ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

The College of Saint Benedict

St. Joseph, Minnesota

October 13-15, 2008

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

This was a comprehensive visit of the College of St. Benedict.

B. Organizational Context

The College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University are stable single-gender institutions that have an extensive history of collaboration. In the past five years the partnership relationship between the two institutions has been formalized by a Memorandum of Understanding. The two institutions share a provost, the faculty and a common curriculum. Students enjoy the benefits of single gender education as well as a co-educational experience. Faculty and staff are devoted to this unique educational experience, as evidenced by their longevity.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

The Coordinate Relationship between the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University is a unique partnership in American higher education. This 45-year relationship enhances student learning, utilizes the uniqueness of each institution and leverages resources in these Benedictine, Catholic, residential liberal arts institutions. Because of this unique relationship, both institutions were reviewed during the visit.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

None

E. Distance Education Reviewed

None

F. Interactions with Constituencies

1. College of St. Benedict
   a. President
   b. Board of Trustees (8)
   c. VP for Institutional Advancement
   d. VP for Student Development
   e. VP for Finance and Administration
   f. Dean of Students
2. Joint CSB/SJU
   a. Provost
   b. Associate Provost and Academic Dean
   c. Joint Faculty Senate, Chair and Vice Chair
   d. VP for Enrollment, Planning and Public Affairs
   e. Admissions staff (7)
   f. Budget Analyst
   g. Director of Human Resources
   h. Self-Study Coordinator
   i. Strategic Directions Council (11)
   j. Academic Policies, Standards, and Assessment Committee
   k. Criterion Three Steering Committee
   l. Common Core Task Force
   m. Director, Academic Assessment and Research
   n. Director of Undergraduate Research
   o. Assistant Dean
   p. Director, Common Curriculum
   q. Director, Career Services
   r. Coordinator, Internship Program
   s. Coordinator, Service Learning
   t. Centers of Excellence staff (3)
   u. Director, Vocation Project and Companions on a Journey Program
   v. Director, Counseling and Health Promotion
   w. Health Promotion Coordinator
   x. Coordinate Relationship Committee
   y. Director, International Students
   z. Director, Intercultural Center
   aa. Director of IT Services
   bb. Executive Director of Financial Aid
   cc. Department Chairs (18)
   dd. Division Heads (4)
   ee. Director of International Education
   ff. Director, McNeely Center for Entrepreneurship
   gg. Director, Learning Enhancement
   hh. Director, Writing Centers
   gg. Director, Math Skills Center
   hh. Director, Libraries
   ii. Director, Education Abroad
   jj. Director, Honors Program
   kk. Student Government (3)
   ll. Faculty Open Forum (45)
   mm. Staff Open Forum (33)
   nn. Administrator Open Forum (97)
3. St. John’s University
   a. President
   b. Board of Regents (10)
   c. VP for Institutional Advancement
   d. VP for Student Development
   e. VP for Finance and Administration
   f. Abbot. St. John’s Abbey
   g. Executive Assistant to the President
   h. Faculty member. Philosophy
   i. Dean, School of Theology
   j. Associate Dean. School of Theology
   k. Graduate Theological Studies Committee
   l. School of Theology Self-Study Coordinator
   m. Director, Life Safety Services
   n. Dean of Students
   o. Director of Residential Life
   p. Athletic Director
   q. Students – Open Forum (21), plus (6)

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

1. CSB/SJU Self-Study Report 2008
8. Focused Visit Report 2001 (SJU)
9. Focused Visits Team Reports: Bahamas, Board of Regents
10. Administrative Personnel Policies and Procedures
11. Support Staff Personnel Policies and Procedures
12. Steering Committee Minutes and Workshop Notes
13. ATS Self-Study Report -School of Theology. 2008
14. CSB Organizational Chart 2008
15. SJU Organizational Chart 2008
16. Strategic Directions 2010
17. Strategic Vision/Strategic Directions 2015 (draft)
18. Office of Institutional Planning and Research Fact Book (Institutional Profile) 2007-2008
20. Faculty Handbook
22. Academic Assessment Annual Reports, 2007-2008 (5)
23. APSAC Summary Chart
24. Department Assessment Plans (5)
25. Online Assessment Reporting System Information
27. Achieving Through Learning and Searching (ATLAS)
28. Internship Program Data
29. Common Curriculum Assessment Organizational Chart
31. Senior Surveys
32. CSB Student Development Program Review: CSB Athletics
33. SJU Student Development Program Review: SJU Athletics
34. Comparisons of NSSE 2004 and 2007 Data
35. Collegiate Learning Assessment 2006-2007
36. Upward Bound Annual Reports
37. Fast Forward Youth Program Annual Reports
38. Career Services Surveys and Reports
39. Bennie Book (CSB Student Handbook)
40. J-Book (SJU Student Handbook)
41. Service Learning Program Surveys and Reports
42. CSB Athletic Department Marketing Materials
43. SJU Athletic Department Marketing Materials
44. Saint Benedict's Rule for Fair Play in Sports
45. Faculty Composition Design Principles (draft)
46. Admission Department Plan (2008-09)
48. SJU Bylaws, 2005
49. CSB and SJU “Workforce Analysis and Applicant Tracking” (Presentation to the Cabinets on August 26 and 28, 2008 respectively)
50. CSB Articles of Incorporation, 1961
51. CSB Bylaws, 2005
52. Bylaws of the Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2005
53. Saint John’s University Statutes of the University, 2001
54. CSB Board of Trustees Reference Manual, 2007-2008
55. Minutes of the following CSB Board of Trustees and Committees (1998-2008)
   a. Board of Trustees
   b. Executive Committee
   c. Audit Committee
   d. Building and Grounds Committee
   e. Investment Committee
   f. Trusteeship Committee
   g. Resource Development Committee
   h. Student Development Committee
57. Minutes of the following SJU Board of Regents and Committees (1998-2008)
   a. Board of Regents
   b. Executive Committee
   c. Buildings and Grounds Committee
d. Audit Committee  
e. Finance Committee  
f. Student Development Committee  
g. Investment Subcommittee  
h. Regents Membership Committee  
i. Resource Development Committee  

   a. Joint Boards  
   b. Academic Affairs Committee  
   c. Coordinate Finance Committee  
   d. Enrollment and Marketing Committee  
   e. Joint Governance  
   f. Coordinate Resource Development  
   g. Coordinate Student Development  

60. Historical Perspectives on Cooperation (several documents)  
63. Tasks Emerging from the Memorandum of Understanding, 2007  
64. Institutional Self-Study Design, 1/31/07  
65. Self-Study Steering Committee Minutes and Workshop Notes, 2006-2008  
66. Third Party Comment Notices  
67. Third Party Comment Responses  
68. Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities: Education within the Benedictine Wisdom Tradition, 2007  
69. Presidents’ Responses to Mission Concerns Identified in Self-Study  
70. Survey on Mission and Integrity: Spring 2007 and Summary of Responses  
71. Survey on Fundamental Mission: Fall 2007 and Summary of Responses  
72. Focus Group Interviews: Spring 2007  
73. Minutes of the following:  
   a. CSB Cabinet Meetings: 2000-2008  
   b. SJU Cabinet Meetings: 2000-2008  
   c. Coordinate Cabinet Meetings: 1998-2008  
   d. Strategic Directions Council Meetings: 2004-2008  
   e. Joint Faculty Assembly Meetings: 1998-2008
II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

The Self-Study process was thorough, and was used by the colleges as an opportunity to assess themselves and to prepare for the future. The membership of the steering committee and the subcommittees represented a broad range of departments and programs at CSB and SJU. All stakeholders had multiple opportunities for input and the self-study process was very transparent and accessible to the entire campus community on an active campus Web site.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The Self-Study was honest, objective and evaluative. Since the colleges used the process to evaluate themselves and their partnership, the report was candid and contained listings of both strengths and recommendations. This evaluative feedback will assist the colleges as they continue their planning process. The on-line electronic resource room that was imbedded in the electronic version of the Self-Study proved to be invaluable to the team, as was the listing of all documents available to the team, as a convenient way to check source documents.

Even though there was a lot of input from many people, the Self-Study read as if it was one voice. The Self-Study steering committee did a great job of preparing a seamless report that was informative and easy to read. Given the complexity of this visit, the Self-Study (with its access to supporting documents) was a great resource to the visiting team.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The team considers the response of the organization to previously identified challenges to be adequate.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment

Requirements were fulfilled

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information.
IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

a. The SJU Board of Regents and the CSB Board of Trustees demonstrated in interviews and in a review of their Board minutes that they have a clear understanding of and support for the respective missions of their institutions and of the Coordinate Relationship. In addition, interviews with individuals and input from the faculty, staff, and student forums support the team’s observation that understanding of and support for the colleges’ mission documents pervades both organizations. Both boards are well versed on institutional priorities and both boards exercise appropriate governance relationships with their institutions.

b. A review of the minutes of the Cabinet meetings of both institutions, the Joint Cabinets, the Joint Faculty Assembly and the Strategic Directions Council all demonstrate support for and understanding of the mission documents of both organizations, as well as for the Coordinate Relationship statement.

c. The organizational charts for the two institutions demonstrate that careful thought has been given to providing services for CSB and SJU while not duplicating services unnecessarily. This organizational structure is the result of an evolving Coordinate Relationship that defines the learning organization partnership between the colleges. The 2007 Memorandum of Understanding and the “Tasks Emerging from the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), 2007” documents demonstrate the intention of both institutions to plan for and accomplish the tasks necessary to operationalize the MOU. The MOU also clarified the expectations of the Boards, Presidents and other administrators. The use of joint appointments such as a single Provost and joint faculty appointment, and a single curriculum that is shared by both colleges, ensures this collaboration. This partnership is sustained through the use of joint groups such as the Joint Faculty Assembly, the Strategic Directions Council and the boards’ Coordinate Relationship Committee.

d. As evidenced by interviews with both presidents, the provost, the self-study coordinator, the director of human resources, and information from the open forums with faculty, staff, administrators and students, both colleges demonstrate support for and protection of their integrity.

e. The team confirmed that both colleges reflect the Benedictine values articulated in their mission documents, faculty handbooks, staff handbooks, the student handbook and student conduct processes. During interviews students, staff, and
faculty expressed a sense of ownership and responsibility in the execution the
Benedictine values of hospitality and community both on and off campus.
Members of the College community also expressed the importance of service to
their overall positive satisfaction at the institution.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational
attention

None

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission
follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require
Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no additional Commission follow-up is recommended.

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The organization’s allocation of
resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its
mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and
opportunities.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

a. The Strategic Directions Council (SDC) was reconfigured in 2006 to ensure that
all levels of planning and budgeting align with their strategic priorities. Based on
a review of planning and budgeting documents, and interviews with board
members, administrators, staff and faculty, the team affirms that this
organizational structure is enabling the colleges to realistically plan and prepare
for the future.
b. The team noted that the colleges' budget planning models have evolved through the use of budget forecasting software, environmental scans and effective enrollment planning forecasts. The budget development processes have included proactive methods to allocate unbudgeted revenues that are targeted to strategic priorities. The team found that the colleges' separate and collaborative approach to fiscal planning has strengthened both institutions.

c. The team finds both colleges to be financially sound. In the past decade, each institution has grown financially. Since 1997 net assets at CSB have more than doubled to $108 million (FY 2007), while net assets at SJU have increased 72% to $144 million (FY 2007). Additional evidence of financial stability is evident in the Combined Financial Index (CFI) for each college. The CFI for CSB increased from 3.94 (2003) to 5.89 (2007). The CFI for SJU rose from 4.39 (2003) to 12.94 (2007). These CFI scores demonstrate that the colleges are well-positioned to support their respective missions. Finally, since 1998 Moody's Investors Services has upgraded the bond ratings of both institutions.

d. The team was impressed with the colleges enrollment planning and marketing efforts which make use of sophisticated analyses of the impact of various pricing, financial aid, family contribution expectations and environmental scans to make informed decisions about the composition of their student bodies. These high quality data analyses are crucial components of institutional planning and facilitate student recruitment in support of each college's mission & strategic plans.

e. The colleges have developed highly effective institutional advancement offices. The colleges have developed a strong base of financial support as evidenced by the success of the recent capital campaigns of each college. Both campaigns exceeded their goals (CSB raised nearly $83 million and SJU raised $160 million), and both were able to close their campaigns a year early.

f. The colleges' planning processes include an on-going review of human resources. This includes workforce analysis and applicant tracking, developing a faculty composition design plan (e.g., 63% of all CSB/SJU faculty were over the age of 45) to enable the colleges to anticipate and plan for future human resource needs. The colleges also review and use data from student experiences, such as senior surveys and use of NSSE, to improve student life on both campuses.

h. The team was impressed with the facilities at the colleges. According to a 2004 classroom survey, the vast majority of respondents found classrooms, labs, studios and performance spaces to be good or very good and well-maintained.
The team took special note of the Benedicta Arts Center and the Gorecki Dining and Conference Center at CSB, and the S. Johanna kiln (the largest wood-fire kiln in North America) and the beautiful 2,500 acre Saint John's Arboretum at SJU. Campus facilities, and the programs they support, demonstrate the colleges’ commitment to serving their students and promoting in them a commitment to serving as stewards of the environment as well. Both institutions have well developed campus master plans.

i. The team noted that the colleges have been consciously reviewing the impact of demographic shifts, technology and globalization on the institutions. An annual “environmental scan,” done by each college, is used to “assess the efficacy of strategic objectives in light of changing external and internal conditions.” The 2007 scan identified “increasing the enrollment of first generation and racially and ethnically diverse students” as a central challenge. To meet that challenge, the colleges have created the Intercultural Leadership, Education, and Development (I-LEAD) program to provide support for talented first generation students. This successful program (90% retention rate) is a serious attempt to address future demographic changes and to enroll students from different backgrounds. In addition, in 2003, the faculty Committee on Academic Computing identified four technologies for investment to enhance learning and respond to changing student expectations. The four technologies were wireless networking, portable computing, classroom collaboration, and geographic information systems (GIS). Finally, the team commends the colleges’ commitment to global education, as evidenced by the high priority given to the Office for Education Abroad, the high percentage of students who study abroad and the high percentage of faculty who have taught abroad.

j. Institutional Research gathers and develops useful data on student learning from senior surveys and use of NSSE. The 2004 and 2007 NSSE surveys have been used to show that, compared to other Catholic colleges and universities, CSB/SJU graduates value faith and spirituality. This is useful information in assessing whether the Catholic and Benedictine traditions and spiritual growth learning goals have been achieved. NSSE data also indicate that overall participation in campus activities to enhance spirituality do not increase from freshman to senior year. The colleges are committed to use these data to “drive institutional reflection (curricular and co-curricular) on how to increase student interest in faith reflections and spirituality from the first year through the senior year.” These data (from both 2007 NSSE and the 2007 Senior Survey) were also used to assess the successful achievement of the “Integration of Knowledge”, “Leadership and Service”, and “Critical Thinking and Communication Goals” learning goals, as well as used to identify learning goals that needed further attention.

2. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**
None

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no additional Commission follow-up is recommended.

CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

a. Since the last HLC visit, CSB/SJU has made progress in articulating learning outcomes for their programs and assessing student learning in those programs. Based on a review of the self-study, the Program Review Policy and Guidelines (2008), interviews with the Academic Policies, Standards and Assessment Committee (APSAC) and with the director of assessment, and an examination of data from the “APSAC Summary Chart,” the team noted that the majority of programs have articulated measurable learning outcomes and are participating in assessment of majors in their departments and programs as part of their annual reports to the dean and the 7-year cycle of Program Review. To further their assessment efforts, the colleges have received a prestigious $149K four-year Teagle Foundation Grant to enable 12 faculty and staff per year to learn about best practices in assessment and then incorporate that learning in multiple teaching and learning settings.

b. The colleges support effective teaching as evidenced by a faculty that is more than 85% full-time, and a Learning Enhancement Center to support faculty and improve teaching (e.g., in 2006-2007 LEC events had a total of 602 attendees). The colleges provide each faculty member with funding for travel to conferences.
The Scholarship and Excellent Pedagogy Sixths (SEPS), initiated during the 2006-07 academic year by the presidents, awards 10 to 12 fellowships of one-sixth teaching reassigned time to full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty for scholarship or teaching projects. Since 2003, the colleges have awarded $818,000 in faculty development grants. Between 2001 and 2006, 94 faculty from 23 academic departments have been granted full-year or half-year sabbaticals. Total expenditures on professional development at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University have exceeded a million dollars every year for the past three years.

c. The team commends CSB & SJU for the many ways that they have created effective learning environments, in joint academic programs and programs supporting academics, and in separate Student Development programs on each campus. Students who participated in the accreditation forums repeatedly noted the classroom atmosphere that encourages participation and questioning. In particular, the year-long First Year Seminar, taught by a faculty member who also serves as the student’s academic advisor, provides the opportunity for students to forge a relationship with that faculty member and the fifteen other students in the class over an extended period. The CSB/SJU learning environment contributes to the colleges’ 70% four-year and 80% six-year graduation rate.

d. Based on a review of documents and interviews with staff and students, the team was impressed with efforts by the colleges’ Student Development, University Ministry and Athletics staffs ability to create programming, services, experiences and athletics involvement that challenge and support student growth.

e. The team noted numerous resources that benefit students. Career Services, Academic Advising, Counseling and Health Promotion and the Donald McNeely Center for Entrepreneurship provide services and assist in student growth. In addition, service learning courses and internships provide valuable learning opportunities.

f. The team found that the libraries appropriately support student learning. With over 1,000,000 volumes, wireless capability, and archives, the libraries offer CSB/SJU students more than adequate resources in support of student learning. More recently, additional funding directed towards subscriptions and on-line data bases has extended the library’s reach beyond the campus and into the twenty-first century. Wireless technology across campus enables students to make use of many of the library services wherever they study.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention
a. While the new Common Curriculum has learning outcomes, based on interviews and a review of the outcomes, the team believes that many of them are too broad to be measured effectively. The team recommends that the institution develop a process for assessing the Common Curriculum in a way that more clearly measures student learning and then use that information to improve student learning. In addition, the St. John’s School of Theology and programs like Study Abroad, Service Learning, Honors and Internships would also benefit from more specifically articulated learning outcomes, an improved process for assessment and a mechanism to use this data to improve these programs.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no additional Commission follow-up is recommended.

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

a. The emphasis on gender focused learning for men and for women has expanded with the assistance of a grant from the Bush Foundation, which has funded the Gender Learning Community, the Women’s Lives and Men’s Lives Speaker series, and the Gender and Women’s Studies Program. Other mission-driven gender initiatives include the SIU Center for Men’s Leadership and Service, a presidential Gender Task Force, the CSB Center for Women, a Professor in Gender Education and Development, a major in Gender and Women’s Studies, and a new annual recognition award for gender education.
b. The team was impressed with CSB/SJU’s commitment to examining gender issues and focusing on the development of women and men is ambitious. The colleges have adopted curricular requirements for the study of gender. Among the many institutional initiatives revolving around gender is the Controversial Conversations study, supported by the Teagle Foundation. In August 2007, researchers at CSB/SJU issued a white paper (Controversial Conversations at a Faith Based Liberal Arts College) describing their study findings.

c. Based on interviews and reviewing materials, the team believes the CSB & SJU strongly support student learning. This is evident in the Service Learning Office support of nearly 800 students a year in inquiry, practice, and socially responsible activities. Experiential learning provides multiple opportunities to foster attitudes and skills for a life of learning. It is also evident in the Honors thesis completion rate, which has increased over the past nine years, from 24 students in 12 departments in 1999 to 37 students in 30 departments in 2007. Finally, in a survey of CSB/SJU faculty, 75% reported they had worked with undergraduates on a research project during the previous two years. By 2007, the percentage reporting they had supervised some student research had grown to 77%, and over two-thirds spent more than three hours a week doing so.

d. Regular program reviews assess curriculum currency. A 2007 program review showed that the majority (71%) of faculty found the recommendations resulting from the program review were useful and 60% noted that the actions recommended by the program review were implemented. Nearly 60% of those who had been through the process said the results of the program review positively impacted departmental decisions and strategic planning.

f. The team concluded that the colleges have developed an exceptional Study Abroad program, containing 16 programs and representing 13 country sites. A report by the Institute of International Education shows that in the graduating class of 2007, 62% of CSB students and 59% of SJU students studied abroad, the majority for a full semester. Seventy-one percent of new students entering in 2007 indicated they plan to study abroad.

g. Forty-three percent of the faculty responding to a 2007 survey reported they had conducted scholarship on global or international issues, a substantial increase from the 22% who said they had done so in the 2004-05 HERI survey.

h. A required Common Curriculum course develops intercultural competence in all students. The 2007 NSSE survey showed 71% of seniors indicated discussions or writing assignments often or very often “included diverse perspectives (e.g., different races, religions, genders, or political beliefs).”

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention
3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no additional Commission follow-up is recommended.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

   a. Board members noted the colleges’ commitment to serve the central region of Minnesota, the state of Minnesota, and the church. The colleges are very committed to their role as a steward in education in the state of Minnesota. A member of the CSB Board of Trustees serves on the Minnesota Private College Board of Trustees. Together the colleges hosted 2 conferences this past summer: “The State We’re In: Creative and Critical Approaches to Minnesota History at 150” and “Minnesota 150: A Writing Retreat.” These conferences were well-attended by historians throughout the state.

   b. The institution’s faith-based heritage stresses the importance of community and service. Both colleges’ mission documents speak directly to the importance of community engagement and service. Faculty, staff, and students are well-informed of the institutions’ faith-based traditions and characteristics, and discussed the importance of the Benedictine values during individual sessions and the group forums, including the emphasis on serving others. The sheer number of opportunities for service and engagement offered by the institutions indicates the significance of service to the institution. Student leaders, as well as administrators and staff, reported that almost every club/organization engaged in volunteer service at some level.
c. The institutions are committed to accessibility as evidenced by articulation agreements with all of the community colleges in Minnesota, and by hosting the Upward Bound program. Students participating in the Upward Bound program hosted by the institution have exemplary retention and graduation rates. Since 2001, 85 percent of Upward Bound participants went on to college immediately following high school, and 81 percent of these have completed college or are still enrolled in college.

d. The Benedicta Arts Center is the leader in the region for providing high-quality fine arts and cultural programming, hosting about 200 public events each year in addition to classes, lessons, and student performances. The Benedicta Arts Center is the only venue outside of the twin cities that hosts the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra. The Stephen B. Humphrey Theatre hosts over 100 public events each year.

e. The institution’s commitment to sustainability and environmental service is noteworthy. Both presidents have signed the Campus Climate Commitment. Students, faculty and staff all discussed the way in which the Arboretum is used as a community educational resource. The Arboretum is a great example of the curricular and co-curricular working together on a significant issue. The Arboretum is also used as a community education resource. It is visited by thousands each year. Due to the success of the arboretum, St. John’s University developed the Avon Hills initiative. This initiative is designed both to promote the natural habitat of the area and to protect landowners’ rights. The Avon Hills initiative has been positively received by the local community.

f. The Liemandt Family Service-Learning Program is committed to staying current about the needs and desires of the local community. It has partnered with over 130 community organizations, agencies, and schools over the past ten years. During the past decade, 4,500 students have provided more than 100,000 hours of service at these sites.

2. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

None

3. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission**
follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no additional Commission follow-up is recommended.

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Affiliation Status

No change

B. Nature of Organization

1. Legal status

No change

2. Degrees awarded

No change

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. Stipulation on affiliation status

No change

2. Approval of degree sites

No change

19 (01/16/09)
3. Approval of distance education degree

No change

4. Reports required

None

5. Other visits scheduled

None

6. Organization change request

None

D. Summary of Commission Review

Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year – 2018-2019)

Rationale for recommendation:

The College of St. Benedict, in partnership with St. John’s University, provides an excellent educational experience for students. The college is stable, has strong leadership, passionate alumnae and more than sufficient human, physical and fiscal resources to accomplish its mission. Through the Coordinate Relationship with St. John’s University, the colleges have created an outstanding combined academic program, as well as many other collaborative endeavors that strengthen the institution.
ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

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St. Joseph, Minnesota

October 13-15, 2008

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The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Dr. James E. Moore, Vice President for Student Affairs and Campus Planning,
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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The College of St. Benedict and St. John's University are vibrant institutions that strive to live their missions of educating women and men, respectively, throughout all of their endeavors. As the colleges have evolved during the past decade, they have become increasingly focused on how they can more intentionally provide a gender-based education to female and male students, with the benefit of a co-educational curriculum. Students, board members, faculty, staff and administrators all spoke with passion about the benefit of this educational experience, and about the these institutions to all of their stakeholders.

In part through the evolution of the Coordinate Relationship, and in part due to the extraordinary talent and commitment of faculty and staff, the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University, individually and through their unique partnership, provide a special educational experience for students. The two colleges are purposefully examining how they collaborate, plan, use resources, and teach in order to become stronger learning-focused institutions that are engaged in a sacred partnership.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

Mission Documents

The colleges have been engaged in a review of their individual mission documents and the Coordinate Relationship Mission and Vision Statement. The internal institutional review noted questions about the relationship between the multiple mission statements. This issue is being addressed through the on-going institutional planning processes. The Team encourages this review with particular attention to the title of the current Coordinate Mission and Vision Statement. Perhaps the “Coordinate Relationship” can be imbedded into the respective mission statements of the colleges. This is not an accreditation issue, but rather advice from the Team. The questions the Team had about the “mission and vision” aspect of the Coordinate Relationship statement were addressed extremely well during the visit, but the Team heard some uncertainty from campus constituents about this dynamic document. If a way can be found to articulate the Coordinate Relationship in a manner that minimizes internal confusion, this will only benefit the colleges as they further develop this grand partnership.

Coordinate Relationship:

The presidents, provost and the other administrators are fully aware that improvements need to be made in academics - some of which faculty voiced to team members and others of which administrators brought up - demonstrating a collegial understanding of what needs to be done. The colleges are blessed with two presidents who are deeply committed to nurturing and developing this unique partnership. The colleges are also blessed with a provost who has a long tenure with and understands the uniqueness of each college. The Team supports the colleges in the current review of how to optimally organize the academic leadership of the Coordinate Relationship.
The Team admires the extraordinary balance that both faculty and administrators at SJU and CSB manifested in conversations about many dimensions of the Coordinate Relationship between the two institutions, including:

- sensitivity to tradition
- commitment to both common and distinct missions
- a realistic scan of multiple environments and a persistent review of the demands of the future, and how those dynamics will guide institutional change
- creative thinking that integrates all of the above.

The Coordinate Relationship holds great promise for fostering a life of learning and enhancing the development of women and men in support of each college's mission documents. The Team believes very strongly that there is great value in this successful and groundbreaking experiment in inter-institutional partnership and strongly encourages the colleges to continue to develop the Coordinate Relationship.

Scholarship

The Team encourages the colleges to continue its review of the definition of scholarship. At the moment it is decentralized, which has both advantages (e.g., more relevant to each discipline) as well as disadvantages (e.g., inconsistency across the disciplines). The colleges could benefit by a more clearly articulated set of criteria that is broadly accepted by faculty and administration.

As undergraduate teaching-oriented academic institutions, the colleges face a tension when committing to research. The faculty supports undergraduate research, yet there is some evidence that institutional funding is not adequate to support undergraduate research. Faculty report increased expectations for them to mentor students, while at the same time generating their own research. Some faculty expressed a desire for more development opportunities for research, including sabbatical leaves, and all faculty respondents in a survey reported that time was by far the most significant constraint on their ability to undertake, continue, or increase their involvement with student research.

Planning

The Team accolades the colleges for the manner in which the Strategic Directions Council has been purposefully created, modified and utilized. Many institutions have planning committees that purport to integrate planning, budgeting and assessment into a coherent process. The manner in which these planning components have been consistently woven together by the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University have positioned the colleges quite well to effectively plan for the future. Enrollment projections - both in numbers and in composition - have been realistically and accurately projected by the joint Enrollment Management division. The admissions staff makes use of sophisticated analyses of the impact of various pricing, financial aid, and family contribution models to scan its environment and make enlightened decisions about the composition of the student body. Most importantly, the high quality of data analysis available to enrollment planners enables them to direct recruitment efforts in directions that support institutional missions.
The draft document “Faculty Composition Design Principles” provides yet another example of
the purposeful planning the colleges are doing to prepare for the future. The Team suggests that
the colleges consider adding an additional descriptor to the list of desired characteristics of future
faculty - “commitment to assessment of student learning” to help ensure that assessment
becomes better integrated into all aspects of student learning at the colleges.

Assessment

The new Common Curriculum has learning outcomes, but a review of them, confirmed by
interviews, suggests that many are too broad to measure effectively. Individual courses in the
program have participated in assessment, but the team found that the process for assessing
general education as a whole to be only in nascent stages. The Common Curriculum
organizational chart shows who bears responsibility for assessing which components of the
Common Curriculum, but there is no timetable or calendar to suggest when various aspects of
the assessment process will be carried out.

The team recommends that the colleges develop a process for assessing the Common Curriculum
in a way that complements the annual reports to the Dean. Likewise, academic programs that
spread over multiple disciplines – for example, Study Abroad, Service Learning, Honors, and
Internships, would also benefit from articulated learning outcomes and a process for assessment.

Likewise, the team believes that the St. John’s University School of Theology has work to do in
the area of assessment. A review of documents and interviews, such as with the Graduate
Theological Studies Committee, provided evidence of data being gathered from students’ written
exams, oral exams and Pastoral Integration Seminar project. However, the Team found no
systematic mechanism in place to utilize this data to assess student learning in the Theology
programs in a way to modify the curriculum. Attention to assessment will strengthen the SOT.

Program Review

Academic programs at the CSB/SJU have undertaken program review following guidelines
established by the Academic Policies, Standards and Assessment Committee, with the latest
Policy for Periodic Review of Academic Departments and Programs issued in 2003. Current
practice calls for both a departmental self-study and a site visit by an external reviewer or by
reviewers to provide an independent assessment. Specialized accreditation (e.g., NCATE) has
also helped with the process. Examination of sample program review documents shows this
process does lead to consideration of the curriculum’s utility in meeting institutional goals,
including those related to diversity, globalism, and technology, as appropriate.

Newer faculty demonstrated little understanding about program review at CSB/SJU, answering
“unknown” to most questions at a rate of 75% or higher. Even for those who had the experience,
the largest response choice was “unknown” (25.3%). Based on survey feedback of the high rate
of “unknown” responses to several survey questions, as well as faculty comments, the team
suggests that the purpose, process, and benefits of program review be more clearly
communicated to faculty.
Athletics

The Athletic programs are remarkable at both colleges. The programs, coaches and directors are completely in sync with the institution’s academic values, diversity, advancement, and service to the local community. Athletic programs are used as a strategic partner in helping achieve these goals. The Athletic departments very much view themselves as part of the common bond that ties together the campus community, as well as an integral part of the institutional collaborative efforts, all in support of the institutional mission.

Constituent Feedback

The Team believes the colleges are doing a good job of serving multiple constituents, but only anecdotal evidence was provided to the Team. The Team suggests the colleges develop a way to get feedback from institutions and organizations that volunteer or partner with the colleges on service learning initiatives. Routine and systematic assessment of these initiatives from all parties involved (faculty, students, and partners) could help all parties ascertain the impact of service on student learning, and identify ways that the curriculum might be improved. In turn, this information might prove very helpful for planning purposes and resource allocations.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

While the Coordinate Relationship has been noted above, the Team wants to recognize the very special partnership that has evolved between the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University throughout the past 40 years. The Team is unaware of any collaborative relationship that matches what has been created by the work of these two colleges in Central Minnesota. With a single curriculum and a single faculty that serves two institutions, this academic foundation provides a solid base for all of the other collaborative engagements of the colleges. These collective experiences both derive from and create a Coordinate partnership that enriches the educational experience of students, but also the faculty, staff and local communities.

The mission emphasis on women at CSB and the mission emphasis on men at SJU is woven throughout each institution. The benefits of a gender-based education are evident in the structures, programs and people of both institutions. Through the Coordinate Relationship, students from two distinct institutions, each with their own culture and traditions, receive the same academic experience. In addition, many of the gender-specific programs and services are done collaboratively, and others coordinate their plans, expertise and resources with each other. The collective Coordinate partnership creates a co-educational learning environment between two single-sex institutions that utilizes the best of gender-based education as well as a co-educational learning environment to prepare graduates who will be leaders in their communities and the world. The paradox and the beauty of this co-educational relationship is that it strengthens how current students, and alumni, view themselves – as a Bennie or a Johnnie!
The Team extends its accolades to the leadership teams of both colleges, past and present, which have made and continue to make this partnership work. Through the work of board members, faculty, staff and administrators, the Coordinate Relationship is a model of collaboration for other institutions of higher education.
INSTITUTION and STATE: College of Saint Benedict, MN

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Continued Accreditation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS): College of St. Benedict and Saint John's University is a COORDINATED visit with ATS. We again request one team and one chair of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University.

DATES OF REVIEW: 10/13/08 - 10/15/08

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Private NFP

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

DEGREES AWARDED: B

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: None.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF NEW DEGREE SITES: Prior Commission approval required.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES: Prior Commission Approval Required

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

REPORTS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

OTHER VISITS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 1998 - 1999

YEAR OF NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2008 - 2009

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2018 – 2019
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

INSTITUTION and STATE: College of Saint Benedict, MN

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Continued Accreditation
_x_ No change to Organization Profile

Educational Programs

Program Distribution

Programs leading to Undergraduate
- Associate: 0
- Bachelors: 37

Programs leading to Graduate
- Masters: 0
- Specialist: 0
- First: 0
- Professional: 0
- Doctoral: 0

Off-Campus Activities

In-State:
- Present Activity: None
- Recommended Change: (+ or -)

Out-of-State:
- Present Wording: None
- Recommended Change: (+ or -)

Out-of-USA:
- Present Wording: None
- Recommended Change: (+ or -)

Distance Education Certificate and Degree Offerings:

Present Offerings:
None

Recommended Change:
(+ or -)