REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution’s response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission’s policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Name of the Institution: Midwestern State University

Date of the Review: April 9-11, 2013

COC Staff Member: Dr. Michael S. Johnson

Chair of the Committee: Dr. Suzanne Ozment (off-site)
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Montevallo
Montevallo, AL

Dr. Stephen T. Hulbert (on-site)
President
Nicholls State University
Thibodaux, LA
Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution

The Report of the Reaffirmation Committee is the final committee analysis and report that includes the findings of the Off- and On-Site Reaffirmation Committees. It will be forwarded to the institution for a formal response. The report and the institution’s response are forwarded to the Commission’s Board of Trustees for action on reaffirmation of accreditation.

Part II. Assessment of Compliance

A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. (Integrity)

The Committee found no evidence of the Institution operating without integrity.

B. Assessment of Compliance with Section 2: Core Requirements

2.1 The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. (Degree-granting Authority)

The Compliance Report adequately documented Midwestern State University’s authority to grant degrees by providing source documents from the Texas Education Code (TEC) 103.01, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the MSU Board of Regents (2.13).

2.2 The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board on which both the presiding officer and a majority of the other members are neither civilian employees of the military nor active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution’s programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting board members are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. (Governing Board)
The Texas Education Code (TEC) provides for a ten-member Board of Regents for Midwestern State University, nine voting and one non-voting, all of whom are appointed by the Governor. Nine members serve staggered six-year terms and a student is appointed to a one-year term. TEC Policy 103.07 gives the Board specific legal authority over the institution, a responsibility implemented through the Board's Bylaws. Sample minutes documented the Board's actions by the majority, approval of policy, and review and approval of the operating budget of the institution. Documentation was provided to establish that the TEC prohibits conflict of interest and requires annual reporting applicable to Board members and the University President. TEC Policy 61.084 also requires in-service training of Board members.

2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. (See the Commission policy “Core Requirement 2.3: Documenting an Alternate Approach.”) (Chief Executive Officer)

The Compliance Report clearly documented the role of the President as the Chief Executive Officer of the institution and that he is not a member or officer of the Board of Regents. Midwestern State University Policy 2.322 specifies the duties and authority of the President.

2.4 The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. (Institutional Mission)

The institution has a clearly defined comprehensive mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for an institution of higher education. The statement reaffirms the University’s commitment to its liberal arts mission and to teaching, research, creative activities, and service. The mission statement is published in the most recent Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs and on the institution’s website.

2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional Effectiveness)

The institution has clearly described and documented its institutional effectiveness process which includes strategic planning, functional planning, evaluation and assessment, budget planning and resource allocation. Institutional assessment is overseen by the University Assessment Committee. The University has implemented an assessment management system, WeaveOnline. In 2011, Midwestern State initiated a new strategic planning effort which resulted in a new strategic plan and a commitment of resources for ongoing improvements.

2.6 The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. (Continuous Operation)
Midwestern State University was founded in 1922 as Wichita Falls Junior College and in 1937 became a senior college named Hardin College. The institution added a graduate school in 1959 and became Midwestern University. At present, Midwestern State University is a regional public liberal arts university with more than 6,000 students enrolled in associate, bachelor’s, master’s, and certificate programs.

2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. (Program Length)

The institution offers one Associate degree which is 72 semester hours in length; 42 Bachelor’s degrees all 120 hours or more in length; and 31 master’s programs equal to or exceeding 30 semester hours. The University Catalog confirms the length of these programs.

2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. (Program Content)

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that MSU degree programs are approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), established as the governing board by Texas Education Code 61.002. Approved degrees have coherent programs of study that meet the institution’s mission and are appropriate to higher education. The institution reported that all undergraduate programs required completion of the Core Curriculum, consisting of 48 credit hours across the curriculum (Undergraduate Catalog, p. 93) consistent with THECB-mandated general education requirements.

However, the Undergraduate Catalog (page 91) stated that the Core Requirements consisted of 47 credit hours. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee could not determine the reason for the inconsistency.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documentation in the Focused Report, Academic Council minutes, and the current online Undergraduate Catalog. The inconsistency of information regarding the 47 credit hour Core Curriculum Requirements was addressed by changes to the catalog approved by the Academic Council in its February 2013 meeting. An interview with the Provost and VPAA and a review of the website substantiated that the online catalog changes appear in the “Changes to the 2012-2014 Undergraduate Catalog” link. The catalog changes will appear in the next printing of the catalog.

*2.7.3 In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in
associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. (General Education)

The general education program, adopted in 2010, is consistent with the mission of MSU and with the mission of Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges. It also reflects the requirements of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The general education curriculum reportedly consists of 45 course credit hours spread across the core areas of communication, mathematics, sciences, humanities and visual and performing arts, social and behavioral sciences, as well as two credits in an institutional option area. However, the institution reports that all undergraduate programs require completion of a Core Curriculum, consisting of 48 credit hours (Undergraduate Catalog, p. 93). The Off-Site Review Team could not determine the reason for the inconsistency. Conflicting numbers are also given for the Core Curriculum in the Compliance Report on pages 39, 50, and 359. The pathway for the selection of General Education courses is inconsistently defined.

In the Focused Report, the institution stated that the inconsistency in representing the Core Curriculum in the Undergraduate Catalog had been approved by the Academic Council and placed in the online catalog. The institution further stated that the changes will be included in the next printing of the catalog. Review of the Minutes of the Academic Council and the changes to the online catalog confirm the institution’s statements.

2.7.4 The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In both cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. (See the Commission policy “Core Requirement 2.7.4: Documenting an Alternate Approach.”) (Course work for Degrees)

Having neither cooperative nor consortial agreements with other institutions to provide instruction, MSU degree programs are not dependent on courses taught at other institutions or by faculty from other institutions. Program requirements at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and transcript examples of students who have completed all coursework at MSU were provided as evidence of compliance.

*2.8 The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of each of its academic programs. (Faculty)
The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee determined that the institution defines the teaching load for full-time faculty in Policy 3.127 of the Policies and Procedures Manual as 12 undergraduate hours per regular semester. The institution employs 347 faculty, 237 of which are full-time employees (68%). Several disciplines in the areas of the General Education core are staffed more than 50% by part-time faculty. With the exceptions of the undergraduate degree programs in Criminal Justice (CJ) and Education (ED), remaining programs are staffed at more than the 50% level with full-time faculty, and in the cases of CJ and ED, a majority of credit hours are taught by full-time faculty. The institution reported that the Education Department utilizes part-time faculty for student teaching supervision while all classroom hours are taught by full-time faculty. Some CJ concentrations at the undergraduate level are staffed by more part-time than full-time faculty, but these also do not rise to the defined level of “program.” Graduate programs are all sufficiently staffed with full-time faculty. With regard to faculty staffing off-site, the institution appears to offer no degree programs off-site; its only off-site location appears to be the Dalquest Research Station.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the documents and conducted interviews with the academic deans and Provost and VPAA in support of the institution’s case for compliance. The Dalquest Research Station is the only off-site location. Therefore, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Committee.

2.9 The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. (Learning Resources and Services)

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee observed Moffett Library collections include a Curriculum Materials Library; a media department housing DVD, CDs, LPs, VHS tapes, media equipment, and computer software; archival/historical collections; leisure reading; government documents; microforms; and an extensive print reference collection of 11,159 volumes. Library patrons have access to over 100 online databases covering a range of resources and discipline-specific areas through the TexShare Consortium and direct subscription. Some of these databases include full-text journal articles and e-books. All are available from off-campus through secure login.

The Moffett Library extended the number of hours it is open from 91 to 101 hours per week during full semesters as a result of data from two LibQUAL+ surveys conducted in 2007 and 2008. Reference services are available 86 hours per week in person, by phone or via online chat. Wireless internet is available throughout the building. The library also offers course reserves, printing and copying services, and interlibrary loan.

Distance education students and faculty may access online resources through the library’s distance education web page. Moffett Library and interlibrary loan materials are mailed to students living more than 50 miles from campus.

Faculty liaisons provide input into materials selection. However, the Off Site Reaffirmation Committee was unable to determine how the materials budget is
developed or how allocation decisions are made to support educational programs and research. There is no documentation demonstrating how the print periodicals and circulating print book collection are consistent with the institution’s educational programs.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the university librarian and collection development/systems librarian, and corresponding documentary evidence provided by the institution, reveal an annual “lump sum” budget, based on prior year actual expenditures, is allocated to the library as the forthcoming year budget is being prepared. Library personnel provided the Committee a copy of a spreadsheet and a corresponding explanatory narrative illustrating a methodology wherein multiple weighted factors such as number of courses in the disciplines, number of credit hours generated in the disciplines, number of degrees granted in the disciplines in the prior year, number of students in the major, number of FTE faculty in the disciplines, and average cost of books in the disciplines are factored to determine how to allocate the lump sum budget in support of academic programs. Samples of blank and actual forms used by faculty across academic divisions to recommend and request learning resources were also examined.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a summary table provided by the institution for budget years 2000-2001 to 2012-2013 that reflected progressively growing commitment of financial resources for book and media purchases up until 2007 at which time decreases in enrollment due to enhanced admission standards and reductions in state appropriations were reported to have resulted in a leveling of annual budget dollars. Interviews with the university librarian, collection development/systems librarian, and associate university librarian of technical services revealed an effort to maximize and leverage these dollars by carefully evaluating, in consultation with faculty across the disciplines, print book and media materials and annual subscriptions for electronic databases and journals, periodicals, and related items in order to meet program needs. For example, library staff described a recent process whereby a number of database subscriptions that had been automatically renewed over a period of many years were carefully analyzed to determine utilization. Where user data indicated use was very low, academic departments were notified and asked to provide input for determining whether to continue the subscriptions, cancel the subscriptions, or consider alternative subscriptions adequate to meet the needs of students and faculty in the disciplines.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with faculty department heads in finance, economics, and general business, computer science, and sociology (one of whom, incidentally, serves as a faculty library liaison and formerly served on the library committee) and observed a culture of responsiveness where information about resource priorities, recent acquisitions and new acquisition opportunities flows freely between library personnel and faculty primarily through the college-level library liaisons but also through direct communication between faculty and library staff. All three department heads indicate they receive regular communications about budget resources available to support their programs including reminders to expend funds before conclusion of the institution’s purchasing and procurement season each year. All three indicate no recollection of a request for procurement of a database subscription, print or electronic book, electronic or print journal, serial, or other learning resource that was declined, and all three iterated experiences wherein library personnel offered alternative, cost-effective means of acquiring a resource or item. One department chair gave an example where he requested purchase of a
print volume. Library personnel responded by noting the volume was already in inventory and requested if he would like a second volume be made available for student use. Another department chair described a scenario where faculty requested membership in an electronic database originating with a professional association. The department utilized a portion of its annual budget to purchase the first year subscription to the database, and the library incorporated subsequent year subscription costs into its annual budget. A third department chair described scenarios in recent years where departments in various disciplines had not expended funds designated for learning resources. In such instances, it was reported, other departments were given opportunity to make proposals for using these funds in order to obtain additional resources and materials for their programs. The university librarian gave an example of an expensive reference resource requested by an academic department. The department provided funds in excess of $10,000 to purchase the item for the first year, and the library incorporated the annual cost into its budget in subsequent years. Utilization data provided by the vendor at the end of year three indicated less than two-hundred “hits” during the prior three years leading library and program faculty to jointly conclude the subscription should not be renewed since other resources adequate to support the program’s needs were available.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee received and reviewed a recent year comprehensive title list, reflecting the identity of the requesting faculty member, for new circulating, print book acquisitions. Interviews with the university librarian, collection development/systems librarian and associate university librarian of technical services revealed a process for engaging faculty in identifying electronic databases, journals, print books, serials, and related learning resources through the cadre of faculty liaisons from the colleges. These liaisons serve as primary disseminators of information about print and electronic collection development through newsletters, informative memoranda, email messages, faculty meetings, and other communication methods. Requests are prioritized by faculty and recommendations circulated back to library personnel directly or via the college library liaison. If a requested item is particularly expensive, or, as in the case of certain electronic databases, is available through a more cost-effective means, information is routed back to the department with recommendations for procuring the item. Library personnel also report, and three department chairpersons confirm, periodic reminders are provided to faculty liaisons and departments regarding the extent to which learning resources budget allocations have been expended to ensure funds are encumbered before conclusion of the purchasing and procurement cycle each year.

*2.10 The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that are intended to promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. (Student Support Services)

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The number and type of programs, services, and activities offered to students through the collaborative leadership of the divisions of student affairs and enrollment management and academic affairs represent a strong, broad-based portfolio of support mechanisms consistent with the institution’s mission and character and are appropriate to fostering student learning and development.
The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a system wide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or Standard Review Report) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board. (Financial Resources)

The FY 2012 Audited Financial Statement and management letter for the State of Texas and the Standard Review Report for MSU were not available at the time of the Off-Site Review as required by the standard.

MSU provided useful information explaining the state auditor function and audited financial statements that clarified the unaudited financial statements presented specifically for the university.

Reductions in state funding and an enrollment downturn, reflected in the 2011 financial report, have strained the operating budget. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that the implementation of the BOR Mustang Guarantee could also challenge the university to absorb operating expenses from grant and endowment resources.

Both 2010 and 2011 years showed a loss before Capital Contributions, Additions to Endowments and Special Items. A decrease in Net Assets was presented for the 2011 fiscal year. Bad debt expense in 2011 was significantly higher than in 2010 without explanation.

An increase in the unrestricted net assets was an encouraging sign from 2010 to 2011. Reductions in operating expenses were evident, and the financial health of the university remains stable; however, the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee indicated that an evaluation of the 2012 financials was warranted to confirm the university is operating within its means.

The FY 2012 Audited Financial Statement and management letter for the State of Texas and the Standard Review Report for MSU were reviewed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The total net assets for MSU increased approximately $7M and almost 8%, primarily as a result of gifts and capital contributions. While enrollment continued to decline in 2012 and gross tuition revenues were flat with an increase in scholarship allowances, the University has adopted new recruitment strategies for 2013 to respond to the decline.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee also reviewed bad debt expense for fiscal year 2012, noting a decline from 2011. The significant increase in 2011 was the result of an abnormal expense in 2010. The MSU policy is to reserve 75% of past due receivable (other than current semester). However, at the time of the computer system conversion in 2009, the past due balances transferred into the
new system were reserved at 100%. The University collected approximately $200,000 in 2010 on these past due receivables; therefore, at the end of the fiscal year 2010, the new past due amounts did not require any additional expense because the existing balance in the allowance was sufficient.

The Director of Budget and Management and the VP for Business Affairs and Finance discussed the budget preparations for fiscal year 2014, currently underway, highlighting a reduction of over $600,000 in the use of one-time funding and a reduction in the amount of budgeted use of reserves for operations. While the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted the potential challenge presented by the implementation of Mustang Guarantee, the actual expense has only been approximately $88,000 over the 3 years since inception. This is primarily because most students who met the eligibility received other resources that met the financial need.

Additional efforts are underway to maintain the financial condition of the University including a voluntary separation plan, which will generate approximately $600,000 in annual savings. Appropriate cost reductions have been made in various expenses (travel, staffing, utility savings, maintenance and operations). The VP for Business Affairs and Finance confirmed that the reductions have been strategically selected and have not impacted the quality of services provided. Fundraising remains strong for MSU and can fulfill needs while enrollment growth is sought.

Although state appropriations declined over $1.7M and over 7% from 2011 to 2012, the University has managed this loss and been able to increase both total net assets and unrestricted net assets while maintaining low tuition increases and implementing new strategies for enrollment growth. Therefore, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee finds compliance with the standard.

2.11.2 The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. (Physical Resources)

An update on the Five-Year Master Plan, Phase I was presented to the BOR in February 2012 and provided information about proposed building construction and renovation. Recently completed construction and renovation projects indicate a strong commitment to maintaining facilities. Space utilization information suggests there is capacity in existing classrooms and laboratories to accommodate growth.

2.12 The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

The institution has developed an acceptable QEP. See Part III for additional information.

C. Assessment of Compliance with Section 3: Comprehensive Standards
3.1.1 The mission statement is current and comprehensive, accurately guides the institution’s operations, is periodically reviewed and updated, is approved by the governing board, and is communicated to the institution’s constituencies. (Mission).

The institution’s current mission statement was most recently revised during the 2009-2010 academic year and was approved by the Board of Regents on May 14, 2010. The mission is reviewed periodically by the administration, the Board of Regents, and the campus community. The mission is appropriate and specific to the institution, its students, and the communities it serves. The institution’s mission is published in both the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs and on the university’s website.

3.2.1 The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the periodic evaluation of the chief executive officer. (CEO evaluation/selection)

The Board of Regents is vested with the authority to select and appoint the President both by the Texas Education Code and by MSU Policy 2.31, which requires the election of the President by the Board "at its first meeting each calendar year." The incumbent is serving in the third year of a three-year appointment. His contract requires annual evaluations. The Compliance Report documented the President's self-evaluation and provided Board minutes and a copy of a letter from the Board Chair to the President as evidence of the President’s annual evaluation by the Board.

3.2.2 The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution’s governance structure: (Governing board control)

3.2.2.1 the institution’s mission

The control of the institution, including mission, is vested in the Board by the Texas Education Code (103.02 and 61.0511), copies of which were provided. Both the Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board have recently (2011) reviewed and approved the mission statement.

3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution

The Board of Regents is charged with overall responsibility for the institution by TEC, Chapter 103 and with fiduciary responsibilities by TEC, 51.352. Chapter 13 of the THECB rules establishes the Board's role in budget approval and financial accountability. This is reinforced by MSU Policy and by the Board of Regents Bylaws.

3.2.2.3 institutional policy

The legal authority for the Board's control of institutional policy is established in TEC 103.02 and published in MSU Policies 2.21 and 2.22. Board minutes provided in response to other core requirements and comprehensive standards document the Board's exercise of its policy making authority.
3.2.3 The governing board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members. *(Board conflict of interest)*

The Texas Government Code precludes conflict of interest by public officials (which includes MSU Board members) at 572.001. In addition, the Board of Regents has implemented a conflict of interest policy for its members. The Compliance Report included copies of minutes of four Board of Regents meetings at which members recused themselves from certain actions because of potential conflicts of interest.

3.2.4 The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies and protects the institution from such influence. *(External influence)*

The response to this standard in the Compliance Report reiterated much of the material from CS 3.2.3 relating to conflict of interest. In addition, MSU policy 2.25, Section G.5 was cited which charges the Board "to assure that outside influences or pressures from political or religious organizations or other external sources do not affect "the operations of the university. The minutes cited in CS 3.2.3 also serve to document application of this policy.

3.2.5 The governing board has a policy whereby members can be dismissed only for appropriate reasons and by a fair process. *(Board dismissal)*

The TEC, 103.031, and MSU Policy 2.22 provide the grounds on which impeachment charges against a board member can be made to the Governor. These include malfeasance, inability to perform duties, or excessive absence. Charges can be filed with the Governor by another board member, an employee of the university or a member of the public. Impeachment proceedings would be conducted by the Texas State Senate and require a two-thirds vote for removal. No information was provided concerning use or non-use of this provision.

Midwestern State University provided Texas Education Code 103.031 and MSU policy 2.22 and the Texas Constitution, Article 15, Section 9 as evidence of procedures and policies in existence to remove or dismiss a member of the governing board for appropriate reasons and through a fair process. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found the original information to be incomplete since no information was provided concerning "use or non-use" of the policies, and subsequently, found the institution to be in non-compliance with the standard.

In the MSU Focus Report (page 17) the institution asserts that there is no historical record of a board member being dismissed from office. Given the fact that there is no record of board dismissal, the question of "use or non-use" is irrelevant.

3.2.6 There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. *(Board/administration distinction)*
The Compliance Report documented the legal basis for the distinction between the Board's policy role and the administrative responsibilities of the President and other staff members. This included the appropriate sections of the TEC and MSU policies. In addition, the report provided specific evidence in three particular instances of clear distinctions in practice between the Board's policy function and appropriate administrative implementation of policy.

3.2.7 The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. (Organizational structure)

The University has a fairly standard organizational structure and communicates it in a variety of ways. MSU Board-approved policies cover specific responsibilities for the President and each major operational unit: academic affairs, administration and finance, advancement and public affairs, and institutional effectiveness. Job descriptions submitted for CS 3.2.8 for other officers were available to document compliance with this standard.

* 3.2.8 The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience and competence to lead the institution. (Qualified administrative/academic officers)

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. Curriculum vitae for two academic officers and one administrative officer provided as documentary evidence in the initial compliance report were out of date and did not reflect information about current position title or function. Updated versions of these documents were requested by the Committee and were subsequently received and verified during the on-site visit.

3.2.9 The institution publishes policies regarding appointment, employment, and evaluation of all personnel. (Personnel appointment)

The institution’s policies regarding appointment, employment and evaluation of faculty and staff are documented in the MSU Policies and Procedures Manual. These policies are also available for the public in print and on the website.

3.2.10 The institution periodically evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators. (Administrative staff evaluations)

MSU has a well-defined evaluation process for administrative staff. Redacted examples of evaluations of an academic dean, the athletic director and a staff member were presented as evidence of the completed process.

3.2.11 The institution’s chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution’s intercollegiate athletics program. (Control of intercollegiate athletics)
The Director of Athletics is a direct report to the President. The Compliance Report documented the institution’s adherence to NCAA requirements concerning institutional control and the role of the President by providing the latest NCAA Self Study document. The role of the President in the review of the athletic budget and expenditures was also documented.

3.2.12 The institution demonstrates that its chief executive officer controls the institution’s fund-raising activities. (Fund-raising activities).

The TEC clearly gives the Board of Regents authority to accept gifts; Board policies assign this authority to the President; and, the President has delegated the day-to-day operations to the appropriate Vice President. Several examples of presidential and senior administrator interaction with the Board about fund-raising activities were offered as evidence. The present’s role in fund-raising by the foundation is less direct; see CS 3.2.13.

3.2.13 For any entity organized separately from the institution and formed primarily for the purpose of supporting the institution or its programs: (1) the legal authority and operating control of the institution is clearly defined with respect to that entity; (2) the relationship of that entity to the institution and the extent of any liability arising out of that relationship is clearly described in a formal, written manner; and (3) the institution demonstrates that (a) the chief executive officer controls any fund-raising activities of that entity or (b) the fund-raising activities of that entity are defined in a formal, written manner which assures that those activities further the mission of the institution. (Institution-related entities)

The Bylaws for the MSU Foundation and the Declaration of Trust for the MSU Charitable Trust are signed and have been approved by the Board of Regents. Clearly defined expectations and roles as well as the extent of liability are apparent in the policy documents establishing the role of each organization and its relationship to the university. MSU policy 2.322 (cited in the prior standard) charges the President with “Serving the Midwestern State University Foundation, Inc. and cooperating in every way possible as requested by the Foundation to enhance its holdings, and advising in the disposition of available funds to the university.” MSU Policy 4.145 further clarifies the relationship of the institution to the foundation.

3.2.14 The institution’s policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. These policies apply to students, faculty, and staff. (Intellectual property rights)


The University is required by the state to place a current copy of its intellectual property policies on file with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) or on the institutional website. The narrative concerning CS 3.2.9 (p. 117) indicates that the Policies and Procedures Manual is on the web and in print in several locations. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee did not find clear
evidence that these policies have been enforced by the institution, or that students and faculty are informed of the location of these policies on intellectual property.

In the Focused Report, the institution stated that both students and faculty are informed of the intellectual property rights (MSU Policy 3.139) that apply to faculty, staff and students. Students are informed of the policy during orientation and the statement is referenced in the Student Handbook. The policy is also referenced in both the Undergraduate (pg. 84) and Graduate Catalogs (pg. 52). Faculty are informed of the policy during their initial orientation to the institution.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the institution’s intellectual property rights policies (MSU Policy 3.139 and MSU Policy 3.140), the Academic Council Minutes, the THECB Intellectual Rights Policy and both the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. The Committee interviewed several faculty and staff members, including the Presidents of the Faculty and Staff Senates respectively, and determined that faculty and staff are informed of the policy during their orientation to the institution as new employees. Department Chairs inform new adjunct faculty during their orientation. Students are informed of the policy as part of the orientation process to the institution as entering freshmen or transfer students.

The institution only had two instances to exercise its intellectual rights policy within the last three (3) years. These instances were both requests by faculty members to use textbooks they had written in courses they were assigned to teach. They occurred in December 2011 and January 2013 respectively. The Committee interviewed both faculty members in question. Copies of their written requests were reviewed. One request dated September 6, 2011, references the policy and requests approval for use in the spring 2012.

Minutes of the Academic Council meetings document consideration and approval by the Council. In the case of the request approved in December 2011, an email message from the department chair to the faculty member informs the faculty member of the approval. A memorandum from the same faculty member to the Provost, dated October 9, 2007, regarding the same textbook informs the institution of publication of the book and a desire to use it as a supplemental resource for students in one of her classes was also reviewed. Purchase by students was not required.

In an interview with the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the On-Site Committee was informed that formal written notification of Academic Council actions regarding intellectual property rights are not sent to the parties involved. Instead, minutes of Academic Council meetings are disseminated widely electronically.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee finds clear evidence that the intellectual rights policy has been enforced by the institution and that faculty and students are informed of the location of the property.

* 3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (Institutional Effectiveness):
3.3.1.1 *educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concurs with the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee that the institution is in compliance through its assessment process for the educational program and inclusion of student learning outcomes.

All academic programs assess student learning outcomes on an annual basis and use data to inform program improvement decisions. The institution provided documentation on 40% of the Detailed Assessment Reports (DAR) from across the colleges. In addition to the randomly selected undergraduate and graduate programs, distance education programs and all academic programs in the assessment management system WeaveOnline were also reviewed. The institution provided two and a half assessment cycles for review. The extents to which individual programmatic student learning outcomes were achieved and the connection between analysis of assessment results and improvements made were clearly demonstrated.

3.3.1.2 *administrative support services

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concurs with the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

The institution provided sample documentation on 40% of the administrative support service areas. The institution identified outcomes/objectives for individual administrative support services, demonstrated the extent to which these outcomes were achieved, and showed the connection between analysis of assessment results and improvements made in the Detailed Assessment Reports (DAR) from the 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 (partial) cycles.

3.3.1.3 *academic and student support services

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concurs with the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee that the institution is in compliance through its assessment process for academic and student support services.

The institution provided sample documentation on 40% of the support service areas. The institution identified functional objectives and student learning outcomes for each academic and student support services unit, demonstrated the extent to which these functional objectives and student learning outcomes were achieved, and demonstrated the connection between analysis of assessment results and improvements made. Sufficient documentation of academic and student support services engaging in a systematic and ongoing annual assessment process is evident in the Detailed Assessment Reports (DAR) in WeaveOnline.

3.3.1.4 *research within its mission, if appropriate
The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concurs with the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee that the institution is in compliance through its assessment process for research within its mission.

The primary department supporting and monitoring formal research on campus is the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP). The institution has identified functional objectives for research, clearly demonstrated the extent to which these functional outcomes were achieved, and shown the connection between analysis of assessment results and actions taken for improvement. Sufficient documentation of the OSP engaging in a systematic and ongoing annual assessment process is evident in the Detailed Assessment Reports (DAR).

3.3.1.5 *community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concurs with the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee that the institution is in compliance through its assessment process for community/public service within its mission.

The institution sponsors two departments that specifically serve the community: the Museum of Art and the Department of Continuing Education. In addition, co-curricular and service activities are distributed across the institution. Both the Museum and the Department of Continuing Education participate in the annual assessment cycle. Sufficient documentation of the departments engaging in a systematic and ongoing annual assessment process is evident in the Detailed Assessment Reports (DAR).

3.3.2 The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that (1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (3) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

The institution satisfactorily addressed all components of this standard. See Part III for additional information.

3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. (Academic program approval)

The institution has a clear and well-articulated procedure for curricular development, approval, and oversight. New program curricular development is initiated by faculty and follows a process of review and approval by the Dean, Academic Council and Provost and, externally, by the MSU Board of Regents and the THECB. Faculty are integral to the ongoing assessment of programs. Distance Education programs follow the same approval process and must meet the same State of Texas requirements as traditional programs.
3.4.2 The institution’s continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution’s mission. (Continuing education/service programs)

MSU’s mission statement supports opportunities for research and creative activities along with co-curricular and service programs. The Center for Continuing Education offers learning experiences for members of the community through mini-courses and online professional development opportunities.

*3.4.3 The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission. (Admissions policies)

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The Committee notes the institution’s undergraduate and graduate admissions policies are appropriately published in various print and electronic media and are consistent with its mission as a public university offering education in the liberal arts and professions at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

3.4.4 The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution’s own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution’s transcript. (See Commission policy “Collaborative Academic Arrangements.”) (Acceptance of academic credit)

The institution has published policies for evaluating, awarding, and accepting transfer credit. Requirements are published in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs and on the university website. A maximum of 30 semester credit hours may be earned through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, College Level Examination Program, and Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). Further policies pertaining to credit based on a proficiency examination (subject to approval by the dean) and credit for experiential learning (up to 6 credit hours for the BAAS program) are provided. The institution participates in the Texas Common Course Numbering System and publishes Course Equivalency Guides on its website.

There is no automatic transfer of graduate credit hours. Typically, six credit hours are allowed, but up to twelve credit hours may be transferred with the approval of the graduate coordinator, the Dean of the college, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

3.4.5 The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. (Academic policies)

Sufficient evidence is presented that the academic policies for Midwestern State University adhere to principles of good educational practice and are published
and accessible in undergraduate and graduate catalogs and in faculty and student manuals. Examples of the approval process for recent policy changes were offered (changes to: early advising and registration, Graduate English program language requirements, and the Writing proficiency Exam).

3.4.6 The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. *(Practices for awarding credit)*

Consistent with the State of Texas Administrative Code 4.6, credit is awarded on the basis of 15 contact hours per credit hour. Three credit hour courses typically meet for 15 weeks plus final exams. The Texas Administrative Code stipulates that courses offered via distance formats do not have to meet this standard as long as the courses have been reviewed and approved through a process equivalent to that for traditionally-delivered courses. The policy for determining credit hour allocation for laboratory and practicum/internship experiences is stated in the narrative, although no reference is made to a written policy.

Course credit determinations for undergraduate courses begin with department faculty and are approved by the College Dean, the Academic Council, and the Provost. Graduate course credits are reviewed and credit is allocated through the same review process used for undergraduate courses with an additional review by the Graduate Council prior to submission to the Academic Council. Course descriptions in Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs include information about course credit.

In summary, institutional practices appear to be consistent with this standard. However, there is a lack of clear policy to ensure consistency in application. See FR 4.9 for details.

3.4.7 The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the *Principles* and periodically evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the mission of the institution. *(See the Commission policy “Collaborative Academic Arrangements.”)* *(Consortia relationships/contractual agreements)*

The institution reports having no consortia or contractual agreements.

3.4.8 The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience. *(Noncredit to credit)*

MSU awards academic credit for course work taken on a non-credit basis when documentation shows the non-credit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience. MSU appears to limit acceptance of such credit to the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences (BAAS) and health sciences programs. Experiential credit must be verified and documented by BAAS staff. Non-traditional credit earned must agree with that established as the norms for ACE accredited schools and programs, military education and training, and regionally accredited vocational-technical schools, junior colleges, and universities.
3.4.9 The institution provides appropriate academic support services. **(Academic support services)**

MSU offers a variety of academic support services. Academic advising is mandatory and required each semester. Advising is decentralized and guided by Academic Advising Committee, with professional advisors for first-year and at-risk students. Academic degree plans are available online to assist students in completing program requirements. The Career Management Center, Disability Support Services, Testing Center and Counseling Center provide additional support services. The Academic Success Center oversees a range of support programs for students. In addition to academic advising for first-year students and undecided majors, the Center coordinates academic referrals for students with course-related difficulties and offers supplemental instruction for historically difficult courses. The First-Year Probation Program requires first-year students earning academic probation during the first semester to repeat courses in which they earned D’s or F’s and to enroll in the Skills for Success course during the second semester. Specialized labs located in academic buildings include the hands-on dental hygiene clinic, the nursing simulation lab, four teaching and research labs for athletic training and exercise physiology, eight engineering labs, the Dalquest Desert Research Station, the Security Training and Research Lab, studio theatre, and an in-house production studio for mass communication students.

Academic enrichment opportunities are provided by the Office of International Education (study abroad), student academic organizations and honor societies, and the common freshman reading. Students are able to gain career and field experiences by participating in a variety of internship and practicum placements. Student Support Services provides 161 first-generation or low-income students with individualized educational plans and other services. All students have access to assistance with course work through the Writing Center, Supplemental Instruction Program, Academic Success Center, and tutoring provided through academic departments.

Distance education students have online access to advising services, library resources, and Writing Center services. Access to other academic support programs and services is available by telephone or other means through the distance education webpage.

3.4.10 The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty. **(Responsibility for curriculum)**

The process for developing new programs originates with the faculty and is approved through department chairs, deans and the Provost. The faculty is responsible for reviewing and assessing the quality of the curriculum through annual monitoring of data related to student learning outcomes and periodic program reviews. Evidence was provided to show that program origination and change comes from the faculty of individual departments and colleges and faculty are well represented in assessment decision making. Policies related to curricular responsibilities and processes are published in the MSU Policy and Procedures Manual and are consistent with THECB standards.
*3.4.11 For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration. *(Academic program coordination)*

Policies related to responsibility for oversight of programs are published in the MSU Policies and Procedures Manual. Qualifications for department chairs, program coordinators and graduate program directors were provided in the Academic Program Chairs and Coordinators Roster. Evidence of acceptable qualifications in the field was provided for all majors and concentrations with the exceptions of Respiratory Care and Radiological Science in the College of Health Sciences and Human Services.

In the Focused Report, the institution cited evidence from the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) that a person with a Master's degree in the field possessed the appropriate level of training to serve as Department chair. The institution further cited evidence from the Commission on Respiratory Care (COARC) that persons holding a Baccalaureate degree in the field meet the qualifications to serve as Director of Clinical Education. Transcripts for the chairs of Respiratory Care and Radiologic Science were reviewed by the On-Site Review Committee.

The On-Site Committee reviewed a survey from the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) which indicated that the Master’s degree was the appropriate degree for a person to serve as department chair. Based upon the ASRT determination that the Master’s degree was appropriate, MSU designated the Master’s degree as the terminal degree required to provide program oversight.

A review of the curriculum vitae and transcripts for Radiological Science Department chair by the On-Site Committee revealed a record of scholarly productivity in the discipline that is equivalent to that which a person with a doctorate might produce.

The On-Site Review Committee reviewed the Interpretive Guidelines for 2010 Standards of the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (COARC) and determined that the Director of Clinical Education must have earned a baccalaureate degree. Initial professional licensing requirements in the field are met with only an Associate’s degree. The baccalaureate degree was designated as the appropriate terminal degree by MSU to provide program oversight.

A review of the curriculum vitae and transcripts for the chair of the Respiratory Care department indicated that COARC standards were met.

3.4.12 The institution’s use of technology enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs. Students have access to and training in the use of technology. *(Technology use)*

The MSU Strategic Plan states that the University will provide current and viable technology to support institutional activities. Students have access to over twenty computer labs on campus. A review of the supporting documentation in the Compliance Report indicates that there are 395 PCs and 49 Macs in labs or
classrooms. Classroom technology upgrades is scheduled for the current semester.

Internet service capacity was increased from 45 MB to 200 MB in June 2012. Wireless coverage will be expanded to include all outside areas, student housing and all office areas by December 2012. A new portal application with single sign-on will go live in December 2012.

Technology is used to enhance student learning in a variety of ways. Examples include TheaterCAD to assist students in creation and design of costumes and scenery, art-related image databases, the nursing Simulation Center, radiography suites with patient phantoms, STAR lab simulated trading floor for business students, and integration of technology into instructional methodologies for pre-service teachers.

Students are informed of technology resources at new student orientation and through web pages. Distance education students can get technical support from the Office of Extended Education. There are web portal pages for access to student resources and library resources. All students must demonstrate computer literacy through a proficiency test or selected course.

3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. (General education competencies)

The institution clearly identifies college-level education competencies and provided sufficient documentation to demonstrate the extent to which students have attained these competencies. Examples of documentation include results from the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), General Education Competencies and Associated Student Learning Outcomes, the Writing Proficiency Exam, and Core Course Assessments.

3.5.2 At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (See the Commission policy “Collaborative Academic Arrangements.”) (Institutional credits for a degree).

MSU requires that 25% of credit hours for a degree be earned through institutional credit and provided evidence in a sample degree audit that it tracks student progress and compliance with the policy. The Residence Requirement Policy is published in the Undergraduate Catalog.

3.5.3 The institution publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. (See the Commission policy “Collaborative Academic Arrangements.”) (Undergraduate program requirements)

MSU publishes and clearly articulates requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components, in the Undergraduate Catalog which is available in print and online. The process for updating catalog
changes on the website is provided. The core curriculum is designed to support MSU’s mission as a public liberal arts university by providing students with a range of knowledge, skills and intellectual approaches grounded in six areas of development: writing, reading, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning, and oral communication. Department chairs and faculty review programs to ensure conformity to standards of other schools and of accrediting bodies in the disciplines. A sample updated catalog page shows that program review is an ongoing process.

Distance education programs conform to the same program requirements as their traditional program counterparts. However, the pathway to completing these programs depends on a core curriculum that is inconsistently defined. (See CR 2.7.2.)

In the Focused Report, the institution stated that the inconsistency in representing the Core Curriculum in the Undergraduate Catalog had been approved by the Academic Council and placed in the online catalog. The institution further stated that the changes will be included in the next printing of the catalog. Review of the Minutes of the Academic Council and the changes to the online catalog confirm the institution’s statements.

3.5.4 At least 25 percent of the course hours in each major at the baccalaureate level are taught by faculty members holding an appropriate terminal degree—usually the earned doctorate or the equivalent of the terminal degree. (Terminal degrees of faculty)

Percentages of MSU’s discipline course hours in each major at the baccalaureate level taught by faculty members holding either a terminal degree in the discipline or its equivalent ranged from 26.8% to 100%. While some of the concentrations in the BAAS degree appeared to have percentages as low as 0-20%, this degree is interdisciplinary and has no dedicated faculty members per se. For programs offered primarily online, the percentage ranged from 60% in Criminal Justice to 90% in Radiologic Sciences. A sampling of faculty listed as having the doctorate or equivalent terminal degree provided evidence that departments and colleges are accurately identifying them as such. However, the Education major numbers (Table 1) are aggregated, so that compliance cannot be accurately determined.

In the Focused Report, the institution disaggregated the number of course hours taught by Education faculty to correspond with the areas of concentration. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Faculty Roster Form to identify the Education courses by concentration that were taught by faculty with terminal degrees. After review, all departments within the institution meet the minimum 25 percent requirement.

3.6.1 The institution’s post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master’s and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs. (Post-baccalaureate program rigor)

The institution’s graduate programs are progressively more advanced in academic content and expectations than its undergraduate programs. A matrix mapping the content of programs from undergraduate to graduate levels
demonstrates this progression. Review of program content found in the catalog confirms that such a progression exists throughout the curriculum.

3.6.2 The institution structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. (Graduate curriculum)

Learning outcomes for graduate programs demonstrate alignment with the Graduate Council Mission Statement and the Graduate School Assessment Plan. In its “Academic Progression and Learning Outcomes Matrix,” MSU delineates how its graduate curricula include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and ensure ongoing student engagement in research or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. Sample syllabi and other documents provide further evidence of compliance. Examples of individual program expectations for knowledge of the literature of the discipline and student engagement in research are included.

3.6.3 At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (See the Commission policy “Collaborative Academic Arrangements.”) (Institutional credits for a degree)

A MSU master’s degree is comprised of no fewer than 30 hours and a maximum of 12 hours can be accepted from another regionally accredited institution to be applied toward the master’s degree. Institutional credits for a graduate degree make up more than one-third of the overall required credit hours. The policy is published in the Graduate Catalog along with other transfer requirements. A sample redacted transcript shows that transferred hours are clearly identified. The Office of the Registrar is involved in the process for approving degree plans.

3.6.4 The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-graduate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. (Post-baccalaureate program requirements)

The institution defines and publishes its requirements for graduate and post-baccalaureate programs in a print and on-line version of the Graduate Catalog. Policies and requirements are consistent with those of the THECB. The Graduate School’s website provides general and program-specific information; individual program websites provide additional details. The Graduate Council defines policies for graduate and post-baccalaureate programs, Policy revisions are approved by the Graduate Council, the Academic Council, and the Board of Regents as appropriate. An example of a policy revision was provided.

3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure
and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. \textit{(See Commission guidelines “Faculty Credentials.”)} \textbf{(Faculty competence)}

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that while most faculty were appropriately qualified, concerns regarding numerous faculty (and/or TA’s) in Education and Psychology were found as well as in other disciplines. The qualifications of faculty in the Department of Radiologic Sciences were of particular concern. The Compliance Report stated for one faculty member that the highest degree in the discipline is a B.S. and stated that no terminal degree exists for the discipline. However, other faculty members in the field were listed as having a MSRS degree.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the additional information provided in the Focused Report and documentation in faculty files in the office of the Provost and VPAA and conducted interviews with the academic deans and the Provost and VPAA. Teaching Assistants had 18 or more graduate credit hours in the discipline. A faculty member in education lacked graduate credit hours in the discipline and classroom teaching experience for student teaching supervision in elementary education. Midwestern State University began one of the first Master’s programs in Radiologic Sciences. Some faculty in the program earned that degree. Others have the qualifications required by the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology. The JRCERT Committee publishes guidelines for program directors, clinical coordinators, and didactic program faculty. The associate’s degree program at MSU is accredited by the JRCERT Committee. Therefore, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Committee.

\textbf{Recommendation 1:} The committee recommends that the institution provide evidence that the faculty member identified in the attachment (Request for Justifying and Documenting Qualifications of Faculty) is appropriately qualified.

\textbf{3.7.2} \textit{The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status.} \textbf{(Faculty evaluation)}

Tenured and non-tenured faculty, department chairs, and deans are evaluated on an annual basis utilizing a standard format that includes evaluation in teaching effectiveness, research/scholarly activity, service, compliance with institutional policies and procedures, and graduate faculty level performance, as applicable. Annual evaluations serve as post-tenure review and support for those seeking promotion and tenure.

Faculty members who teach in distance education programs are evaluated using the same metrics as their on-campus counterparts. MSU provides evidence of an adjunct faculty evaluation process in progress, reporting that adjunct and other part-time faculty have been evaluated since December 2011. The sampling of faculty evaluations presented in the Compliance Report were not representative of the breadth of the educational programs offered by Midwestern State.

The On-Site Review Committee examined a Personal Report of Teaching Effectiveness submitted by faculty from at least thirty (30) different subject areas.
near the end of the fall 2012 semester. The Report relies very heavily upon self-reported information from each faculty member. Each Department chair marks a rating of perceived effectiveness. This is followed by a narrative that varies with each chair.

A different form, the Evaluation for Adjunct Faculty Members, was used to evaluate all adjunct faculty with the exception of those in Education and those in Health Sciences and Human Services. The College of Education used the Performance Appraisal Worksheet. The metrics of the instruments used to evaluate both full-time and part-time faculty are comparable. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee examined evaluations of adjunct faculty from 6 of the 7 Colleges. The reports submitted cover the breadth of the educational programs offered by MSU except as noted.

The College of Health Sciences and Human Service will begin adjunct faculty evaluations in Spring 2013. College Council Minutes from August 2012 indicate that the evaluation of adjunct faculty will begin in January 2013.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a copy of the intended evaluation form and a written description of the process. The Committee also interviewed the dean of the College of Health Sciences and Human Services who explained the development of the form and process used. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation explaining the steps in the evaluation process that was distributed to all adjunct faculty in January 2013 was reviewed by the Committee.

However, currently no evaluations of adjunct faculty in the College of Health Sciences and Human Services have been conducted.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the institution present evidence that the institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of adjunct faculty members in the College of Health Sciences and Human Services.

3.7.3 The institution provides evidence of ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners. (Faculty development)

Professional development for faculty is provided by the Teaching and Learning Resources Center and includes workshops attended by approximately 20% of faculty. Examples were provided of documented support from the President’s Office, the Provost’s Office, the Graduate School, the University Research Committee and College Research Committees for memberships, publications, research, training and travel.

3.7.4 The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom. (Academic freedom)

Midwestern State University has academic freedom policies consistent with the Texas Education Code: MSU Policy 3.118, Academic Affairs: Academic Freedom and Responsibility; MSU Policy 3.120, Tenure and Promotion; and MSU Policy 3.143, Academic Affairs: Faculty Grievance Procedure. Policies are published in the institution’s Policies and Procedures Manual. Further, the Faculty Senate serves in an advisory role by making recommendations to administrative officers (published in the Faculty Senate Constitution, MSU Policy 2.392 Article IV). Faculty Senate meeting minutes of 4/24/2008 provide an example of the process utilized when a concern was raised about student evaluation of instruction.
Records of faculty grievances are kept on file in the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The institution reports that no faculty member has filed a grievance for a violation of academic freedom in the last 10 years.

3.7.5 The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. (Faculty role in governance)

The institution publishes several documents which demonstrate the expected responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. The Faculty Manual explains the areas of faculty governance as do the Graduate and Undergraduate Catalogs. Several sets of faculty minutes were provided that show the policies are implemented.

3.8.1 The institution provides facilities and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission. (Learning/information resources)

The Moffett Library is a three-story building with 93,676 square feet. There are 11 group study rooms, 29 individual study rooms, and a variety of open seating throughout the building. The Information Technology Department maintains 15 public access computers and a student computer lab in the facility. Supporting documents for CS 3.4.12 indicate the lab has 18 computers. Discipline-specific labs and learning resources housed in academic departments are noted in CS 3.4.9.

Library collections include audiovisuals, a Curriculum Materials Library, government documents, microforms, special collections, 117 online databases and an extensive print reference collection of 11,159 volumes. Laptops, camcorders, digital projectors, and other related equipment are available for checkout from the Media Department. Recommendations for additional materials are made by a liaison from each department, with the Collection Development/Systems Librarian selecting additional materials to balance the collection. Access to resources is enhanced by a comprehensive discovery service, Primo, and by the Voyager online catalog. Circulation, interlibrary loan and reference services are described in the Compliance Report.

Distance education users may access online resources through the library’s distance education web page. Research Guides provide subject-specific resources. Reference service is available via online chat or a toll-free number when the Reference Desk is staffed.

3.8.2 The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources. (Instruction of library use)

MSU offers regular and timely instruction in the use of library resources. Each college has a “faculty partner” librarian who provides research assistance, training and classroom instruction. In 2011/2012, librarians conducted 171 instruction sessions. Freshman English instructors may select from four learning modules to incorporate into their syllabi.
Pre- and post-tests administered to select groups of freshman English classes in 2009 and 2010 indicate that students gain knowledge as a result of library instruction. Changes have been made to the College Connections library instruction based on regular assessment and discussions with instructors.

Distance education students have access to research aids through the “Library Services for Distance Students” web page which includes instructions for contacting a reference librarian through online chat, email or toll-free phone. Instruction sessions are provided for distance education students when they attend on-site classes during the semester as shown in the example of radiology research. Both distance and on-campus students have access to subject-specific LibGuides which were introduced in spring 2012.

The Compliance Report indicates that the librarians regularly contact faculty regarding instructional needs. In turn, two instruction librarians provide ongoing training for all librarians.

3.8.3 The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution. (Qualified staff)

All nine librarians in the Moffett Library hold a master’s degree from an ALA accredited institution, and five hold additional advanced degrees. The library also has six full-time support staff and 25 part-time student assistants. Position descriptions are provided for all librarians. The CVs give some evidence of professional development such as webinars attended in 2009-10. According to the CVs, two librarians have made presentations at professional conferences. The narrative states that three to four librarians attend the Texas Library Association’s Annual Conference and the ExLibris annual conference each year.

3.9.1 The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community. (Student rights)

The institution informs students of their rights and responsibilities as well as applicable policies and procedures through the Student Handbook which includes a Statement of Student Rights, the Code of Student Conduct, Human Dignity Statement, and Honor Creed. Printed copies of the Handbook are made available to students at multiple locations on campus and are distributed during New Student Orientation. An online orientation includes modules addressing student rights for distance education students. The same information is included in both the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Electronic copies of these publications can be accessed on several institutional websites.

Multiple avenues are provided to students to address grievances including racial or sexual harassment, disability, educational records and student conduct. A general grievance procedure is available to students for complaints not covered by other published policies or regulations.
3.9.2  The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains security measures to protect and back up data. *(Student records)*.

The institution has adequate policies and procedures to protect the security and confidentiality of student records. Students are informed of their rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) through the Student Handbook, Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, the Schedule of Classes and on the MSU website. An online FERPA tutorial is available on the webpage of the Office of the Registrar. The Compliance Report indicated locations for various records and specifically identified responsible departments.

The Counseling Center has a specific Confidentiality of Records policy that includes communication, storage of paper and electronic records, training and audit process. The Health Center describes procedures of the security and confidentiality of records and the use of social security numbers. Computer records are maintained by a contracted provider and stored at a secure remote site.

Student records are maintained in accordance with established institution policy and a records retention schedule consistent with guidelines from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the MSU Board of Regents. Procedures are in place for backing up electronic records which are moved to secure storage facilities off site. Permanent academic records are securely stored in a locked and alarmed vault with restricted access. A Disaster Recovery Plan has been developed.

All employees sign a Data Security agreement which follows FERPA guidelines. Faculty and staff are granted access to student records only as needed to perform their specific job duties. Training is required before employees are granted access and a password to the student information system. Changes to security access must be approved by appropriate administrators.

3.9.3  The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experience in the student affairs area—to accomplish the mission of the institution. *(Qualified staff)*

Most student services are provided by the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Departments and program areas are described in CR 2.10. A Vice President and Associate Vice President manage the division. The institutional organization chart indicates that the Vice President reports to the President of the institution and is part of the senior leadership team.

Staff have the appropriate degrees and relevant experience for the position held. Evidence includes a chart of department heads with a brief overview of major responsibilities, academic qualifications and professional experience. Links are provided to each institutional job description and individual curriculum vitae. Also listed are professional organization memberships and leadership roles as well as recent presentations and publications. Examples of staffing ratios based on professional standards indicate adequate levels for the number of students served.
3.10.1 The institution’s recent financial history demonstrates financial stability. (Financial stability)

General operating conditions seem solid with good management intervention to control spending during downturns in tuition and state reductions. The internal budget process is organized and strongly influenced by requirements for state institutions. Effective reporting of goals and objectives with performance reports strengthens the university communication and financial transparency.

Evidence about the implementation of budget processes was not sufficient to determine compliance. Net Assets were negative for 2011 and review of the 2012 financial statements should confirm the university has corrected the negative trend. In the 2011 financial statement a decline in maintenance spending was reported from 2010 to 2011.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the budget planning for 2014, currently underway, noting a reduction of over $600,000 in the use of one-time funding and a reduction in the amount of budgeted use of reserves for operations. The 2012 Financial Statements revealed that fundraising remains strong and has been utilized to supplement the existing budget in these challenging times.

The institution has a system of financial monitoring quarterly, in which key financial data are reviewed by the VP of Business Affairs and Finance. In addition, the Vice President prepares a written letter with necessary explanation and commentary that accompanies the reports to the Board of Regents. Therefore, the institution is actively monitoring financial results to respond to economic conditions. The core ratios of the University (primary reserve ratio, viability ratio, return on net assets ratio, and net operating revenues ratio) all show marked improved for fiscal year 2012. Additionally, the review of the 2012 Financial Report indicated that both unrestricted net assets and total net assets increased by approximately 8%.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee also noted that maintenance expenses increased from 2011 to 2012 and discussions with the Associate Vice President for Facilities indicated that sufficient resources are devoted to maintenance.

While the institution has experienced declining enrollment, measures have been taken to respond to this trend. As a result, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concluded that despite a significant loss in state funding and declining enrollment, the institution has managed the finances of the institution in a manner that demonstrates financial stability in these conditions.

3.10.2 The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations. (Financial aid audits)

The Department of Education Eligibility and Certification Approval Report is available and indicates full eligibility and certification through March 2015. The most recent DOE audit for Title IV for the period ending June 30, 2010 shows two findings, both of which have been addressed by management. Policy and Procedures are evident for controlling the distribution of aid and for reconciliation.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Texas Statewide Single Audit for the period ending June 30, 2012, which concluded that corrective action was
taken to address prior findings and no additional findings were noted. Therefore, the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee’s findings were confirmed.

3.10.3 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial resources. (Control of finances)

Management reporting processes are evident among the MSU leadership and Board of Regents. The institution has an experienced and qualified VP for Finance and Administration, Controller and accountants. A transition plan for an August 2012 retirement of the CFO is in place.

Controls are tested and evidenced through a 2012 state audit of financial and operational processes. The response to findings appears complete. A detailed assessment of primary financial control areas such as fixed assets, payroll, purchasing and budget reflects strong organization and management of the financial operations. Sample Banner reports are provided to reinforce the policy and procedures. The 2013 budget presentation was available in detail and was approved by the Board of Regents.

3.10.4 The institution maintains financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs. (Control of sponsored research/external funds)

Policies governing the establishment and management of contracts and grants are published. Grant reconciliation activities are outlined with a sample grant program budget. More information about the role of the Office of Sponsored Programs is necessary to demonstrate the relationship and coordination between the Controller’s office and Sponsored Programs.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee interviewed the VP for Business Affairs and Finance, the Director of the Sponsored Programs Office, Controller and Grant Accountant. A walk-through of the granting process revealed extensive collaboration among these areas from pre-award to close-out. Both the grant and contract checklists serve as an internal control for managing external funding. Additionally, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee inquired regarding any communications from agencies or findings from agency audits, noting no adverse issues. Therefore, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concludes MSU is in compliance with this standard.

3.11.1 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its physical resources. (Control of physical resources)

Property control and reporting requirements are posted. Managers and technical staff in the facilities operations area are qualified and experienced. A web based work order system is utilized to communicate with the campus about facilities issues. Facilities management recognizes and supports training and development opportunities for the facilities operations staff. MSU’s participation in the university and state capital management processes help to insure appropriate reporting and tracking of facilities maintenance and renovation needs.
3.11.2 The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community. (Institutional environment)

The Cleary Act information for 2011 is posted on the web in compliance with federal regulations. MSU has well-defined emergency management policies and procedures. Testing of the emergency message system is comprehensive and up-to-date. Coordination between campus police, the counseling center, housing and other university offices is comprehensive and documented in the materials presented.

Student, faculty and staff programs are offered to assist with general wellness and more immediate/emergency care. Effective use of an internal social media site to connect campus community members is well developed.

*3.11.3 The institution operates and maintains physical facilities, both on and off campus, that appropriately serve the needs of the institution’s educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities. (Physical facilities)

An up-to-date capital project plan along with a capital master plan provides solid direction for future growth of campus facilities. The Board of Regents approves construction and major renovation contracts after staff conduct formal assessments of current buildings/complexes with consideration for existing and planned program use. A recent Space Utilization Summary indicates excess capacity for enrollment growth.

Evidentiary documentation such as work order records, customer service survey results, deferred maintenance lists and details about the technology infrastructure is needed to demonstrate effective operational management.

The Off-Site Committee determined that the institution was not in compliance with 3.11.3 noting that additional evidentiary documentation was needed to demonstrate effective operation management. In response, the institution provided additional explanation and documents in the form of work order reports, monthly superintendent reports, labor hour reports, and an explanation of how the workload is evaluated to determine whether outside contractors are needed. Additionally, the institution provided customer survey responses ranging over several years which indicate a 95% satisfaction on several criteria. Finally, the management process for deferred maintenance was provided. A technology infrastructure summary was provided and inquiries of personnel indicated that technology is sufficient for University’s mission and a multi-year upgrade of classroom technology is currently underway. The campus tour provided evidence of recent progress, on-going facilities improvements and planning for future needs was discussed as well. With the addition of support documentation and more detailed explanation of internal processes, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concluded that the institution is in compliance with 3.11.3.

3.12.1 The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission’s substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes. (See the Commission policy “Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions.”) (Substantive change)
MSU provided documentation of required notices to the Commission of substantive changes pertaining to online offerings and the addition of degree programs.

3.13.1 The institution complies with the policies of the Commission on Colleges. (Policy compliance)

*3.13.1 “Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies”

Applicable Policy Statement. Any institution seeking or holding accreditation from more than one U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body must describe itself in identical terms to each recognized accrediting body with regard to purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituencies, and must keep each institutional accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

Documentation: The institution should (1) list federally recognized agencies that currently accredit the institution or any of its programs, (2) provide the date of the most recent review by each agency and indicate if negative action was taken by the agency and the reason for such action, (3) provide copies of statements used to describe itself for each of the accrediting bodies, (4) indicate any agency that has terminated accreditation, the date, and the reason for termination, and (5) indicate the date and reason for the institution voluntarily withdrawing accreditation with any of the agencies.

Through a review of relevant paper and electronic documents, as well as through interviews, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that the institution did describe itself in identical terms to other U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting bodies. The accrediting bodies affected here are as follows:

American Chemical Society
American Dental Association, Commission on Dental Accreditation
Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs
Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International
Board of Nurse Examiners for the State of Texas
Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education
Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care
Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
Council on Social Work Education
Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology
National Association of Schools of Music
State Board for Educator Certification
Technology Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, 111 Market Place, Suite 1050, Baltimore, MD 21202 (410) 347-7700

3.13.2 “Collaborative Academic Arrangements: Policy and Procedures”

Applicable Policy Statement. Member institutions are responsible for notifying and providing SACSCOC with signed final copies of agreements governing their collaborative academic arrangements (as defined in this policy). These arrangements must address the requirements set forth in the collaborative...
academic arrangements policy and procedures. For all such arrangements, SACSCOC-accredited institutions assume responsibility for (1) the integrity of the collaborative academic arrangements, (2) the quality of credits recorded on their transcripts, and (3) compliance with accreditation requirements.

**Documentation**: The institution should provide evidence that it has reported to the Commission all collaborative academic arrangements (as defined in this policy) that included signed final copies of the agreements. In addition, the institution should integrate into the Compliance Certification a discussion and determination of compliance with all standards applicable to the provisions of the agreements.

**Not applicable**

The institution reports having no consortia or contractual agreements.

*3.13.3 “Complaint Procedures Against the Commission or Its Accredited Institutions”*

**Applicable Policy Statement.** Each institution is required to have in place student complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well-publicized. *(See FR 4.5).* The Commission also requires, in accord with federal regulations, that each institution maintains a record of complaints received by the institution. This record is made available to the Commission upon request. This record will be reviewed and evaluated by the Commission as part of the institution’s decennial evaluation.

**Documentation**: When addressing this policy statement, the institution should provide information to the Commission describing how the institution maintains its record and also include the following: (1) individuals/offices responsible for the maintenance of the record(s), (2) elements of a complaint review that are included in the record, and (3) where the record(s) is located (centralized or decentralized). The record itself will be reviewed during the on-site evaluation of the institution.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

The Committee reviewed documentary materials regarding processes and procedures prescribed for various types of student and public complaints. The Committee noted the strength of the institution’s approach to providing appropriate channels for receiving, address, and recording multiple types of complaints including student academic complaints, student non-academic complaints, faculty complaints, staff and employee complaints, and public complaints against the University. The University provided the Committee a sample summary of student academic complaints and corresponding resolution from records maintained in the Office of the Provost. The University also provided the Committee a sample summary of student non-academic complaints and corresponding resolution from records maintained in the Office of the Dean of Students. The Committee reviewed actual records of complaints and corresponding resolution made available by the Office of Dean of Students. The institution reports no public complaints made against it have escalated to a formal grievance, thus resulting in no records.
3.13.4. “Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports”

*3.13.4.a. Applicable Policy Statement. An institution includes a review of its distance learning programs in the Compliance Certification.

**Documentation:** In order to be in compliance with this policy, the institution must have incorporated an assessment of its compliance with standards that apply to its distance and correspondence education programs and courses.

MSU provides adequate documentation that the Principles of Accreditation apply to all programs of the institution, regardless of mode of delivery with regard to curriculum and instruction, faculty, institutional effectiveness, student services and library and learning resources. However, no evidence is provided with regard to application of the Principles of Accreditation to distance education in the areas of facilities (technology resources to support distance learning) and finances.

The On-Site Committee interviewed the Director of Budget and Management and the Associate Vice President of Outreach and Engagement regarding technology resources and finances to support distance learning. The learning management system recently changed from being hosted on campus through Blackboard to the Desire2 Learn (D2L) system. The resulting change reduced the need for the institution to provide servers and other equipment to support distance education. The equipment that is required is budgeted for through the information technology budget. This includes equipment that might be added to expand capacity and that required for normal replacement.

A distance learning fee of $50 per credit hour is assessed for all distance learning courses. The resulting revenue that is generated exceeds $750,000 annually. This revenue is adequate to support the cost of the D2L system itself, the Help Desk function and a small amount of equipment required to expand bandwidth. Included in the Help Desk function is provision for refresher and upgrade training that existing and replacement users might need. In addition, a separate technology fee of $17 per credit hour is assessed to all students. A portion of this revenue is also devoted to supporting the distance learning program. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee also reviewed financial documents confirming these revenue sources.

3.13.4.b. Applicable Policy Statement. If an institution is part of a system or corporate structure, a description of the system operation (or corporate structure) is submitted as part of the Compliance Certification for the decennial review. The description should be designed to help members of the peer review committees understand the mission, governance, and operating procedures of the system and the individual institution’s role within that system.

**Documentation:** The institution should provide a description of the system operation and structure or the corporate structure if this applies.

(Note: The institution placed its response for 3.13.4b under 3.13.5.b) MSU is an independent state university in the State of Texas with its own Governor-appointed Board of Regents. The Board of Regents is charged with insuring that the institution complies with the rules and requirements of the State of Texas Legislature which delegates authority to the Texas
Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). THECB is responsible for multiple functions of higher education in the State of Texas. Links to THECB Rules and Regulations are provided.

3.13.5. “Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution”

*3.13.5.a. Applicable Policy Statement. All branch campuses related to the parent campus through corporate or administrative control (1) include the name of the parent campus and make it clear that its accreditation is dependent on the continued accreditation of the parent campus and (2) are evaluated during reviews for institutions seeking candidacy, initial membership, or reaffirmation of accreditation. All other extended units under the accreditation of the parent campus are also evaluated during such reviews.

Documentation: For institutions with branch campuses: (1) The name of each branch campus must include the name of the parent campus—the SACSCOC accredited entity. The institution should provide evidence of this for each of its branch campuses. (2) The institution should incorporate the review of its branch campuses, as well as other extended units under the parent campus, into its comprehensive self-assessment and its determination of compliance with the standards, and indicate the procedure for doing so.

Not applicable

3.13.5.b. Applicable Policy Statement. If the Commission on Colleges determines that an extended unit is autonomous to the extent that the control over that unit by the parent or its board is significantly impaired, the Commission may direct that the extended unit seek to become a separately accredited institution. A unit which seeks separate accreditation should bear a different name from that of the parent. A unit which is located in a state or country outside the geographic jurisdiction of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and which the Commission determines should be separately accredited or the institution requests to be separately accredited, applies for separate accreditation from the regional accrediting association that accredits colleges in that state or country.

Implementation: If, during its review of the institution, the Commission determines that an extended unit is sufficiently autonomous to the extent that the parent campus has little or no control, the Commission will use this policy to recommend separate accreditation of the extended unit. No response required by the institution.

Not applicable

3.14.1 A member or candidate institution represents its accredited status accurately and publishes the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission in accordance with Commission requirements and federal policy. (Publication of accreditation status)

MSU represents its accredited status accurately and publishes in its Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs as well as on its website the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission in accordance with Commission and federal requirements.

D. Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements
*4.1* The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent with its mission. Criteria may include: enrollment data; retention, graduation, course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations, student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals. *(Student achievement)*

The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent with its mission. Criteria may include: enrollment data, retention, graduation, course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations, student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that the institution evaluates student achievement by monitoring retention, course completion, graduation and job placement rates, and results from various required licensure examinations. While the institution recognizes monitoring student achievement, the appropriate criteria and rationale used to determine successful student achievement was not clear. For example retention data were listed but no expected threshold of achievement for this criterion was indicated.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents that provided appropriate criteria and rationale for determining thresholds of successful student achievement. Examples of documents reviewed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee included: an Enrollment Management Plan FY2013-2015 which set goals for increasing enrollment and improving retention rates, Strategic Plan which set institutional goals, dashboard of University-level performance measures and rationales for the Board of Regents, Board of Regents minutes from May 5, 2012 which discussed goals for increasing enrollment and retention.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed three years of institutional effectiveness data in WeaveOnline. Acceptable levels of performance were generally set internally through the department and/or college associated with the measure. Expected performance levels were driven by state or federal mandates, accrediting standards of specific disciplines, internal initiatives, and/or performance of peer institutions. Student achievement goals were entered in WeaveOnline by department chairs and then approved and/or revised by the relevant dean and/or Provost. An annual assessment, evaluation, and reporting process for analyzing student achievement was conducted at the departmental, college, and Provost levels of administration.

*4.2* The institution’s curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the mission and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded. *(Program curriculum)*

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that MSU offers a wide range of baccalaureate and graduate programs that reflect its mission to offer a curriculum that supports comprehensive arts and sciences, preparing students “to contribute constructively to society through their work and private lives.” The process and oversight for this is outlined in standards CR 2.7.2 and CS 3.6.2.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documentation and conducted interviews with the academic deans, the Core Curriculum Committee, and the Provost and VPAA in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.
*4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. (Publication of policies)

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. Numerous documentary materials reviewed by the Committee indicate current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies are published in print form through undergraduate catalogs, graduate catalogs, and course schedule bulletins and are widely available in digital and PDF form at various locations on the institution’s website.

*4.4 Program length is appropriate for each of the institution’s educational programs. (Program length)

The institution offers one associate degree which is 72 semester hours in length; 42 bachelor’s degrees all 120 hours or more in length; and 31 master’s programs equal or exceed 30 semester hours. The undergraduate and graduate catalogs confirm the length of these programs. Faculty Senate committees provide oversight and control.

The number of semester hours in the associate, bachelor’s and master’s programs were reviewed in an inspection of the online and printed catalogs by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The conclusion of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee is confirmed.

*4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (See the Commission policy “Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions.”) (Student complaints)

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. Numerous documentary and evidentiary materials provided by the institution communicate formal and informal procedures whereby students may seek resolution to an array of complaints (academic and non-academic concerns; challenges to educational records, FERPA complaints, disability grievances, and racial or sexual harassment complaints, course grade appeals, academic suspension or dismissal appeals, return of financial aid funds, traffic violations, student conduct and academic misconduct). Procedures for resolving written student complaints specifically related to grade appeals and traffic violations were provided, along with corresponding records noting resolution of actual complaints. The Committee noted the strength of the institution’s procedures for addressing unspecified student complaints through a newly implemented general complaint procedure.

*4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution’s practices and policies. (Recruitment materials)
The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The institution provided a substantial number of evidentiary documents, policy statements, print media samples, communication samples, and recruiting information pieces, as well as undergraduate and graduate catalogs, that accurately represent the institution’s practices and policies regarding recruiting topics such as undergraduate and graduate admission, academic program requirements, course equivalencies, international student services issues, and related topics of particular interest to prospective students.

*4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent Higher Education Act as amended. (In reviewing the institution’s compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission relies on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Department of Education.) (Title IV program responsibilities)

Corrective action was taken to address auditor findings in 2010 and 2011; therefore, MSU is currently in compliance with Title IV requirements. The DOE Eligibility and Certification approval report confirms eligibility for all aid programs through March 2015.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a revised ECAR which included an update for the newly appointed Vice President for Admin and Finance. Furthermore, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee interviewed the Director of Financial Aid and reviewed the Single Audit Report of the State of Texas, noting the conclusion that corrective action was taken on prior findings and no additional findings were noted in 2012. No additional corrective action was required and the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee’s findings were confirmed.

*4.8 An institution that offers distance or correspondence education documents each of the following: (Distance and correspondence education)

*4.8.1 demonstrates that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (a) a secure login and pass code, (b) proctored examinations, or (c) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that MSU verifies the identity of students in distance learning courses by using unique eight-character alphanumeric username and pass code for secure login to university portals and to access the MSU Learning Management System. The institution has a clearly defined procedure for proctored exams. Proctoring guidelines and procedures for nursing courses were provided as an example.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted an interview with the Registrar and the Interim Director of Information and Technology/Programming Manager in support of the
institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

*4.8.2* has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee determined that Distance education students were informed of their FERPA rights through an online tutorial that is part of distance education orientation. All students receive annual notification of FERPA rights at their university e-mail address, and FERPA rights are stated in other web and print resources.

Faculty are informed of students’ FERPA rights at new faculty orientation and during Banner system training. Information Technology Policies 10.10.01 and 10.10.03 ensure that there is no unauthorized use of system resources. The department also conducts annual controlled penetration testing.

The policies presented do not reference distance education and do not provide a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the documents provided in the Focused Report and conducted interviews with the Registrar, the Associate Vice President for Outreach and Engagement, and the Interim Director of Information and Technology/Programming Manager. The institution has created a policy for protecting the privacy of students in distance education courses and programs that is published on the website.

*4.8.3* has a written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee stated that distance education students in the two programs that use proctored exams are required to pay proctoring fees. Students are notified of these fees in two ways. All students see a notice to distance education students before entering WebWorld to enroll in classes. The notice states that some online courses required proctored exams at centers that frequently charge a fee of $10 to $25 per test that is not included in tuition and course fees and is an additional responsibility of the student. The same notice also appears on the Distance Learning Orientation which all distance education students must complete.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted an interview with the Registrar and Interim Director of Information and Technology/Programming Manager in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

*4.9* The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. *(See the Commission policy “Credit Hours.”) (Definition of credit hours)*
The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that the institution reported its definition of a credit hour for semester courses in a fashion consistent with expectations of the U.S. Department of Education as well as the Texas Administrative Code. However, the institution failed to provide its own explicit policy and procedure as required by this standard. While the Texas Administrative Code has a clear definition of a traditional credit hour, the code does not have enough specifics for dealing with any credit situation other than a traditional classroom-based course.

The Focused Report documented that the institution has created a document entitled “Midwestern State University Credit Hour Definition.” The policy states that MSU has chosen to expand on the guidelines set forth in the Texas Administrative Code Title 9, Rule 4.6 and the federal definition of a credit hour CFR Title 34, Part 600.2. The MSU Credit Hour Policy explains the application of the policy for all forms of instruction offered by the institution. The document was presented at the February 20, 2013 Academic Council Meeting. Interviews with the Registrar and the Associate Vice President for Outreach and Engagement confirmed the policy and procedures for awarding credit hours for courses and programs.

E. Additional Observations regarding strengths and weaknesses of the institution. (optional).
Part III. Assessment of the Quality Enhancement Plan

A. Brief description of the institution’s Quality Enhancement Plan

MSU’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Enhancing Undergraduate Research Endeavors and Creative Activities (EURECA), focuses on undergraduate research as a means of enhancing the traditional learning environment with experiential learning that contributes to the development of critical thinking skills, improves student retention, and strengthens faculty scholarship. The QEP focus was selected after an inclusive campus process and is based on the successful Undergraduate Research Opportunities and Summer Workshop (UGROW) program and on successful experiences with student research forums.

The EURECA program involves:

- establishment of an Office of Undergraduate Research, with a half-time faculty director and a half-time student assistant;
- curricular opportunities for student to learn about research and creative activities, including methodology;
- promotion of research collaboration between faculty members and students, including graduate students as mentors and cross disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and creative activity;
- presentations of research and creative projects in a variety of formats at Undergraduate Research Forums, to be held twice a year; and
- assessment of all of these activities.

B. Analysis of the Acceptability of the Quality Enhancement Plan


The development of the QEP began early in 2010 with the appointment of a committee to initiate the process of selecting a topic for the QEP. The committee was comprised of 15 members representing a broad cross-section of the campus community, including the faculty, student body, administration, staff, alumni, and the MSU Board of Regents. The committee implemented two web-based surveys to ensure broad-based participation in the topic-selection process.

The results of the surveys did not reveal a clear mandate, so further steps were undertaken to identify and refine the QEP topic including additional discussions with faculty, students, and administrators. A convergence of several factors resulted in the selection of undergraduate research as the topic. The institution’s positive experience with the Undergraduate Research Opportunities and Summer Workshop (UGROW) suggested a viable model. In addition, success with several student research forums supported a QEP topic that incorporated a platform for research presentations. Further, the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), of which the institution is a member university, was supporting undergraduate research as a valuable component of liberal arts education. A review of the literature also suggested that undergraduate research can be a very effective means of improving student recruitment, student
engagement, and the development of critical thinking skills. Finally, undergraduate research was consistent with the institution’s mission and the recommendations outlined in the Strategic Master Plan completed in June 2012.

2. **Focus of the Plan.** The institution identifies a significant issue that (1) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and (2) accomplishes the mission of the institution.

Undergraduate research has been a part of the institution’s program of study for many years. Traditionally, research has usually been intra-disciplinary and often concentrated in the STEM fields. The history of undergraduate research at the institution conforms to that pattern as The Inventory of Campus-wide Undergraduate Research Experiences indicates.

Two broad areas of student learning emerged from several surveys of the institutional community; critical thinking and real world experience. These fit into the institution’s history of student research. As student interest in undergraduate research increased, interdisciplinary collaboration grew. It was embraced by both students and faculty. The production of *Bandersnatch* is an early example of collaboration and the value of combining critical thinking skills and real world experience.

The advancement of undergraduate research at the institution is undergirded by the *Characteristics of Excellence in Undergraduate Research (COEUR)* (Hensel, 2012). They are as follows: (1) promotes faculty mentor-student partnerships, (2) engages students in active learning, (3) promotes inquiry, discovery, and creativity, (4) enhances and refines students’ critical thinking skills, and (5) promotes and supports faculty scholarship with student learning. The overall goal of Enhancing Undergraduate Research Endeavors & Creative Activities (EURECA) is to “enhance the opportunity for students to engage in research with faculty guidance.”

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has reviewed the QEP and found it to be focused on the student learning outcomes. The learning outcomes take students stepwise through the process of learning research skills with peers and faculty, appreciating student-faculty interactions, analyzing research outcomes, understanding the research process, examining ethical considerations in research and how they might be applied in real world situations and communicating the results of their research.

The project focuses on the environment that supports student learning in that it reinforces a change in the campus culture to cultivate more undergraduate research opportunities that had already begun. It also fosters a collaborative relationship between faculty, graduate students and undergraduates as researchers.

The project also supports the institution’s mission as it is woven into the strategic plan.

3. **Institutional Capability for the Initiation, Implementation, and Completion of the Plan.** The institution provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to initiate, implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.
The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Quality Enhancement Plan developed by MSU. In order to fully implement the plan, the institution must have the capability to do so. Because of the broad involvement of the campus community and significant support from the President, “EURECA” has been given sufficient priority in resource allocation. The budget for 5 years is roughly $1.4M. In assessing the availability of monetary resources, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that $60,000 already devoted annually to a summer research program is being folded into the larger, broader reaching QEP. The additional amount needed of $174,000 has already been included in the budget planning for fiscal year 2014 and the early projection for 2015 also include the incremental increase for Year 2 of the QEP budget. The President has also indicated his support of the use of undesignated private funds to supplement to budget as needed.

The oversight of the QEP has been assigned to a cabinet level position, Vice President for Administration and Institutional Effectiveness – again reinforcing the priority given to the QEP. For daily operations, a Director of Undergraduate Research has been appointed to a .5 FTE. The Director selected has been a leader on campus in the area of Undergraduate Research and thus, brings experience to the role. If the program is widely accepted and expansion is an opportunity, staffing may need to be reassessed to determine if a .5 FTE director and .5 FTE student assistant is sufficient.

Other expense categories including student travel and professional development appear appropriately budgeted. Based upon discussions, the Committee noted the Institution’s desire to ensure that program is sustained beyond the 5 year requirement. In conclusion, the overall resource allocation and organizational structure is appropriate; therefore, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concludes that the Institution demonstrates the institutional capability for the initiation, implementation and completion of the QEP.

4. **Broad-based Involvement of Institutional Constituencies.** The institution demonstrates the involvement of its constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the Plan.

The university began the work of identifying a QEP topic in 2010 with the appointment of a fifteen member “Topic Selection” committee. The committee was made up of individuals from across the campus representing the administration, faculty, staff, alumni, students, and the Board. The committee engaged in discussions and launched two web-based surveys to garner broad based participation. The first survey solicited potential QEP topics and the second web survey was sent to the campus to gather input on the emerging topics. Three topics began to emerge, including the idea of a Student Forum. The QEP team informed the Visiting Team that a series of conversations on campus related to COPLAC membership, review of the trends associated with NSSE results from 2008-2012 which reveals room for improvement in the area of providing “enriching educational experiences,” and the initial success of the UGROW program created a confluence of ideas that eventually led to the emergence of a more focused topic. Discussions continued throughout the year and an appointed committee fleshed-out the UR focus and resulted in a recommendation to the President in October 2011. During the deliberative process, the committees conducted a literature search on UR, and identified survey models, learning outcomes, rubrics, and benchmarks that helped shape the discussions.
The QEP writing committee (12 faculty and two students) was approved in March 2012. Over the course of the two year process a multitude of campus constituents were involved in the shaping of the QEP.

5. **Assessment of the Plan.** The institution identifies goals and a plan to assess the achievement of those goals.

To achieve this overall purpose, the proposal committee formulated one goal that captures the intent of EURECA and is inclusive of traditional, applied, and creative research endeavors. The foundation of EURECA is the overarching goal to “enhance the opportunity for students to engage in research with faculty guidance.” To operationalize this goal, the committee then referred to recent research and best practices. Based on *Characteristics of Excellence in Undergraduate Research* (CUR, 2012) three characteristics were identified that address the overall goal: mentorship, accessibility, and dissemination. With these characteristics in mind, three objectives were formulated as follows:

- **Objective 1 (O1) Mentorship:** Promote research collaboration between faculty and students both within discipline and from different disciplines, to enhance the educational experience.

- **Objective 2 (O2) Accessibility:** Provide accessibility for all students to learn basic research skills.

- **Objective 3 (O3) Dissemination:** Provide students opportunities for improvement and implementation of visual, oral, and written communication skills through the vehicle of a URF.

The institution plans to evaluate the extent to which students achieve the intended student learning outcomes (SLOs). Assessment can showcase the effectiveness of a plan in terms of what works and supports student learning outcomes, and it can help to delineate what does not work by identifying opportunities for strengthening the plan. MSU will assess EURECA’s effectiveness by measuring SLOs that emphasize research, particularly collaborative research, communication skills (both written and oral through the URF), positive perceptions of student-faculty interactions, and critical thinking skills. The plan of assessment uses a logic model. A table was provided to the Committee that detailed the goal, objectives, SLOs, assessments, and performance criteria which will be used to assess the effectiveness of EURECA. Specific student learning outcomes, as well as assessment methods and performance criteria, were identified for each objective. The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are as follows:

- **SLO 1:** Students will develop collaborative skills in research by participating in research with peers and faculty both inside and outside their designated discipline.

- **SLO 2:** Students will have positive perceptions of student-faculty interactions.

- **SLO 3:** Students will critically analyze research outcomes and become good consumers of research.

- **SLO 4:** Students will identify the sequential steps in the research process and the roles each investigator may have.
• SLO 5: Students will examine research ethics and understand how they apply in work and life.

• SLO6: Students will communicate their research findings through written work, creative presentations, and/or oral presentations via the URF or another appropriate venue.

• SLO 7: Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills through the application of the research process and communication of results.

C. Analysis and Comments for Strengthening the QEP

The MSU QEP Topic Selection Committee and the QEP Proposal Committee have provided excellent documentation of a thorough process to uncover a QEP that takes advantage of campus strengths and opportunities, has the potential for impact across the campus, is inclusive of faculty members and students from all disciplines, is aligned with the institutional mission, is affordable by the institution, and is challenging but achievable. The QEP Proposal Committee has presented a comprehensive review of the literature on the benefits and assessment of undergraduate research. They have built the EURECA program on the foundation of successful programs on campus (UGROW and smaller student research forums) and have a plan to expand the program over five years in a sustainable way. The program will impact far more students and faculty than those it actually funds.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee offers the following comments aimed at enhancing this very strong plan:

1. The institution might consider finding a way to document the Undergraduate Research Forums. Posters could be preserved electronically, abstracts collected for oral presentations, and performances recorded digitally. Information collected could be used for recruiting of students and faculty and for reporting on progress.

2. We encourage plans for the introduction of the Undergraduate Inquiry and Creativity course into the core curriculum to continue.

3. The Undergraduate Research Advisory Committee might begin to investigate other ways in which undergraduate research and creative activity can be incorporated into the curriculum, so that these efforts are credit-bearing activities for both faculty members and students, rather than being an addition to the normal workload.

4. We encourage plans underway to further institutionalize the QEP by including mentoring undergraduate research and creative activity and presentations and publications with students in the promotion and tenure documents and process to continue.

5. We encourage plans to move funding of the QEP effort to a fixed continuing endowment to continue.

6. The UR Advisory Committee may want to consider offering some mini-grants rather than offering only stipends. The stipend model works well for the summer program, but during the academic year some projects might benefit from access to small amounts of funding for supplies or equipment rather than the stipend.
7. The institution might investigate other potential funding sources (McNair Scholars Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute) to enhance the resource base.

8. The UR Advisory Committee might consider partnering with the Teaching and Learning Resource Center to offer faculty development workshops on participating in undergraduate research activities and student development workshops on effective presentations and posters.

The QEP is well-documented and coherent, with an excellent assessment plan and a reasonable budget. It has great potential for enhancing the learning environment for students and changing the academic culture at MSU.
Part IV. Third-Party Comments

If an institution receives Third-Party Comments, the institution has an opportunity to respond to those comments and the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviews the response as part of its comprehensive evaluation of the institution.

The Committee should check one of the following:

___X___ No Third-Party Comments submitted.

_____ Third-Party Comments submitted. *(Address the items below.)*

1. Describe the nature of the Comments and any allegations of non-compliance that may have been part of the formal Third-Party Comments;

2. Indicate whether the Committee found evidence in support of any allegations of non-compliance.

If found to be out of compliance, the Committee should write a recommendation and include it in Part II under the standard cited with a full narrative that describes why the institution was found to be out of compliance and the documentation that supports that determination. In this space, reference the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement and the recommendation number cited in Part II.

If determined to be in compliance, explain in this space the reasons and refer to the documentation in support of this finding.
## APPENDIX A

### Roster of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Institution/University</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Suzanne Ozment</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs</td>
<td>University of Montevallo</td>
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<td>Montevallo, AL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Jeanette M. Barker</td>
<td>Director of Institutional Effectiveness</td>
<td>North Carolina Central University</td>
<td>Durham, NC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Sharon I. Bevins</td>
<td>Chair, Department of Physical Therapy and Human Performance</td>
<td>Florida Gulf Coast University</td>
<td>Fort Myers, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Sherryl A. Byrd</td>
<td>Vice President, Student Affairs</td>
<td>Austin Peay State University</td>
<td>Clarksville, TN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Joe G. Delap</td>
<td>Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Jacksonville State University</td>
<td>Jacksonville, AL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Virginia R. Kinman</td>
<td>Electronic Resources Librarian, Professor, and Director of SACS Compliance</td>
<td>Longwood University</td>
<td>Farmville, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Robert J. Sheehan</td>
<td>Provost and Senior Vice President for Academics and Student Affairs</td>
<td>Coastal Carolina University</td>
<td>Conway, SC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Charles D. Whitlock</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Eastern Kentucky University</td>
<td>Richmond, KY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Mark V. Smith</td>
<td>Vice President SACS/COC</td>
<td>SACS Commission on Colleges</td>
<td>Decatur, GA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Stephen T. Hulbert</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Nicholls State University</td>
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<td>Thibodaux, LA</td>
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<td>Dr. George Emmett Daniel III</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Director, Student Success Center</td>
<td>University of Tennessee at Martin</td>
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<td>Dr. Sandra J. Jordan</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Toby W. Osburn</td>
<td>Associate VP for University Services</td>
<td>Vice President for Business Affairs &amp; Treasurer</td>
<td>McNeese State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. DeAnna M. Smith</td>
<td>Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Lander University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Edward L. Vaughn</td>
<td>Dean, Academic Support Services</td>
<td>Dean, Academic Support Services</td>
<td>Alcorn State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Katherine M. Whatley</td>
<td>QEP Evaluator</td>
<td>Vice President for Annual Programs</td>
<td>Council for Independent Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Sheila V. Adams</td>
<td>Observer</td>
<td>Dean/Professor of Nursing, Dean of Nursing and Speech-Language Pathology</td>
<td>Mississippi University for Women</td>
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<td>Columbus, MS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Charles A. Taylor</td>
<td>SACSCOC Observer</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>SACS Commission on Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Michael S. Johnson</td>
<td>Staff Representative</td>
<td>Senior Vice President/Chief of Staff</td>
<td>SACS Commission on Colleges</td>
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**Staff Coordinator:**
- Dr. Mark V. Smith
- SACS Commission on Colleges, Decatur, GA
APPENDIX B

Off-Campus Sites or Distance Learning Programs Reviewed

This is not applicable to Midwestern State University
APPENDIX C

List of Recommendations
Cited in the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee

3.7.1 Faculty competence), Recommendation 1:
The committee recommends that the institution provide evidence that the faculty member identified in the attachment (Request for Justifying and Documenting Qualifications of Faculty) is appropriately qualified.

3.7.2 (Faculty evaluation), Recommendation 2:
The Committee recommends that the institution present evidence that the institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of adjunct faculty members in the College of Health Sciences and Human Services.