

# **REPORT OF A CHANGE VISIT**

TO

St. Cloud Technical and Community College  
St. Cloud, Minnesota

March 12-13, 2012

FOR

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

## **EVALUATION TEAM**

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## **ASSURANCE SECTION**

### **Part I: Context and Nature of Visit**

#### **A. Purpose of Visit: Requested Change**

St. Cloud Technical and Community College requests approval to initiate online delivery of the following degree programs: Liberal Arts and Sciences Associate in Arts, Business Management Associate in Science, and Energy Technical Specialist Associate in Applied Sciences.

#### **B. Accreditation Status**

St. Cloud Technical and Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

#### **C. Institutional Context**

St. Cloud Technical and Community College, (SCTCC), a regionally accredited, suburban, comprehensive community college, is part of the Minnesota State Colleges and University (MnSCU) system governed by the Minnesota state government. SCTCC serves the six-region area of Benton, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Sherburne, Sterns and Wright and is located in a Central Minnesota area with a population of approximately 90,000, 70 miles northwest of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area. SCTCC is the second largest higher education institution in the St. Cloud area. Beginning as a vocational-technical institute attached to and a part of the local school district in 1948 and then a technical college accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, SCTCC, in 1995 became part of MnSCU, and earned accreditation as a comprehensive technical and community college in 2010. Becoming a comprehensive technical and community college has enabled SCTCC to expand its mission to include transferability.

SCTCC offers 45 majors with over 90 certificate, diploma or degree options that can be completed in two years or less. As of April 2012, SCTCC Spring enrollment headcount was 4,575 including 2,240 full time students and 2,336 part time students and 168 high school students participating in either the Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program or the dual enrollment programs held in local high schools. The full time population has increased approximately 20% from 2007; the part-time population has declined by 3%. The dual enrollments have also declined from 2008.

In 2009, former Governor Pawlenty set a goal for 25% of all credits to be delivered online by 2015. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU) Board of Trustees and SCTCC have adopted this goal and included it in its strategic plan *Designing the Future*. To address this goal mindfully, quality measures must be in place. Two online task groups for FY 2011-12 will work with these measures: the Student Success task group and the Quality Matters task group.

#### **D. Special Conditions and Contractual and Consortial Arrangements**

SCTCC is a part of MnSCU. As such the College, although is able to take advantage of economies of scale in purchasing, must use the state adopted online platform, Desire 2 Learn, D2L.

#### **E. Approvals Obtained**

Internal approval processes have been obtained.

#### **F. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies**

President

Academic Affairs and Standards Committee (5)

Online Learning Committee (13)

Office of Institutional Sustainability

COI/Dean, Library and Information Technology Services and staff (7)

Vice President, Academic Affairs  
Dean, Trade & Industry  
Dean, Business Management and Computer Technology  
Dean, Liberal Arts  
Vice President, Administration  
Faculty (6)  
Students (7)  
Vice President, Student Affairs

**G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed**

Accounting Principles I online course  
Essentials of Nutrition online course  
Abnormal Psychology online course  
Analytical Writing online course  
Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, 2010  
Online Committee Reports, FY 2009-11  
SCTCC Organizational Overview  
SCTCC Organizational Structure  
Online Learning Budget 2008-12  
Online Tuition Differential Justification  
Online Cost Center FY 08-12  
SCTCC Facilities  
SCTCC Infrastructure/Technologies  
eAcademy Tools  
Atomic Learning Online Software Training Resource  
D2L-Desire to Learn  
Minnesota Online  
eFolio Minnesota  
Minnesota Learning Commons  
SmarThinking  
Quality Matters Task Force  
Quality Matters Implementation Plan  
CTL Instructional Development Grant  
New Course Proposal Worksheet  
College Faculty Credentialing (MnSCU)  
Online Faculty Status Report Fy 2012  
FY 2012 Courses, Instructors, and Enrollments  
Center for Teaching and Learning Schedule 2012  
Faculty and Staff Library and IT Services Handbook  
"Is Online Right for You " (Orientation)  
Center for Academic Success  
D2L Survey Results Fa 2010, SP 2011  
D2L Yearly Report 2011  
Noel Levitz Survey and Results  
Online Enrollment Per Course Data FY 2012  
Verification of Student Identity  
Student Complaint/Grievance Policy (Draft)  
360 Consortium Agreement  
Energy Technical Specialist Consortium Agreement  
Change Request Application  
SCTCC Organizational Profile Overview  
SCTCC Systems Portfolio 2010  
SCTCC Systems Appraisal Report  
2012 SCTCC's College Catalog  
Faculty Guidebook 2012  
Employee Handbook 2012

## Part II: Evaluation of Documentation Supporting Institution's Request for Change

### A. Commitment to, preparation for, and fit of the proposed change to the institution

St. Cloud Technical and Community College, (SCTCC), prepared for its entry into online education for more than a decade by offering online courses. Although no full programs were available online, evidence exists that the College began exploring student demand and readiness for expanded online offerings as early as 2005. Current data from various surveys and feedback mechanisms continue to indicate a growing interest in online instruction as verified by enrollment patterns of existing online course offerings which tend to fill immediately when posted. As the College matured in its understanding of virtual instruction, and the infrastructure required to support it, enrollments have steadily increased. Even though the College has experienced an overall enrollment decline of approximately 7% this year, its online enrollments actually grew nearly 8%. Online enrollments are projected to grow by 2% in 2012-2013. Enrollment patterns indicate that the College's student constituency is supportive of the College's direction in pursuing online education which will support online delivery of academic programs. SCTCC is ready to take the next step of offering full degree programs online.

SCTCC is governed by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Based on student enrollment, MnSCU has been a leader in offering courses and degrees to online learners via Minnesota Online since 2004. Four percent of the system's student population took online courses in 2004, and today 15.4 percent of the system's students are taking online courses. The College utilizes a well-known learning management system, Desire to Learn, which is funded by the state of Minnesota. During the site visit the team learned from the faculty that students may take online courses from multiple institutions. The team also found from interviews with students that with the common learning management system, SCTCC students encounter a more consistent course design and delivery which enhances their educational experience which was very much appreciated. By participating in the state system, SCTCC is able to provide an environment conducive to efficient and effective transfer, as well as being an integral part of the state's higher education system.

SCTCC made a commitment to serving the various constituencies that it serves. As indicated in the 2010 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and in discussions with faculty during the site visit, "SCTCC understands their stakeholders' needs through utilization of input from program advisory committees, connecting with faculty from other colleges for transferability, and service on a variety of state, regional and national boards to increase awareness of community needs. SCTCC's Foundation assists the college with financial support for ... technology and equipment, and faculty/staff development." By understanding the needs of the stakeholders as related to the need and value of online degrees, SCTCC will be able to be more confident in projecting and assessing the success of the online delivery mode.

There appears to be unanimous support from the President's Cabinet staff for managed growth in the online instructional programs. Quality is important to them and each appears committed to contributing resources from their units to support the implementation of online degree programs. The institution committed considerable resources to support student success for those who will enroll in their three new fully online programs. Within the last two years, SCTCC has dedicated a staff in the Library and Information Technology Services Department including an e-learning support staff person to assist students with online technology issues, a lab manager, and a technical support staff member who is available to assist faculty in utilizing other technology tools into their online courses. This staff is overseen by the CIO. The LMS administrator and librarian also support the online courses as a part of the department. The department is clearly committed to discovering and implementing best practices in their distance learning programs.

The institution's present request to initiate online degree programs complements the progress the College has made since 2010 in embracing a comprehensive mission. In various College documents and through conversations during the site visit, the team verified that the College expanded its mission to include transferability in 2010. Two of the three degree programs, the Business Management Associate in Science and Liberal Arts Associate in Arts, requested to be offered online are transfer programs. Along with the cooperation among institutions in the state of Minnesota, the approval for online programs will allow the College to move toward the fulfillment of the revised mission, and do so in the online environment.

SCTCC's decision to expand its mission to include transfer programs (2010) significantly changed many aspects of its operation including the role and number of faculty devoted to the transfer component. New faculty members have been hired to teach general education/transfer courses. In FY 2012, 176 credit based courses sections were delivered online. Of those 176 course sections, 100 sections, 56.8%, were taught by full-time faculty. All faculty teaching these courses, including the requested online transfer degrees in Liberal Arts and Sciences and Business Management, hold a minimum of a master's degree in the discipline, or a master's degree and 18 hours of graduate work within the discipline to be taught. While previous HLC reviewers have raised concerns about the credentials of general education faculty, the team reviewed personnel files of these faculty members. It appears that this concern has been resolved appropriately by the institution.

Further evidence of SCTCC's commitment to quality online delivery is the adoption and faculty support of Quality Matters. Not only have six faculty become certified as reviewers for the College, two faculty have become national reviewers. Faculty seem excited about the prospects of ensuring course quality through the Quality Matters review process. Faculty also were positive about extending professional development to include other topics of instructional design.

Since the 2010 ACT Student Satisfaction survey which indicated that students needed more flexible programming and from which course work and faculty development related to online instruction was developed and implemented, data from various surveys and feedback mechanisms continues to indicate a growing interest in online instruction as verified by enrollment patterns of existing online course offerings which tended to fill immediately when posted. Student feedback gathered during the on-site visit revealed their enthusiasm about the quality of instruction in their online courses. Most students attending the focus group had taken between five and seven online courses at SCTCC. Students expressed that their participation in higher education would be substantially limited if not for the availability and flexibility afforded by online instruction. As the College has matured in its understanding of virtual instruction and the infrastructure required to support it, enrollments have steadily increased. Even though the College experienced an overall enrollment decline of approximately 7% this year, its online enrollments actually grew nearly 8%. Online enrollments are projected to grow by 2% for 2012-13.

#### **B. Capacity for implementing and sustaining the change(s)**

SCTCC has developed a sound infrastructure to ensure sustainability of the online program. During the site visit, the team spoke with different internal constituencies that have direct planning responsibility for some part of the anticipated change. Prominent among these groups were faculty, the Online Learning Committee, and the Academic Affairs and Standards Committee. In addition, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees approved the SCTCC Strategic Plan for 2006 through 2010. The SCTCC Strategic Plan, consisting of 13 goal areas, addresses six key concept areas including online education. By including online education in the strategic plan and with faculty and staff support, SCTCC will have a vehicle to maintain its emphasis on distance delivery, and the internal support to implement and continue online delivery not only of courses, but also of the programs requested.

The cross-sectional memberships of the Online Learning Committee and Quality Matters Committee ensure input from various internal constituencies during the development phase. This opportunity for early input is particularly advantageous to the IT staff who provide support for both student and faculty.

Early involvement alerts IT of changes that will be forwarded which can be addressed in the planning for services and operations. In addition to this planning information, the data gathered by IT concerning the volume of traffic for the services and the issues that arise during the semester inform their decision-making processes. The superior dedication, work and data informed decision-making of the IT staff is evidenced in their earning the Baldrige Award of Excellence.

The College is aware of the importance of implementing a strong academic foundation that not only supports its on-ground instruction, but also its online instruction. The College uses a variety of tools to communicate with prospective and current students. Mandatory participation in online orientation is required to assure that all new students are provided with basic information about succeeding in the first semester of college. Students also learn about the unique demands of learning in a virtual environment including such things as discussion boards, accessing course materials, typical course deadlines for assignments, and other common online course characteristics. Students cannot receive a college email account or log-in access codes to the College's student portal until they have completed this orientation, cleverly assuring nearly total compliance for this important student success strategy. Prior to enrollment students also have access to a sample course which helps them determine if online learning is compatible with their own learning style. After enrollment, students are provided the college-adopted syllabus template, adapted to distance delivery. The template was very apparent in the team's review of specific courses. Information such as, the grading strategy, course calendars, a statement of diversity, a statement regarding academic integrity, attendance, (required course activity at least three out of seven days each week), learning objectives (those approved through the College's Academic Affairs and Standards Committee), course outcomes, grading rubrics, instructor contact information, etc. is made available to students.

Various documents and conversations with key staff led the team to conclude that SCTCC has the capacity for implementing and sustaining the requested change. A review of five online courses developed for the proposed online degree programs demonstrated a commitment to quality online instructional design principles; clear and accessible course content; frequent opportunities for student engagement with each other, the instructor, and course materials; appropriate assessment methods; and, identical course objectives as those found in traditional face-to-face iterations of the same course.

As noted in the 2010 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, validated by conversations with faculty and staff during the team visit, and review of the website, the team noted that SCTCC has developed an infrastructure for student support services to ensure that student advising, transfer evaluation, developmental needs, and other support networks are in place to foster student success. Consistent services are offered to online students. Tutoring services are supported in both synchronous and asynchronous formats for writing assignments. Generic instructions are well identified on the D2L home page. Support services for both faculty and students are available through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Desire 2 Learn Support Services site identified on the D2L home page. Questions can be asked to the support team in a chat room format by live help available by phone. For students who need assistance with computer applications, SCSCC uses Atomic Learning which provides free computer training in a variety of applications.

SCTCC charges an online tuition differential of 25% over base tuition for a total of \$192.86/credit, or an additional \$38.58 per credit in FY12. This additional funding provides budget for staff positions, technology and infrastructure, LMS subscription support to Minnesota Online (MnOnline), faculty and student training, and marketing efforts. The tuition differential generates funding for additional staff positions dedicated to online learning and partially funds the salary of the Vice President of Institutional Sustainability, who has responsibility for this area. A non-salary budget has been set up to fund various ongoing distance delivered expenses, such as training for faculty. Prudent management of the College's financial resources will continue to allow for funding of sufficient staff, technology, training, and systems that support online learning.

### **C. Strategies for systematically monitoring and evaluating the effects, performance, and/or quality of the change(s)**

In January 2012, SCTCC approved a new set of College Outcomes and Competencies that identify

five outcomes and accompanying specific competencies expected of all SCTCC graduates. These outcomes and competencies form the foundation for establishing assessment strategies to gauge the degree to which students are attaining these institutional expectations. SCTCC must assure the Commission and its constituencies that these assessment strategies will be documented, evidence of student learning gathered, and that thoughtful analysis of the evidence leads to action plans for improving student outcomes. While the team received sincere assurances from College personnel that these next steps are imminent, it is imperative that SCTCC be able to demonstrate that this assessment cycle is indeed in place by the time of its next AQIP quality review in 2015. As indicated in the 2010 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and through conversations with faculty and staff during the site visit, a strength of SCTCC is its internal review of program outcomes by the Shared Governance Council, Executive Leadership, and Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC). AASC reviews all course outlines and academic standards to ensure the course-level learning outcomes are tied to program level outcomes, which are tied to SCTCC's institutional level outcomes. SCTCC internal program reviews are the mechanism to discover the need for and impel changes in, redesign of, or discontinuation of programs. Program change recommendations are reviewed by the SCTCC Affairs and Standards Council and the MnSCU Office of Academic Affairs. This review is for all programs regardless of delivery systems which will enhance the potential for consistency of instruction across delivery modalities. This established on-going cycle of program review, as well as a peer review process for online courses assures that online course content and, ultimately, the programs will be regularly evaluated against current best practices for delivering instruction at a distance.

Minnesota Online is a leader in the assessment of online learners. The system was the first state system and is currently one of only two public systems of four-year and two-year institutions to work with Noel-Levitz to survey online students across its system. This coordinated effort provides the opportunity to view the data at a statewide composite view, to compare individual institutions with the statewide standard, and to coordinate improvement efforts among the individual four-year and two-year programs. Since 2006, students have been surveyed annually with the Noel-Levitz Priorities Survey for Online Learners™ (PSOL) during the spring semester. The results of these surveys have been shared as a Minnesota Online composite. It was evident during the site visit that SCTCC has access to the data; however, the College must take the next step to use and document the use of the data in their decision-making and improvement processes prior to the 2015 system review.

SCTCC has an impressive array of tools and methods for gathering data related to important, strategic institutional goals. Student satisfaction surveys, enrollment trend reports, Noel Levitz retention surveys, and faculty assessment survey results were made available to the team for review. While the data gathering aspect of institutional research is clearly evident, there was little evidence of the systematic, institution-wide use of data for the improvement of operational and/or instructional processes. Notable exceptions were the Student Services unit and the unit supervised by the Chief Information Officer. Both of these departments provided several illustrations of improvements that were derived from an effective analysis and follow-up actions based on a variety of data sources. There does not seem to be a misunderstanding about the expectations for the use of data in informing institutional decision-making at SCTCC. Neither did the team sense unwillingness on the part of senior leadership for using data in more systematic ways. Nevertheless, the critical advantage that could be attained through the strategic use of data in decision-making has yet to be sufficiently implemented or documented. This is a challenge that the institution must rise to meet. The team believes the College is motivated to continue strengthening this aspect of college operations. While the on-site evaluation of the change request found some rudimentary discussions had taken place regarding the establishment of appropriate metrics for gauging quality in student learning, important—perhaps critical—work remains to be done in this area prior to the impending Accreditation Reaffirmation visit in 2015.

#### **D. Strategies for addressing strengths, challenges, or strategic issues (especially those previously identified by the Commission) related to the change(s)**

During the visit, students clearly valued faculty and instruction. A clear passion was exhibited by faculty and staff who have been directly involved in planning curriculum, designing instruction, refining systems and processes, and deploying adequate resources to support this proposed A variety of

instructional and assessment tools were evidenced in the courses reviewed by the team. Faculty personalize online courses with video and audio welcome presentations. Assessment tools such as, quizzes assignments, readings, and exams were prevalent in all courses reviewed. Students are offered a variety of interactive tools such as chat rooms, discussions, and faculty office hours. Faculty have incorporated these tools in graded assignments throughout the semester to encourage and ensure participation in the course. To support instruction, the College provides well-publicized, targeted learning opportunities about improving teaching and learning in an online environment are routinely offered through the College's Teaching and Learning Center.

Faculty and staff participation on the state and national levels, expose faculty and staff to best practices which can be implemented at SCTCC and vice versa. An example of SCTCC's participation in collaborative opportunities within the state of Minnesota is the College's participation in the transformational consortium of nine institutions that is in place for the Energy Technical Specialist AAS degree. SCTCC has capitalized on the approvals and experience of other programs and, in fact, has become a leader in the consortium to be in a position to request approval to offer the Energy Technical Specialist AAS degree online.

Authentication is an issue that is being faced in online education throughout the nation. SCTCC has posted and communicated academic dishonesty policy that incorporates progressive discipline strategies for violations. Instructors also may employ best practice strategies to prevent and discourage students from academic dishonesty as evidenced in the course syllabi. For example, Turnitin.com is used in the Analytical Writing course to detect plagiarism. Students are advised in the syllabus of the consequences for violation. SCTCC uses the same authentication systems and protocols for distance delivered courses as it does for face-to-face courses. This includes required authenticated registration and access to the learning management system by requiring username and password information. Additionally, the LMS requires log in and password information from individual users for each access. However, this process meets the minimum obligation for academic integrity. SCTCC must continue to research and deploy other and additional alternatives to meet the spirit and intent of this federal regulation.

The team reviewed SCTCC's 2010 Institutional Work Plan, previously required annually by the MnSCU system. This Plan specified SCTCC strategic goals that integrate system-wide strategic goals. The format for reporting requires a statement of the goal, anticipated major activities, projected institutional outcomes, and actual outcomes or progress toward the goal. Much progress toward system-wide goals was documented in this 2010 Work Plan. This activity provides the College with an opportunity to assess its strengths, challenges, and strategic issues. Now that the MnSCU no longer requires the Institutional Workplan, it utilizes an Accountability Dashboard under three headings: Access/Opportunity/Success, High Quality Programs & Services, and Economic Competitiveness. Under Access/Opportunity/Success the college was awarded Gold "exceed expectations" ratings regarding enrollment and credits that successfully transfer. Under High Quality Programs & Services, the college was awarded a Gold rating for student engagement and Blue ratings (meets expectations) for student opinion of learning and licensure pass rates. Under Economic Competitiveness, the college was awarded Gold ratings for both the critically important Composite Financial index (CFI) as well as the Facilities index. There were two "needs attention" ratings regarding tuition (system % determined) and employment of graduates where the percentage went from the 90's to 85% due to a construction program right-sizing to align with the downturn in the economy in that area.

Clearly SCTCC has taken very seriously improving and measuring institutional effectiveness as evidenced by their dashboard ratings and the college focus on self-evaluation processes and change request. Assessment tools through the introduction and utilization of the Baldrige Express organizational assessment in 2010-11, Foundations of Excellence(FOE) initiative 2010-11, and the CCSSE/Student Engagement survey 2010. At the All College Conversation Day strategic planning (2011) the college community aligned those activities and synthesized the outcomes to identify strategic priorities and performance measures that support the overall mission and core values. The key measures (SCTCC Pillars) help define performance excellence by focusing the college on

accountability, data driven decision making, and assessment.

#### **E. Potential positive or negative effects of the change(s) on other institutional operations**

The expansion of the distance learning program to include the College's first online degree programs will likely strengthen the transfer function of SCTCC's mission. Students voiced their appreciation for the flexibility provided through asynchronous coursework, several noting that it would be impossible for them to pursue a college education without this option. Since online learning represents a growth opportunity for the college (based on current and projected enrollments) at a time when enrollment decreases are being recorded, online degree programs could prove to be of great benefit both for the student and for the College.

With not only the expansion of the mission of SCTCC to include transferable education, but also the approval of two transferable programs to the online environment and transferable potential of the Associate in Applied Science degree to a baccalaureate in applied technology, SCTCC could see a significant increase in enrollment. This increase may significantly impact the already stretched SCTCC budget. The strain on the institution is likely to increase for those students pursuing the Liberal Arts transfer degree. However, the College prepared to meet the budget challenge by establishing a tuition differential that may be adjusted as online education at SCTCC develops further.

The models and practices being developed to support quality in distance education courses, particularly those based on Quality Matters principles, have great promise for promoting student engagement and for encouraging student retention. These models and practices may present opportunities for improvements in traditional instruction if the data resulting from their use indicates positive results.

#### **F. Quality standards**

SCTCC elected to adopt and implement the Quality Matters system, a nationally recognized program for assuring quality instructional design for online courses, in 2009. To ensure emphasis, the College has written the model into the Quality Process document for online and hybrid course design. The Quality Matters program is the centerpiece of instructional design standards and best practices for online learning. Quality Matters, is well supported by faculty. Faculty have developed Quality Matters rubrics which are available to students. The rubrics provide the method of evaluation using a point-driven scale, to be used for writing assignments. Not only are courses being reviewed, but faculty development is provided by the Center for Teaching and Learning not only with standing presentations on assessment and instructional design during annual inservice days, but also during the semester. The team reviewed the College's three-tier approach to faculty development using the Quality Matters system, which included an accounting of all faculty who have participated in this professional development series to date. In addition to the faculty participation in instructional design workshops, six faculty are now certified as course reviewers; two faculty are certified as national reviews.

In the review of courses, the team found a number of course outlines and syllabi for the courses required in the proposed new online degrees to have been appropriately updated or reviewed within the cycle described in the change request proposal. However, some, particularly in some content areas of the Business degree have not been updated or reviewed for many years. IN at least one case, it had been over a decade. Faculty in this area must take immediate responsibility for assuring that these courses are current, that syllabi are prepared in the new required format, and that appropriate pedagogies for delivering the content online have been incorporated into the course design.

Despite ongoing issues of assessment and the use of data to inform institutional decision-making, the team believes St. Cloud Technical and Community College is striving for excellence in its distance education program. The VP of Academic Affairs presented reviewers with a summary of SCTCC's journey in developing a culture of assessment during her tenure at the College. This summary includes a timeline with intentionally designed forums, workshops, and reports intended to stimulate action by the faculty in taking ownership of the assessment process at SCTCC. It is clear that some progress has been made in that regard. The summary also includes a list of next steps, all of which indicate that instruction is working toward broader implementation and documentation of assessment practices at the College.

### **Part III: Recommendation and Rationale**

#### **A. Recommendation**

The team recommends that the Substantive Change Request of St. Cloud Technical and Community College to offer the Liberal Arts and Sciences AA, Business Management AS, and Energy Technical Specialist AAS degrees be approved.

#### **B. Rationale for the Team's Recommendation**

The team's review of documents, both online and paper, visits to online classes, and conversations with faculty, administrators and staff, provided evidence the College has the capacity to sustain and expand online education to offer three online degree programs.

Examples of quality standards that have been incorporated into SCTCC's bid for the approval of proposed online degree programs that support the team's recommendation include that:

- The College has addressed funding of the new initiative by developing and appropriating a tuition differential to support the initiative;
- The state of Minnesota has committed to the proliferation of online education to include hosting the Learning Management System, providing Minnesota Online, and implementing statewide faculty support and collaboration for online education;
- The College has made a strong commitment particularly with providing sufficient and effective technology resources and human resources to online education;
- The College has established a evaluative and inclusive committee infrastructure that will be used to evaluate proposals and program review;
- The faculty and administration are excited and committed to online education to include embracing the Quality Matters system to ensure continued quality of courses, and, ultimately, the programs;
- Professional development opportunities are available to and been taken advantage of by faculty and staff to ensure the courses in the programs have educational integrity; and,
- Despite the insufficient progress that the College has experienced in using data that has been gathered for assessment and evaluation, the College faculty and staff are committed to continuous improvement of their assessment initiatives college-wide in preparation for the AQIP Reaffirmation in 2015; and,
- The robust student enrollment indicates a strong and continuing demand for online education.

#### **C. Other Accreditation Issues**

None

### **Part IV: Statement of Affiliation Status**

#### **A. Affiliation Status**

No change.

**B. Nature of Institution**

1. Legal status

No change

2. Degrees awarded

No change.

**C. Conditions of Affiliation**

1. Stipulation on affiliation status

No change

2. Approval of degree site

No change

3. Approval of distance education degree

The team recommends that the Substantive Change Request of St. Cloud Technical and Community College to offer the Liberal Arts and Sciences AA, Business Management AS, and Energy Technical Specialist AAS degrees be approved.

4. Reports required

None

5. Other visits scheduled

None

6. Organization change request

None

**D. Monitoring**

None

**E. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action**

None

**F. Summary of Commission Review**

**Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year)**

AQIP Reaffirmation 2014-2015

**Rationale for the recommendation:**

The team's review of documents, both online and paper, visits to online classes, and conversations with faculty, administrators and staff, provided evidence the College has the capacity to sustain and expand online education to offer three online degree programs

## **ADVANCEMENT SECTION**

### **I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION**

The team appreciated the rich discussion surrounding the expansion of the mission of the College, student learning, dedication of faculty and staff to the direction of the College, and the capacity of the institution to deliver quality online education to its students. Although SCTCC is still refining its institutional assessment program, we believe that the deliberate steps taken to expand the College's mission to be approved to offer transfer programs, SCTCC's long legacy of offering online courses, and the College's organizational structure to ensure accountability will support the College's endeavor to offer sound educational programs online in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Business Management, and Energy Technical Specialist will lead to the full development of an institutional assessment program.

### **II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM**

Rich discussions during the visit and the review of written and electronic materials stimulated the thinking of the team which led to the following suggestions for the SCTCC.

- The team was intrigued by the availability of the sample course for potential online students to investigate prior to enrollment as well as the discussion to implement mandatory online orientation. Discussions led to the question about whether these students would be more successful in their courses and in completing any of the academic programs and/or the programs being proposed if they took the sample course. Discussions also led to the question if and when online orientation became mandatory, whether those students were more likely to be successful in continuing and completing their educational goals at SCTCC. Now is the time to set the stage to develop and conduct a longitudinal study to determine the impact of the sample course on student success.
- The team also discussed the burden of copyright compliance with staff and faculty. Currently, the College librarian monitors copyright compliance; however, in the online environment, this becomes quite a time-consuming and challenging task. The team suggests that the College consider a proprietary service that shifts the burden of copyright compliance to the service. Authentication is a federal requirement that all colleges are trying to address. In the discussions with faculty and staff at SCTCC, authentication was being addressed; however, in discussions with students, other options were shared from other institutions. It is important that SCTCC be creative in their approach to authentication to ensure the quality and credibility of the online courses and, ultimately, the academic programs offered online. Since Minnesota is so interconnected with their higher education system and students take classes at multiple institutions, students are a wonderful resource in learning how faculty at other institutions handle authentication which could include: randomization, a testing center for on-campus testing, web cam usage, etc.
- Assessment at SCTCC is still an issue. To address the assessment of general education outcomes, the College might consider research the AACAU VALUE rubric available on the

HLC website. Further refinement and definition of the roles of the vice president level of administration with regard to assessment is suggested.

- In its rapid growth into a community college, SCTCC has had to develop a futuristic administrative and committee structure. The team learned that the Online Learning Committee was becoming cumbersome by addressing both the online learning component of its educational program and Quality Matters, the professional development and course evaluative initiative. The team agreed that it may be time for the committee to split. The team also encourages the College to maintain the connection between the committees so that each compliments the work of the other.

### **Recognition of Significant Accomplishments, Progress and/or Practices**

Faculty and staff are committed not only to the institution, but also the online program to include offering degree programs. It is evident that the College has worked the goals of the Strategic Plan by accomplishing approval as a community college, developing and implementing online courses to requesting approval for online degree programs without sacrificing quality. The continuous improvement model of the AQIP accreditation, supported and promoted from the presidential level, has served the College well as demonstrated by the Baldrige Pocket of Excellence Award earned by the Library and Information Technology Department,

The spirit of cooperation and collaboration of higher education institutions in the state of Minnesota is particularly beneficial to the online programs. SCTCC faculty and staff have taken advantage of and been a leader on committees which establish best practices and procedures for the state to the benefit of the institution.

*Team Recommendations for the  
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** St. Cloud Technical and Community College, MN

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Change Visit

**DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Request to initiate distance delivery.

**DATES OF REVIEW:** 3/12/12 - 3/13/12

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**Nature of Organization**

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**LEGAL STATUS:** Public

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** NO CHANGE.

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**DEGREES AWARDED:** A

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** NO CHANGE.

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**Conditions of Affiliation**

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**STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:** None.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** NO CHANGE.

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**APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:** Prior Commission approval required.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** NO CHANGE.

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**APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES:** The institution has not been approved to offer its degree programs or more than four of its certificate programs through distance education or correspondence education as defined in Commission policy. Commission policy does permit the institution to offer up to four certificate programs as well as a limited number of courses leading to degree programs through distance education or correspondence education without seeking prior approval.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** The institution has been approved under Commission policy to offer up to 20% of its total degree programs through distance education. The processes for expanding distance education are defined in other Commission documents.

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**REPORTS REQUIRED:** None

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:**

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**OTHER VISITS SCHEDULED:** Change Visit: 2011 - 2012; Request to initiate distance delivery.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** NONE

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**Summary of Commission Review**

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**YEAR OF LAST REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION:** 2008-09

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**YEAR FOR NEXT QUALITY CHECKUP VISIT:** 2014-15

*Team Recommendations for the*  
**STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**

**YEAR FOR NEXT REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION: 2015-16**

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION: NO CHANGE**

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## ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** St. Cloud Technical and Community College, MN

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Change Visit \_\_\_ No change to Organization Profile

### Educational Programs

	Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate		
Associate	41	
Bachelors	0	
Programs leading to Graduate		
Masters	0	
Specialist	0	
First Professional		
Doctoral	0	

### Off-Campus Activities

In-State:	Present Activity:	<b>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</b>
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	Eden Prairie (Waste Water Treatment Facility)	
Course Locations:	1	
Out-of-State:	Present Wording:	<b>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</b>
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	None	
Course Locations:	None	
Out-of-USA:	Present Wording:	<b>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</b>
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	None	
Course Locations:	None	

### Distance Education Programs:

Present Offerings:

Certificate - 15.0303 Electrical, Electronic and Communications Engineering Technology/Technician offered via Internet; Certificate - 15.0702 Quality Control Technology/Technician (15 credits) offered via Internet;

Certificate - 48.0501 Machine Tool Technology/Machinist offered via Internet; Certificate - 48.0508 Welding Technology/Welder offered via Internet

**Recommended Change:**

**(+ or -)**

+Associate in Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences

+Associate in Science, Business Management

+Associate in Applied Sciences, Energy Technical Specialist

**(CIP codes should be in the original institutional application for change)**

**Correspondence Education Programs:**

Present Offerings:

None