**Higher Learning Commission**
A commission of the North Central Association

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500 | Chicago, IL 60604-1411
312-263-0456 | 800-621-7440 | Fax: 312-263-7462 | ncahlc.org

February 19, 2013

Dr. Tony L. McLain
President
Lake Superior State University
650 W. Easterday Ave.
Sault Sainte Marie, MI  49783-1699

Dear President McLain:

The monitoring report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed.  A staff analysis of the report is enclosed.

On behalf of the Commission, staff accepts the report on (1) aligning tenure and promotion with collective bargaining, (2) information technology planning and professional development, (3) implementation of assessment of student learning, and (4) shared governance. No further reports are required.  The institution's next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 2016 - 2017.

Also enclosed is a copy of the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status, which reflects the actions taken by the Commission.  For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Process Administrator, Accreditation Services, at lnakutis@hlcommission.org.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

INSTITUTION:  Lake Superior State University, Sault Sainte Marie, MI

EXECUTIVE OFFICER:  Tony L. McLain, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION RE: REPORT:  A monitoring report due 2/1/2013 focused on (1) aligning tenure and promotion with collective bargaining, (2) information technology planning and professional development, (3) implementation of assessment of student learning, and (4) shared governance.

ITEMS ADDRESSED IN REPORT:  The office of the Commission received Lake Superior State University's report on the above topics on 1/30/2013.

STAFF ANALYSIS: Lake Superior State University hosted a comprehensive visit in October 2011. The visiting team recommended four monitoring reports to follow the visit:

1. *A clearly defined Tenure and Promotion process aligned with the faculty collective bargaining agreement*
2. *IT Strategic plan and Professional Development/Training Plan for IT personnel*
3. *A university assessment plan outlining a clear process for collecting, disseminating and implementing assessment results.*
4. *A plan indicating how the Shared Governance model has progressed and results from the model as it has impacted the new reorganizational structure*

Tenure and Promotion Aligned with Collective Bargaining

The rationale for this monitoring report on tenure and promotion was indicated in the team report:

> *During the time of the visit, the team reviewed the faculty collective bargaining agreement for clarity in the area of tenure and promotion policies and procedures.  After interviewing faculty and administration, it was evident to the team that this is an area that lacks clarity, procedure and implementation. It was also evident that faculty have little input on the tenure and/or promotion guidelines. Junior faculty indicated that they were not sure when consideration for their tenure would be possible and only became aware of tenure if the department chair or Dean notified them.*

Following the October 2011 HLC site visit, a committee of faculty and administrators was established to work toward the development of a more clearly defined Tenure and Promotion process, aligned with the Faculty Agreement.  The initial work of the committee focused on identifying the criteria for tenure, which were not included in the current faculty collective bargaining agreement, although criteria for promotion were included. To align the criteria for tenure and promotion, a Memorandum of Understanding was crafted, affirming that a faculty member's formal written application for tenure shall address the criteria as specified in *Criteria for Promotion* of the Faculty Agreement. This MOU was presented to the Faculty Association and Provost for approval, and it was signed on January 22,

2013. The approved MOU was attached to the monitoring report.

To better monitor and communicate the tenure timeline for individual faculty members, a Tenure Review Dates table is posted as a reference for the Deans in the Provost Council Dropbox folder. This table is crafted in accordance with Section 9.4.1 of the Faculty Agreement which explicitly states that "The maximum probationary period before tenure is granted shall be: seven years for a person initially appointed as an Instructor, five years for a person initially appointed as an Assistant Professor, four years for a person initially appointed as an Associate Professor, and three year for a person initially appointed as a Professor." The chart is maintained and reviewed by the Deans and the Provost. This information is shared with the President of the Faculty Association.

The supporting evidence that was included with this monitoring report were the three MOUs, i.e. *Defining the Criteria for Tenure, Clarifying Tenure for Mid-Year Hires* and *Defining the Process for Requesting Tenure Time Extensions.*

IT Strategic Plan and Professional Development

The comprehensive team report noted in its report with respect to strategic planning for Instructional Technology:

> *The team also found during the visit that a clearly defined IT Strategic plan did not exist. With the fast-paced change in technology, it is imperative that the institution plan for infrastructure updates and hardware and software replacement. The team also noted that the IT area lacked a professional development plan to stay current and abreast of IT needs and updates. Faculty and staff clearly articulated the need for professional development/training in all areas of technology. In addition, the team was unclear about the actual use of online course offerings due to varying responses to this question from faculty.*

In response to the team's concerns, the University created the IT Monitoring Committee in January of 2012 and tasked it with updating LSSU's *IT Strategic Plan*. The committee membership provided broad representation from across campus and included faculty, staff, and students. The committee began meeting in early spring, 2012, and continued to have regular meetings through the summer.

The committee began by gathering information. The group felt it was important to involve the entire campus community with this process and so initiated two surveys; one directed at students, the other directed at faculty and staff.

The *IT Strategic Plan* is comprised of five Strategies. Critical Outcomes have been developed for each Strategy, as indicated below.

> *Strategy 1: Cultivate an Information Technology culture committed to excellence and service that reaches beyond current needs.*
> *Critical Outcomes:*
> *1.1: Establish and maintain sufficient and appropriate IT staffing*
> *1.2: Establish an IT staff Professional Development Program*
> *1.3: Develop Assessment Plans and Staff/Department Goals*
> *1.4: Research and evaluate new technologies*
> *1.5: Evaluate consolidation of campus IT resources (AV, IT) & locations*
> *1.6: Revamp and maintain IT website*

*Strategy 2: Provide tools and services to support innovative teaching and student centered learning.*
*Critical Outcomes:*
*2.1: Develop University-wide consistent classroom technology standards.*
*2.2: Maintain and support open student computer labs/kiosks*
*2.3: Maintain and provide training for learning management systems (Blackboard, etc.)*
*2.4: Collaborate with LSSU's Blackboard support team to provide support for distance learning*
*2.5: Collaborate with AV to provide support for instructional devices*

*Strategy 3: Implement and maintain state-of-the-art administrative systems.*
*Critical Outcomes:*
*3.1: Maintain Banner and associated systems*
*3.2: Implement, and train users for, ARGOS (data reporting tool)*
*3.3: Purchase and Implement Xlerant (budget planning software)*

*Strategy 4: Build and maintain a secure, reliable and robust technology infrastructure to support the growing communication and information technology needs of the University.*
*Critical Outcomes:*
*4.1: Establish a campus-wide computer replacement program and communicate with campus*
*4.2: Replace and upgrade aging network switches and routing gear according to a recommended life cycle*
*4.3: Enhance campus Wi-Fi infrastructure to eliminate weak areas and provide full coverage in all campus buildings*
*4.4: Implement improvements to existing datacenter environment*
*4.5: Upgrade and replace aging server and storage hardware, increase utilization of virtualization technologies*
*4.6: Utilize hosted/cloud services where appropriate to augment existing resources and/or provide greater reliability and redundancy*
*4.7: Develop and implement a plan to update computer software to ensure campus is using most current or appropriate versions*
*4.8: Enhance the security of the University's information assets*

*Strategy 5: Provide a quality customer service environment to enhance productivity and efficiency.*
*Critical Outcomes:*
*5.1: Improve internal communication within IT*
*5.2: Improve external Communication*
*5.3: Maintain efficient and responsive Helpdesk*
*5.4: Provide professional development/training to campus community*

The IT strategic Plan was developed by the IT Monitoring Committee and accepted by the LSSU administration with minor modifications. Administration was left with the task of determining the best route for implementation of the plan while considering the limited resources available to the institution. The Provost was tasked with providing recommendations to the President and his Cabinet.

Since January of 2012, several changes in IT have been implemented. Perhaps the one that has the potential for the greatest impact is the slight restructuring of IT and appointments as directors.  The IT department has now been divided into two areas; Enterprise Application Services and Information Technology User Support Services. Directors have been appointed over both areas.  The new structure will provide the resources necessary to better serve the campus and its constituencies and results in a more balanced division of responsibility for the individuals that lead these areas.

The remainder of the IT monitoring report provided updates on each of the five strategies of the *IT Strategic Plan.* The outcomes detailed in the monitoring report include personnel adjustments, software and hardware updates, support for online instruction, etc.

Supporting evidence for the *IT Strategic Plan* and the survey results were appended to the monitoring report.

Assessment Plan

The comprehensive visit team commented on the assessment program at LSSU:

> *The team also found that assessment had not been articulated across campus. The institution was cited for assessment during their accreditation visit in 2002 and progress in this area lacked evidence on the university level. The team saw evidence of assessment on the department level and college level, but there was no "closing of the loop" of centralized location for university assessment plans. The team believes that assessment is being completed but is not being aggregated or implemented as a part of a university assessment plan.*

The University has demonstrated its commitment to assessment through the addition of an associate provost for assessment, voluntary membership in the HLC Academy for Student Learning, acquisition of assessment software, support for professional development through national meetings, and ongoing participation by college deans in the HLC annual conference.

The monitoring report began with a review of the history of assessment at LSSU.  Indeed, assessment was noted as a concern during the 1991 HLC visit, again during the 2001 visit, and most recently in the 2011 visit.

In the assurance section of the 2011 team report, the team indicated that there were two foremost areas of concern related to assessment: first, the lack of a centralized repository for the collection, aggregation and reporting of assessment data, and secondly evidence of the use of this data in institutional decision making.

The monitoring report described four broad initiatives which address the two key concerns implicit in the request for a University assessment plan. All four initiatives are contained within the overarching scope of the *University Assessment Plan* developed by LSSU.

1. Aggregation of Institutional Assessment Data: After extensive review and research into building our own system, and into available commercial products, the University committed to the use of Tracdat, a hosted relational database for assessment created by Nuventive. Tracdat provides a fully integrated interrelated system for the collection, aggregation and reporting of assessment activities, findings, and resultant action plans. This one-stop system for assessment will provide report capabilities necessary for faculty, staff and administration to review assessment findings, and to make decisions related to student achievement and institutional effectiveness.
2.  Academic Assessment:  The comprehensive visit team saw evidence of assessment on the department level and college level, but indicated that it did not see assessment data being used through institutional processes.  In response, the University initiated two processes:
    a.  The University using the translation of program-level assessment plans into Tracdat

to foster and support a critical review of those plans.

     b. The second process centers on course-level assessment, and it is the specific focus of the University's participation in the HLC Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning. Joining the Academy in the summer of 2012, the University's Action Plan, defined a four-year process whereby we formalize course-level assessment.

3. <u>General Education Assessment:</u> While structurally similar to both course-level and program-level assessment, the general education assessment process is an interwoven process relying on course-level student learning outcomes targeting the general education specific outcomes, and broader institutional goals assessed across all student groups. As faculty migrate course-level assessment plans into Tracdat the first priority is for general education approved courses. Tracdat builds relational linkages between specific course-level outcomes and the higher level general education outcomes. These course-level findings are aggregated and combined from across many courses through high-level general education roll-up reports. Also, institution wide general education outcome data is incorporated in the reports, including the results of ETS proficiency profiles, senior exit surveys, and other assessment instruments.

4. <u>Administrative (Strategic) Plan Assessment:</u> Assessment of administrative and support divisions is occurring along two distinct but connected pathways. First, assessment information and reports, audits and other documentation from across all divisions will be collected and presented on the University's Assessment Landscape webpage. Secondly, assessment for all strategic plan initiatives is now being collected and aggregated using Tracdat. The Critical Strategic Outcomes identified by the LSSU Board of Trustees in the summer 2012 form the focus of the many and varied strategic unit-outcomes developed at the administrative or divisional level. Achievement and evidence related to these outcomes will be archived similar to course/program outcomes, with strategic roll-up reports like that shown in web page.

Although the monitoring report did not provide evidence of the integration of assessment findings into the operations and decision-making of the University, the monitoring report on assessment concluded, *"The next two years will be critical as we have the opportunity and responsibility to use assessment findings to drive institutional planning and execution in ways which will shape and position the university for the future."*

<u>Shared Governance</u>

At the time of the comprehensive visit, the team noted:

> *The team did confirm that the institution had implemented a new "shared governance" model during the past academic year. There was evidence of the beginning stages of the process of shared governance with newly formed committees and the discussion of new policies, but there was no evidence at the time of the visit that demonstrated that this model will be continued beyond what is written in the self-study and what was shared with the team. The team would like to see how the model of shared governance moves the institution into the state of continuous improvement across all levels to help reconnect the constant flux of administration with faculty and staff.*

The Shared Governance structure at Lake Superior State University (LSSU) is a system of strategic and task committees that advise the LSSU administration on matters of strategic, fiscal, academic and administrative policy. There are five strategic committees and numerous task committees. The Shared Governance Oversight Committee (SGOC) is the umbrella committee which oversees the

activities of the other strategic committees, solicits issues from the campus community, and distributes these issues to the appropriate strategic or task committee. Another role of the SGOC is to establish new strategic, task and ad hoc committees as deemed necessary by the constituents of LSSU.

Lake Superior State University developed its Shared Governance structure in 2009.  Since 2009 these committees have become increasingly active and participative in the resolution of issues across campus as well as conduits for improved assessment needs within the University.   Over this time 18 campus related issues have been resolved and 2 issues remain pending as these issues continue to be discussed.

Planning and Budget Committee has successfully achieved approval from the Board of Trustees for the strategic plan, which includes 3 Critical Outcomes for each of the 7 Strategies. These outcomes have been identified as the highest priority currently. This committee has actively collaborated with the Assessment Committee in the evaluation of the Tracdat tool (a software program for tracking assessment across campus) for the purpose of improved University assessment. As a result of this collaboration, Tracdat has been adopted as a useful tool to help meet the assessment needs of the University. The Assessment Committee has been very active in support of establishing and maintaining the assessment process.

Results from the Shared Governance model have positively impacted the new organizational structure since 2009. Bullet pointed below is a clear demonstration of this impact.

- Shared Governance has created a reporting structure between all invested members that has improved accountability as well as promoted ownership for the overall wellbeing of the University.
- Communication as noted above has also greatly improved through the development of a collaborative SGOC meeting process. Increased communication through reports between staff and formal leadership has led to increasing collaboration and reporting with the President, Provost and Board of Directors
- This model has also promoted the development of leadership by encouraging tenured and non-tenured faculty collaboration resulting in increased peer mentorship and guidance.
- Student involvement has been improved through active participation in decision-making and dissemination of knowledge aligning our University more closely with our mission.

Issues currently under review by Shared Governance committees include degree requirements for multiple majors, parking, requiring 300/400 level courses for BA/BS degrees, Tobacco-Free Campus, etc.

Issues resolved through Shared Governance include the four day work week, bookstore issues, tenure extension application issues, cell phone use in class, incomplete grade policy, transfer grade policy, course repeat  policy, issuance of certificates, scholastic standards membership, infrastructure issues, honors policy, sick-leave buyout, development of campus recreation department, etc.

Staff comment:  Lake Superior State University submitted an excellent and thorough set of monitoring reports.  The report indicates remarkable progress in all four areas of concern to the 2011 comprehensive visit team.  The University is commended for its effectiveness in addressing all of these issues and for setting forth the accomplishments of the University with respect to these issues in well organized and informative monitoring reports.

<u>STAFF ACTION:</u>  Accept the report on (1) aligning tenure and promotion with collective bargaining, (2) information technology planning and professional development, (3) implementation of assessment of student learning, and (4) shared governance. No further reports are required.  The institution's next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 2016 - 2017.

# STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

### LAKE SUPERIOR STATE UNIVERSITY
650 W. Easterday Ave.
Sault Sainte Marie, MI  49783-1699

*Affiliation Status:*    Candidate: Not Applicable
Accreditation: (1968 - .)

## Nature of Organization

*Control:*    Public

*Degrees Awarded:*    Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's

## Conditions of Affiliation:

*Stipulations on Affiliation Status:*    Accreditation at the Master's level is limited to the Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction.    International offerings are limited to courses in Canada.

*Approval of New Additional Locations:*    The Commission's Expedited Desk Review Program is only available for offering existing degree programs at new locations within the state.

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

*Reports Required:*    None.

*Other Visits Scheduled:*    None.

## Summary of Commission Review

| | |
|---|---|
| *Year of Last Comprehensive Evaluation:* | 2011 - 2012 |
| *Year for Next Comprehensive Evaluation:* | 2016 - 2017 |
| *Date of Last Action:* | 02/19/2013 |

*Name Change:*

Sault Ste. Marie Branch of Michigan Technological University to Lake Superior State College of Michigan Technological University (1966) to Lake Superior State University (1987)

*Academy Participation:*

Participating in the  Academy for Assessment of Student Learning.