to the results of the broad CAC assessment tool. The possible correlation was hopeful, but simultaneously, the scores indicated a possible confirmation of underperformance.

In addition, the Assessment Committee also realized that what they thought they were measuring with regard to communication in their classrooms was not necessarily clearly aligned with their written learning goals and outcomes. This sent each person back to revising learning goals and outcomes, the intended natural result of assessment.

**Classroom-Based Rubric: Information/Technology Literacy Pilot, Spring 2010**



The Assessment Committee found that approximately fifty-two percent of the students performed at a C-level or higher across classes in English, early childhood development, and philosophy. The observations noted in the discussion above about the communication competency applied to the findings regarding information/technology literacy.

In fall 2010, the results of the classroom rubrics pilot were discussed at the August duty day, and the faculty agreed to engage in a more widespread collection. Instructors were asked to:

- Assess one learning outcome each in of two competency areas: Communication and Informational/Technology Literacy. The learning outcomes had to be listed on the course outline. The instructor could assess each competency in a single course or one competency in one course and one from another course using any assessment method—test, quiz, discussion, exercise, etc.
- Create rubrics that evaluated what skills the students needed to master in order to meet the outcome.
- Decide on the level at which the outcome was met.
- Report, via the D2L system, how many students met the outcomes.

The results:

- 68% of students met the informational literacy competency (152 met; 70 did not)
- 70% met the communication competency (320 met; 136 did not)

We learned two important things from a logistical perspective. The rubrics were found to be useful by faculty and students, and as a result, some faculty are now using this approach more frequently in their classrooms. We also learned that the D2L framework did not live up to expectations. For some, it took twenty-one steps to set up the rubric. Across multiple courses the process was inefficient, and the collection process became quite time-consuming for the assessment committee. We later learned that the D2L would be confining when we were unable to pull data that we could link to program learning goals and outcomes, which was a significant set-back for measuring program learning goals and outcomes but an important piece of learning, which ultimately led to the purchase of TracDat assessment software.

The negative experience with D2L was important. Three decisions were made: The assessment committee decided to ease off of another large round of classroom rubric data collection slated for spring 2011,

leaving time to further discuss results and next moves with the communication and information/technology literacy competencies. Two faculty (geography faculty and business adjunct) decided to create a new approach to the classroom rubric data collection process, which they presented to the assessment committee and was test-driven on a limited basis in spring 2011. Even with the simpler solution based on a single spreadsheet, however, the data collection is still quite time-consuming. By virtue of the Northeast region's collaborations between the region's colleges, we were able to review TracDat, an assessment software that is straightforward, flexible, and particularly suited to FDLTCC's assessment model. Like four colleges in the Northeast Region, FDLTCC is purchasing the software at the time of this writing and will be able to set up the software and receive training prior to the beginning of fall semester. This investment was made possible by the careful approach the college took to using its stimulus dollars, and the investment will enable the college to build into the software not just measuring capabilities related to student learning in classrooms and programs but also capacities for measuring progress on our major plans, if we so chose.

From the perspective of student learning, the classroom rubrics rendered useful results. As noted on page 42, the Assessment Committee's thought that using an alternative broad assessment measure might provide useful information alongside the CAC instrument proved true. On the CAC assessment, our students have consistently performed higher in communication and lower in information/technology literacy. The results of the classroom rubrics paralleled that performance, giving us a slightly more positive (hopeful) view of communication with the classroom rubrics than with the CAC assessment. The classroom-based rubric results added important confirming evidence that our students and faculty need more training in technology. Our two direct measurements of student learning demonstrated this need; in addition, our indirect measurements in CCSSE (2007 and 2009) and in SENSE (2010) yielded results also demonstrating this need, as have anecdotal observations from faculty and advisors for the past few years. As a result, administration incorporated two positions from Title III grant awards that will enable us to offer training and assistance on-campus and begin strategically planning our approach to classroom and web-based technologies, such as D2L, eFolio, supplemental/assistive technologies such as PLATO, Camtasia, and other technologies that students and faculty can utilize to improve learning and classroom instruction.

Results from indirect data sources related to information/technology literacy also led us to create some of the activities and learning outcomes we piloted in our Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program in August 2010 (discussed further on page 56). In our request for renewed funding to offer Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program 2011, we specifically added purchasing flash drives for all participants and for piloting an abridged version of Nandagikendan in two special one-day new student orientation sessions that will include introductions to campus e-mail, student accounts, and D2L. Our current approach to orientation does not include intensive hands-on, experiential learning with these electronic resources, but this will be piloted during orientation this summer.

The classroom-based rubrics project will continue to develop. The rubrics need refinement but have demonstrated their value has an additional broad assessment measure, particularly used alongside the broad CAC instrument, anecdotal observations from faculty and advisors, and evidence from indirect sources, such as CCSSE and SENSE.

#### Academic Programs

When we began addressing sanction-related work on teaching and learning, addressing improvements in academic programming became a building project from the ground up. Until fall 2009, program coordinators had never met collectively or worked together. There were a variety of system-level details to repair, such as updating articulation agreements, reviewing the college's program inventory and making corrections to system-level postings, reviewing and correcting the program planners our students use for



planning their progression through a program, improving communication between advisors and programs, making corrections to system-level publications regarding our programs, and defining the role of Carl Perkins funds in a clearer manner. In addition to these basic tasks, we needed to begin forming the foundation for measuring program learning goals and outcomes, which did not exist in a measurable form, develop an approach to program review that was more meaningful, and begin to create a data-informed approach to program planning and development. In the course of four semesters, we accomplished these tasks, identifying and responding to significant logistical challenges along the way but ultimately putting into place the foundation necessary for a coherent process of program-level assessment of student learning and program review.

One of the first significant accomplishments achieved by FDLTCC's program coordinators, all of whom are teaching faculty, was to suggest changes to the college's approach to class scheduling that better served their students, which was not on our list of to-do activities. Students in the law enforcement program take their program-specific at night; therefore, the students needed more general education courses offered in the late afternoon hours, for example. Human Services students, on the other hand, primarily are not available for night courses and are best served by courses that are generally scheduled in blocks on two days a week. Given that three of the programs serve approximately one-third of the college's student population, adjusting the schedule to better serve students made sense. As a result of making simple adjustments suggested by the coordinators, class sizes have improved, and the revenue generation of the instructional budget has progressively improved.

Seven of the college's eight programs receive a small amount of funding through a Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education grant; as a result, each program works with a program advisory committee that offers input on curriculum development and program directions. As part of new grant-reporting requirements, the program coordinators created for the first time Program Advisory Guidelines (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning/program documents), which eliminated one of the college's audit findings. FDLTCC's guidelines were found exemplary by the evaluating team during the Perkins' Monitoring Site Visit in spring 2010 (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning/program documents). As well, the nursing program's Carl Perkins program of study in health occupations is regarded by the State as model program of study; the program provides high school students with one college credit, a first responders certificate, and preparation for CNA testing. Currently, the coordinator of Early Childhood Development (ECD) program is working on creating a new program of study in the high schools for ECD. Our nursing and law enforcement program coordinators attended meetings and provided input to the Chancellor's office regarding a new set of Perkins-related technical skills assessment in each program that will become active in 2011 - 2012; our institutional researcher has also attended a training session regarding the technical assessments. One of the priorities of the Program Advisory Guidelines was to make equitable across programs the use of Perkins funds. We achieved equitable distribution, and program coordinators work collaboratively in sharing funds with other programs if they were not going to use their portion. The timeliness of such decisions improved but did not meet our ideal, primarily due to scheduling constraints. As a result of clearer communication, however, we were able to utilize unused Perkins funds for our business program's Young American Indian Entrepreneurs summer camp. In 2011 - 2012, FDLTCC's Perkins award will be cut significantly, and we are currently prioritizing the use of the funds based on the lowest Perkins budget scenario.

The program coordinators began discussions of program expansion with a focus on deepening options within existing programs that could provide students with occupational credentials and hasten entrance into the workforce. They reviewed workforce data and began discussing strategic program planning. As a result, the contributions of program coordinators during academic planning raised good ideas, particularly about collaborations between programs. In addition, five of the eight programs have either made data-based changes to their program curriculum or have taken up projects that increase options for students. Among the changes and projects: The law enforcement coordinator's fall 2011 sabbatical project is

focused on rejuvenating our corrections program, a stagnant program for the past four years, so students who do not pass or pursue the skills portion of the law enforcement program have options that lead to employment in the field. The human services coordinator is creating a behavioral mental health specialist certificate based on input from his program advisory board and community organizations in which our students are likely to work. As a result of student performance in RN classes and on the State nursing boards for RNs, the nursing program has revised its Nursing Roles Transition course and will deliver it to entering RN students prior to the beginning of fall semester 2011; in addition, they have merged two home health aide courses into a single course so it is better aligned with other programs in the system and more efficient in transfer. The early childhood development program studied data regarding its students' reading placement scores and will pilot reading prerequisites in spring 2012. The electrical utilities technology program has worked with the math department to revise its math prerequisites, has restructured several program-specific courses to improve student success, and has created one new course on residential building techniques to build a more complete package of knowledge for students pursuing the clean energy certificate and home energy auditing national certification with the Building Performance Institute. Although the results of these actions are forthcoming, the changes demonstrate consistency with the college's strategic planning priorities focused on increasing student success and offering flexible options for students; in addition, they are consistent with our discussions regarding expanding programs from within at a time of scarce resources.

Alongside revising student learning goals and outcomes in program-specific courses, the program coordinators created measurable program learning goals in each of the four core competencies. The beginning of this work gave rise to extending the college's original general education competencies to "Competencies Across the Curriculum"; in addition, some of the programs created goals and outcomes specific to their individual programs (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning/program documents), and the law enforcement and early childhood development programs have already revised their original program learning goals and outcomes. Of the assessment work that has been accomplished during the past four semesters, the program measurements have identified the most significant logistical challenges.

Building a bridge between classroom- and program-level learning goals and outcomes has been more difficult than expected, primarily due to the timing a number of significant changes happening in a very short period of time. As a result, the time required for classroom faculty and program coordinators to engage in discussions about the alignment of classroom and program learning goals and outcomes was inadequate. To sidestep this shortcoming, we attempted to pull data relevant to each program's students from the classroom-based rubrics. These data illustrated a possible future path and added to our ideas about building a picture of program-related student learning data to post publicly; however, the results were too small to be useful. The process also raised a deeper logistical challenge with regard to how program data is coded in the MnSCU's Integrated Student Records System (ISRS), which is discussed in more detail below.

Although this aspect of our work has been challenging, we achieved the primary goal of putting into place for the first time measurable program-level learning goals and outcomes. These have been incorporated into the revised program review policy and, thus, we will continue work on the bridge between classroom- and program-level. Currently, each program's learning goals and outcomes will be incorporated into our website information about programs this summer as we work on Federal compliance-related changes. The TracDat assessment software mentioned earlier has the capacity to draw connections between classroom- and program-level assessment and should bring at least partial resolution to the challenge. If this resolution occurs prior to the focus visit, we will have a demonstration prepared for the evaluating team.

The program coordinators revised the college's program review process (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning/program documents), reducing the process from nine to six steps and creating performance

measures that align with the college's assessment model and that are consistent with current or proposed reporting obligations in the MnSCU system's public accountability dashboard and in Federal regulations. These measures include: The program's goals and outcomes, student success measures (retention, transfer, and completion), job placement data if available, and performance rates on mandatory professional competency assessment if applicable. In addition to quantitative measures of effectiveness, the program will respond to qualitative questions regarding the program's responsiveness to the college's mission and the assets and resources the program adds to the college. The process is peer-based and includes the input of an evaluator external to the college. The revised policy received faculty approval and becomes effective in fall 2012.

As noted above, we have encountered logistical challenges with program-level data collection, the most significant of which involves the MnSCU system-level databases. Although we are fortunate to have a rich system-level coffer of data resources, there does not exist at the program level a system-wide uniform method of coding data related to programs. For example, asking a simple question such as, "what are the retention, transfer, and completion rates of FDLTCC's law enforcement program" is not a simple query. This is because pulling information based on majors is dependent on how a student's major has been categorized in the Integrated Student Records System (ISRS). If a student is working on their AS degree in law enforcement and also taking advantage of the AA transfer curriculum, where the student appears in the data depends on whether the AS or the AA has been assigned as the primary major. If the AA is the primary assignment, the student will not appear in the program data, and vice versa. For FDLTCC, like other institutions across the system, program-level assessment and data reporting, is becoming increasingly important, and FDLTCC is not the only institution facing this barrier as it moves forward with its goals. This was evident in a recent meeting regarding the MnSCU system's new program-related dashboard additions and, particularly, the public posting of gainful employment data. A system-wide solution, however, is not forthcoming in the near future.

To fundamentally address the problem at an institutional-level, FDLTCC will have to establish a standard method of categorizing majors, deciding whether to give AS and AAS degrees a primary status or the AA, understanding that the decision will have a negative consequence to the numbers for the major given a status other than primary. In addition, we will have to decide whether we make the adjustment retroactively for a period of years or begin with the most recent entering cohort and proceed from there, understanding that data from preceding years might not be fully reflective of a program's enrollment and student success. We have not yet held these discussions, and instead, have focused on putting into place at least some figures that can assist programs with evaluation. Because the college added an institutional researcher to its staff, we have also been able to develop alternative data sets that we can use in for program review as we begin addressing these logistical challenges (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning/program documents for examples).

Across the past four semesters, FDLTCC's work on the assessment of student learning across its curriculum and in programs has been formidable. Our emphasis on Competencies Across the Curriculum has enabled us to build a model of assessment that spans classroom-, program-, and institution-level assessment. Although the construction continues, we have yielded results that have been used meaningfully by the institution in planning, hiring, and purchasing. We have implemented measures that help us locate the accuracy of results from existing measures, identified logistical challenges and devised solutions that keep us moving forward, evaluated the effectiveness of our processes, and made decisions based on these evaluations. At the time of this writing, FDLTCC's student services unit has just begun strategic planning, and their first action was to identify how their work might fit in to the Competencies Across the Curriculum. If adopted, we will have accomplished drawing a complete circle of effort focused directly at the assessment of student learning across the college. Our progress has been significant, and the college is positioned well for its future work.

## Academic Outreach

As noted above, FDLTCC's assessment plan includes specific goals regarding FDLTCC's academic outreach, which is primarily comprised of offering an AA degree at Red Lake Nation and FDLTCC's College in the High Schools programming. Below is a brief discussion of our progress in meeting goals in each area.

### *Red Lake and Mille Lacs*

In 2009, FDLTCC was offering courses at two outreach sites on the Mille Lacs and Red Lake reservations. As had been advised by the Higher Learning Commission, the college discontinued offering courses at Mille Lacs through a customized training contract and integrated the delivery under the standard umbrella of processes related to course delivery, as had been our practice at Red Lake. Although the shift went smoothly, personnel changes and the introduction of another college at Mille Lacs had shifted expectations with regard to FDLTCC's presence at Mille Lacs. In the past, under the customized training contract, Mille Lacs had paid for an on-site position through which scheduling and student advising had been delivered. Eliminating the customized training contract essentially eliminated that area of support. Though the college supported a position that visited Mille Lacs on a weekly basis, the situation was not ideal and, at times, confusing. Simultaneously, Central Lakes College (CLC), a two-year institution located only twenty-eight miles away from the reservation (FDLTCC is approximately 100 miles away), began offering courses at Mille Lacs. FDLTCC, Mille Lacs, and CLC agreed that this could be beneficial to students, and the thought was that CLC would focus on offering developmental courses. As the semester progressed, however, it became clear that CLC and FDLTCC would be in direct competition over a student population of approximately thirty. FDLTCC discussed the situation with Mille Lacs, and we jointly agreed that FDLTCC would step back so Mille Lacs could explore their relationship with CLC. The college informed the students in late fall 2009 and provided several options to them for completion of their studies. Because both FDLTCC and CLC are MnSCU institutions, and both offer associate degrees built of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, the students were not ill-affected.

Classes at Red Lake continue into the present, and several changes have occurred based on evaluation in fall 2009 and into the present. Given the site's distance from the main campus, almost four hours, logistical challenges became evident rather quickly in 2009. Among the concerns were financial aid services, textbook delivery, and aspects of student services. We held two meetings with all staff whose duties included services to Red Lake, the first of which identified the roles of each and the second of which identified problems.

As a result of this evaluation, a variety of improvements have been made. Textbook orders are now placed earlier and pre-semester delivery has been made a priority, which has also assisted with avoiding textbook-related audit findings. Deadlines regarding financial aid were made more clear and direct conversations between Red Lake staff and the FDLTCC financial aid office began and have continued. Students have received aid in a more timely manner and problems regarding aid are either clearly explained or avoided. Direct conversations between Red Lake staff and FDLTCC's business office began and have continued, resulting in a timely collection of invoices and receipts. The main campus procedure for students on academic suspension has been replicated at Red Lake and continues each semester.

The vice president of academic affairs visited the Red Lake every three weeks during spring semester of 2010 to follow-up with students on suspension, to meet with faculty as requested, and to begin establishing a better working relationship with Red Lake staff. Regular visits now often include other administrators and staff from the FDLTCC. Tutoring credits in English and math were assigned to two faculty members, which continues, and has given the students a readily accessible source of learning support. Professional development activities were taken advantage of by two faculty at Red Lake using

FDLTCC's faculty development funds. Using stimulus funds, FDLTCC purchased twenty laptop computers, upgrading the technology and doubling the number of computers available for student use at Red Lake. Since fall 2009, twenty students from Red Lake have gone through commencement, and FDLTCC's president and vice president attend Red Lake's special celebration of these graduates. In spring 2011, the CAC assessment measure was delivered for the first time at Red Lake. This process identified the need for a clearer faculty orientation to the purposes of institutional assessment and the necessity of participation. Because our course offerings are more limited at Red Lake than at the main FDLTCC campus, we are also considering that classroom-based rubrics might be a better measurement system at Red Lake, a logistic that can be effectively managed through TracDat software. In addition to bridging our assessment practices to Red Lake, we are currently gathering student success data to share, evaluate, and plan next moves with Red Lake's new administration.

Our actions at Red Lake have positioned FDLTCC to deepen and focus its improvement efforts, particularly with regard to the assessment of student learning. During summer 2010, Red Lake hired a president who has since appointed an academic dean, development officer, retention specialist, and director of student services. They have contacted HLC and have begun their work toward gaining accreditation. In this process, FDLTCC will continue to offer an AA degree at Red Lake and act in a supportive capacity in their accreditation-related work.

### College in the High Schools

During fall 2009, the leadership of our College in the High Schools program changed, and as a result, a variety of improvements have been made. Consistent with the college's budget planning goals, FDLTCC has reduced the size of its College in the High Schools program and focused on building tuition-paying enrollment, which has garnered two years of increased FYE. Across the past five years, FDLTCC's College in the High Schools students have transferred into higher education at an average rate of eighty percent. During 2009 - 2010, as part of our recruitment and retention efforts, we began sending high school students reports indicating the credit progress they have made toward attaining a two-year degree and urging them to consider pursuing a cost-effective approach to their educations by choosing to finish their general education at FDLTCC. Our enrollment rates since that time have increased; however, at this time, we do not have a way to demonstrate with certainty that the bulk of the increases are due to more effective communication with our College in the High Schools students. FDLTCC's College in the High Schools mentors now use the college's State vehicles to make their visits, which has reduced the program's costs. FDLTCC's communication with the high schools has improved, which has resulted in timely receipts of class rosters. As a result, FDLTCC's records and registration personnel enter data on a schedule that does not fall into peak times for them. The overall results of these changes have produced a leaner, more efficient, and more cost-effective program.

The most significant improvement in our College in the High Schools program has been a review of our program against the private accreditation standards of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Programs (NACEP). As a result of the review, we realized that our program exceeded NACEP standards for mentoring and reporting, were on track in other areas, and fell short in three areas, improvement in which would benefit our program and be realistically achievable. As a result, FDLTCC applied for and received NACEP membership in fall 2010 and is on course to apply for an accreditation visit to be held in 2012. At this time, we have created and are delivering four survey instruments to collect data from current students, students 1-year out, students 4-years out, and current high school administrators, faculty, and guidance counselors. In August 2011, FDLTCC will host and run a one-day professional development activity for high school faculty, and at that time, we will begin building a strategic approach to the direct assessment of student learning.

The results of our improvements to the College in the High Schools program also have positively addressed longstanding apprehensions FDLTCC faculty have had, like many faculty across Minnesota, with such programming. Our chief financial officer provided faculty with an overview of FDLTCC's College in the High Schools budget in fall 2010, which addressed questions about whether or not the program was a financial drain or a convenient way to generate revenue for the college. The program is neither a financial drain nor boon for the college, as the budget indicated. It provides a service to high school students who are preparing to enter colleges and universities, brings in a modest revenue, and enables the college to build positive relationships with K-12 schools. FDLTCC faculty will be leading part of the professional development activities for high school faculty in fall 2011, which will help to ensure faculty that course learning goals and outcomes are being met.

Overall, FDLTCC's improvements to its College in the High School's programming has resulted in a more effective and efficient program, well-positioned to achieve private accreditation during fall 2012. In addition, we are laying the groundwork to directly assess student learning in the program, which will spread direct assessment across all dimensions of our academic offerings and position the college to have a 360-degree view of its effectiveness in student learning across general education, academic programs, Red Lake Nation, and College in the High Schools.

### Student Success

The final part of FDLTCC's assessment plan focuses on student success, which crosses lines between academics and student services. It is a primary focus of delivering responsive education in the college's strategic plan and is directly linked to the college's budget process. Our efforts have focused on retention and recruitment, which involves a variety of projects, and improving our institutional research capacity to support our efforts with increasing student success. Below is a brief discussion of our efforts in both areas.

In 2007 - 2008, an FDLTCC counselor (currently the college's Dean of Student Services), who was participating in MnSCU's Luoma Leadership Academy, reconvened the college's retention committee, which had been stagnant for two years. The committee decided that it did not want to repeat previous start-and-stop retention projects that yielded useless results. The committee "began at the beginning" and spent the year sorting out and reviewing baseline retention data from MnSCU's student success measures. The college's overall retention rate was forty-four percent. In fall 2008, the committee began discussing a more streamlined approach to helping faculty identify students at risk, the end goal being to create and implement a pilot that could yield some form of measurable results. At the time, the college relied on faculty to voluntarily complete lengthy paperwork on each student perceived to be at risk; the process was cumbersome, time-consuming, and garnered little participation. The retention committee created and implemented in the spring 2009 a new academic alert process that utilized a faculty's hard copy of the class lists as a mechanism to identify students who were not attending and/or doing unsatisfactory work on assignments, quizzes, or exams. Faculty were given alert codes to indicate the problem next to the student's name on the class list: AT (poor attendance), MA (missing assignments), ME (missed exams), TP (poor test performance). The process was implemented during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> weeks of spring 2009.

At the same time, the chair of the retention committee and a faculty member led an initial charge to bring retention and recruitment to the forefront. In May 2009, the *R<sup>2</sup> Initiative* was launched, with forty-two faculty, staff, and administrators in attendance at a forum established to show the importance of recruitment and retention and how it is everyone's responsibility at FDLTCC. The motto "R<sup>2</sup>" has been used since, and the college has continued an intense focus on retention and recruitment-related activities. These efforts have led to an increase in retention rates for the college and a steady increase in FYE for the past three fiscal years.

### **Historical Fall to Fall Retention Rates of NE Region Colleges**

Fall 2005-06 Data: 42.8% (retention-committee did not meet)

Fall 2006-07 Data: 46.0% (retention-committee did not meet)

Fall 2007-08 Data: 44.7% (retention-committee started meeting again during fall 2007)

Fall 2008-09 Data: 58.2% (14% increase in retention rate)

Fall 2009-10 Data: 54.0% (3.8% reduction in retention rate, part of which was expected due to improvement efforts in athletics and more aggressive actions in FDLTCC's academic suspension process)

### **Cloquet campus enrollment figures for past four years - in FYE:**

2007–2008: FYE was 711 (Fall 2007 FYE was 324)

2008–2009: FYE was 749 (Fall 2008 FYE was: 341)

2009–2010: FYE was 913 (Fall 2009 FYE was: 429)

2010–2011: FYE was 954 (Fall 2010 FYE was: 436)

The chair of the retention committee and a faculty member presented data to foster discussion at the May 2009 R<sup>2</sup> forum, and since that time, data has been consistently shared at our fall and spring campus-wide duty days (mandatory meeting days) (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning/retention presentations). The goal is always to share information about enrollment/ retention activities, to foster campus-wide buy-in for retention and recruitment, and to keep the campus engaged and focused on what they can do to help these two crucial areas for the campus. One significant result of these discussions has been their "spin-off" effect, as illustrated on page 30 of this document. We have created additional support and programming for underprepared and first generation students based on retention-related results and discussion, such as increasing the availability of evening tutoring for housing students by utilizing a Woksape Oyate grant from the American Indian College Fund and expanding hours in FDLTCC's Center for Academic Achievement. Two larger projects have been created: The 0 - 40 Program and Nandagikendan (Seek to Learn) Summer Academic Program.

#### *0 - 40*

The 0-40 program was initiated during Spring 2008 by then Vice President of Administration and Student Services Larry Anderson with the use of Access, Opportunity, and Success (AOS) funds from the MnSCU system. AOS funds were set-asides for colleges to use to create recruitment and/or retention programming for underrepresented students and students of color. FDLTCC used this resource to create 0 - 40, an "intrusive" program designed for students identified during the college's academic suspension and petition process that have time management and/or study skills barriers to academic success. Students are selected for 0 - 40 during individual meetings with students on academic suspension and are required to meet twice a week for two hours for an entire semester to learn effective time management and study skills as a foundation for future academic success. Students in the program are required to provide weekly Academic Progress Reports throughout the term. If the mid-term progress report indicates that a student is attending class regularly, is current on their coursework, and has an average grade in all classes of at least a "C," the student's financial aid is released. Students receive intrusive advising throughout the term, and at various times in a term, students listen to guest speakers (motivation), utilize testing and tutoring technologies such as TABE and PLATO, and receive career counseling (Strong Interest Inventory/Myers-Briggs).

Since its inception, the number of students participating has increased and many students have moved from beginning with a 0.00 – 1.00 GPA and increasing to 2.0 and above on a regular basis. We have had several instances of students moving from 0.0 GPA to 4.0, and on average, participants' GPAs increase by slightly over one grade point. For our FY10 results and plans for this program, please see the Access, Opportunity, and Success Report in the Resource Room: Teaching and Learning/retention presentations.

### *Nandagikendan (Seek to Learn) Summer Academic Program*

Via the college's focus on retention and CCSSE and SENSE data, it became clear that we needed to more effectively address our entering students. This was further confirmed in 2010 – 2011 by direct evidence of student learning from the CAC instrument and classroom-based rubrics. The hire of a Director of Athletics and Student Preparedness, coupled with an award of funds from MnSCU's diversity office and a portion of Woksape Oyate American Indian College Fund grant monies, enabled the college to create and pilot our Nandagikendan Summer Academic Program in August 2010. The purpose of the academy is to provide entering students with the basic tools of college life, help them establish relationships prior to beginning their studies, and introduce them to academic expectations in classrooms both generally and with specific attention to math, science, and English. We also included a fine arts component that straddled academic expectations and building relationships.

Thirty-six students composed primarily of athletes and a small number of early arrival dorm students participated in the pilot. For a first-time delivery, our results were positive, and we learned much about how to improve the delivery of the program (for a complete discussion of results related to our goals and outcomes, see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning), and its value was evident throughout the 2010 - 2011 school year. Based on what we learned and on discussions both previous to and following the delivery of the program, we submitted a new proposal to fund Nandagikendan 2011 that includes our regular program, an advanced track for students who participated last year and are returning with the intent to transfer to four-year institutions, and the piloting of two one-day abridged formats as a possible way of reformatting our approach to our general student orientation. Consistent with our concerns about the information/technology literacy levels of our students, we also incorporated a jump drive for each participant (for an overview of Nandagikendan 2011, see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning). We were awarded most of our request.

As a spin-off to Nandagikendan's success, we also worked with the Fond du Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa on Title III funding to create two programs aimed at academically high-achieving American Indian sophomores and juniors that will follow the Nandagikendan model. Currently, the college is in the process of hiring a director for the Nandagikendan high school programming.

FDLTCC's focus on retention has yielded important positive results and campus-wide involvement. It has been instrumental in improving the college's budget and in creating a practice of data-based decision making. Campus-wide discussions about retention and recruitment, coupled with its placement in the college's strategic, budget, and assessment planning, have generated positive and effective spin-off projects for students and have enabled the college to make improvements to its services. Through this work, we see clearly how a small isolated project, worked over time and evaluated and reported out regularly, can have a broad and significant impact.

### **Institutional Research**

FDLTCC's addition of a position devoted to institutional research has been a pivotal improvement to our ability to work with and think about data, to address logistical challenges and not be stopped by them, and to practice data-based decision-making that leads to effective assessment of student learning and to student success. In addition, our college's capacity to form data-based presentations for our public audience and to create internal documentation processes in assessment of student learning and in our student success projects has significantly increased.

The most significant impact of having an institutional researcher on campus has been with our program-related work. As noted above, we were able to not simply identify logistical challenges, but we had the



capacity to spend the time necessary to fully investigate the challenge and create interim solutions; in short, our work was not halted, which is often why logistical challenges can be draining and damaging to assessment projects. In addition, as noted earlier in this document, coordinators of the nursing and early childhood development programs were able to review, evaluate, and make changes to their programs based on the use of data of MnSCU's data warehouse, which was not previously possible. The assessment committee also included our institutional researcher in their committee meetings, each benefitting from the other in terms of training and discussion, necessary "soft" aspects of building a sound model of assessment.

Having institutional research on campus has also assisted us with the creation of documents that visually portray aspects of our work, particularly with regard to the alignment of our plans. In addition to this, the institutional researcher has assisted some people with transforming the college's "budget wheel" into wheels specific to their office's work. The institutional researcher has also created several iterations of an accountability dashboard for the college, charting student success, learning goals and outcomes, budget, and progress on plans. These tools positively affect our efficiency, ability to maintain focus on our priorities, and our continued commitment to transparency with our audiences.

During October and November 2010, the Student Services department and budget committee, with the assistance of our institutional researcher, began piloting project storyboards, an activity implemented to provide our student services staff and budget committee with a user-friendly document to identify a project or challenge area and to develop goals and objectives to meet the challenge. The storyboard form (see Resource Room: Teaching and Learning) includes areas to briefly record results and next actions based on the results, as well as an area that enables the reader to identify how the project relates to FDLTCC's strategic planning priorities, budget, the mission of FDLTCC, FDLTCC's core competencies, and/or HLC criteria.

The storyboard projects have enabled Student Services staff to further discuss how the department and the work they do with students has an impact on student learning. Members of the department who created the story boards reported on their activities in February and March 2011. In part, as a result of the activity, the department has recently begun updating a previous Student Services Strategic Plan. As the planning moves forward, staff will look at their work and the impact each department has on student learning. They will attempt to adapt the college's Competencies Across the Curriculum to use as a guide to improving their work with students. The storyboards would not have been possible without the institutional researcher, who brought the idea with her to FDLTCC and created the template capturing alignment of plans, challenges, actions and goals, results, and next steps.

Through the institutional researcher, FDLTCC has also been able to take up projects that help us "think about data." In the student success portion of our assessment, three such projects were identified: Mapping core competencies to State licensure exam results, mapping CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SENSE results to HLC criteria, and mapping core competencies to CCSSE and SENSE results. These projects were put forward for thinking about and learning from the experience of putting two unrelated data sets side by side, much like one views and learns from art. Would we find anything useful in terms of how we might measure student learning and student success? Thus far, we have learned the following:

1. State licensure exams: We were hoping to find an additional resource that gave us another perspective on our students' success related to the Competencies Across the Curriculum. We learned that the three State exams our students take (law enforcements POST Board exam, the State Nursing Board exams, and the licensure exams in the human services) each contain components that involve problem-solving, communication, and culture. It is unlikely, however, that we will be able to have State agencies disaggregate data for us, not for lack of willingness but for lack of capacity and time in the State agencies at this time. For now, the project rests at that barrier.

2. Mapping CCSSE, CCFSSSE, and SENSE results to HLC Criteria: We got this idea from the MnSCU Minnesota Engagement Institute, a two-day session led by CCSSE for the MnSCU system in which we took a deep look at our and others' promising practices related to student success. Utilizing a guide from the CCSSE organization, we have begun to plug in CCSSE results from 2009, 2007, and 2005. Our SENSE results arrived in March, and we have not yet worked with the results or started the mapping project. We will continue to work on this project for possible use in the college's future accreditation-related work.
3. Mapping CCSSE and SENSE results to the Competencies Across the Curriculum: We wanted to see if we could find anything that would shed additional light on our students' performance in the core competencies. What stood out most, however, was how the CCSSE data aligned with the competencies particularly on questions related to student services. This was a surprise, and it was our first data-based view indicating that the core competencies might have a place in Student Services. Some of this data was presented to the Student Services department in fall 2010. The point was simply to review one portion of data related to CCSSE and core competencies and how Student Services has an impact on student learning. Coupled with storyboard projects and a repeated emphasis in discussions on the competencies, Student Services' strategic planning work has included the introduction of the competencies into the department and its offices, a very important and exciting addition to FDLTCC's focus on and assessment of student learning and student success.

By adding a position devoted to institutional research, we have been able to maintain forward progress despite some challenges; increase our capacity for internal documentation and tracking of progress on projects; visually make ties between our projects, plans, budget, and mission; access and utilize data that has informed decision-making; and enjoy a modest level of freedom to explore possibilities during a time of significant change at the college. In only one year, the presence of institutional research at FDLTCC has yielded important and positive results, all of which assist us in serving students better.

FDLTCC's progress in the area of institution- and program-level assessment of student learning has been significant across the past four semesters. We have put into place the foundational pieces of a model that spans classrooms, programs, and the institution. For the first time, our direct assessment of student learning has yielded results that have been useful to decision-making. We have made changes that have increased our performance capacity by adding an institutional researcher and by purchasing tools that help us to address logistical challenges. We have laid the groundwork necessary to bridge our assessment of student learning across our academic outreach activities, and we have carried an emphasis on measurable outcomes and evaluation throughout our student success initiatives, which positions the college to speak accurately and convincingly to its many audiences and to continue improving its service to students.

## **VI. Conclusion**

During 2009, FDLTCC was placed on notice by HLC in four areas: Administrative structure, finances, planning, and teaching and learning. The result of this action was to focus our attention intently on these primary facets of the college's infrastructure.

FDLTCC has moved from a \$236,000 deficit in FY09 to a \$600,000 reserve at the end of FY11, a budget reserve that meets MnSCU Board policy and the mandate of previous HLC evaluators. We have reduced audit findings from nineteen to one at the time of this writing. We have made significant improvements in existing processes and created new ones while also performing our day-to-day work. By maintaining our commitment to a broad-based participatory process that includes monitoring, evaluation, and frequent reporting, the campus community is prepared for the future, and the college is positioned to endure through a challenging time.

The college's strategic and other plans have been vital guides during the past two years. FDLTCC's work on its strategic and other major plans since 2009 has been focused and intentional. Our plans are grounded in actions and results, and because they are "living" plans, most of the content of this report is a direct result of our planning-related work. By aligning our strategic plan with others, both broad and narrow, we have been able to accomplish our institutional and project goals, while also fulfilling our responsibilities to the MnSCU system and to our external partners. In addition, by building regular reports of progress into our bi-weekly meetings, we have been able to see new possibilities, create new projects, and find support to further develop work related to the college's priorities.

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The time that has passed since April 2009 has provided us vital teachings. Throughout, we have been committed to do the work necessary to learn from our experience. It has been an important opportunity for us, and we look forward to sharing our results with HLC's evaluating team in August 2011.