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May 6, 2025

Ms. Virginia Arthur
President
Metropolitan State University
700 E. Seventh St.
St. Paul, MN 55106-5000

Dear President Arthur:

Attached is a copy of the Multi-location Visit Report completed following the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) visit to Metropolitan State University (the institution). As detailed in the report, the pattern of operations at the locations appears to be adequate and no further review or monitoring is necessary.

Within the Multi-location Visit Report, you will find brief comments on the instructional oversight, academic services, student services, facilities, marketing and recruitment information and adequacy of assessment of student performance. Please consider these comments as advice for continued improvement of the additional locations.

Per HLC policy, completion of these visits and fulfillment of the requirement will be noted in your institution's history record and the completed report will be included in your institution's permanent file.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the Multi-location Visit or the attached report, please contact accreditation@hlcommission.org.

Sincerely,
Higher Learning Commission

cc: Jules Thompson, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Tom Bordenkircher, HLC Staff Liaison

Multi-location Visit Peer Review Report

Institution: Metropolitan State University, St. Paul, MN 555106

Additional Locations Visited:

Location Name	Location Address (<i>street, city, state and ZIP code</i>)	Date Reviewed
Minneapolis College	1501 Hennepin Ave. Minneapolis MN 55403	3-25-25
Minnesota Correctional Facility, Stillwater	970 Pickett Ave. N. Bayport, MN 55003	3-27-25

Peer Reviewer

Name: Dr. Kathleen Brock

Institution: UW Stout Title: Associate Professor

Instructions

In order to document effective administrative systems for managing multiple additional locations, please complete the following. For each item, check **adequate** or **attention needed**, and indicate in Comments the institution's strengths and/or opportunities for improvement in controlling and delivering degree programs off-campus. If comments pertain to a specific location, they should be included along with the identity of that location.

Submit the completed report as a PDF file at hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Final Reports" from the list of submission options to ensure the institution's materials are sent to the correct HLC staff member. The report is due within 30 days after the last additional location is visited.

Overview Statement

Provide information about current additional locations and the institution's general approach to off-campus instruction. Describe the growth pattern at the institution since the last review of off-campus instruction. Provide information about the involvement of external organizations or other higher education institutions.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:



Adequate



Attention Needed

Comments:

Metropolitan State University (Metro) is the only Minnesota State System University in the Twin Cities. To fulfill their mission to serve students from across the metro area of Minneapolis and St. Paul they have developed numerous partnerships and rented facilities throughout the Twin Cities. The Statement of Accreditation Status on the HLC website identifies that in addition to the Main Campus, Metro has a total of 15 approved “additional locations”.

Metro groups their locations into five distinct groups. The first is the main campus located in St. Paul. The second which they identify as their Midway campus location is rented from a management company. In order to achieve their mission, they have developed partnerships with each of the ten Minnesota state two-year colleges in the Twin Cities. Two of these they consider as rented campus locations. Metro’s Management Education Center and School of Urban Education are located at Minneapolis College and their Public Safety and Police Science Center is on the Hennepin Technical College Campus. They also rent classroom space at other educational institutions such as Saint Paul College in order to deliver courses at locations convenient for students. The final location type is within correctional facilities. Metro is offering the BA and BAS in Individualized Studies at three correctional facilities which are located from 12 to 54 miles from the main campus.

Both through information shared and comments made during the multi-location visit it is apparent that Metro conscientiously balances its focus on service to the metro area with the results of analysis of enrollment trends. Course enrollment trends since 2019 indicated that the majority of course enrollments were in online or hybrid courses. As a result, they have consolidated space both on the St. Paul campus and at their Midway site. Current plans include the permanent reduction of leased space at Midway, with the vacating of that site in the summer of 2026. The University is not projecting additional locations in the next three years.

Institutional Planning

What evidence demonstrates that the institution effectively plans for growth and maintenance of additional locations? Identify whether the institution has adequate controls in place to ensure that information presented to students is adequate. Describe whether the financial planning and budgeting process has proven effective at additional locations.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

The planning and maintenance of additional locations is core to the mission and legislative charge of Metro State to serve the entire Twin Cities area. Through its continual evaluation of existing programs, enrollment trends, and strategic identification of unmet needs and potential opportunities the University plans for growth, reductions, and relocation of programs as appropriate. Each location is connected to an academic dean who oversees the academic programs at that location, and they have budgetary oversight for the academic programs in their unit. It is the enrollment and the course schedule at each of the locations that determines the resource allocation. The University has demonstrated that it is willing to take whatever actions are appropriate in regard to responding to enrollment and new strategic opportunities. For example, they closed the Dental Clinic at Maplewood and are working toward a reduction in space and eventual closing of their Midway site. In contrast, they have expanded their

presence at the Minneapolis Campus with targeted efforts for the development of an expanded entrepreneurial center.

Facilities

What evidence demonstrates that the facilities at the additional locations meet the needs of the students and the curriculum? Consider, in particular, classrooms and laboratories (size, maintenance, temperature, etc.); faculty and administrative offices (site, visibility, privacy for meetings, etc.); parking or access to public transit; bookstore or text purchasing services; security; handicapped access; and other (food or snack services, study and meeting areas, etc.)

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

Metropolitan State University completed a comprehensive facility planning process between 2022 and 2024 which engage stakeholders to review space and program needs. The President's Advisory Group on Space oversees a regular process for space requests and prioritizes requests based on impact and available budget. Two off-campus locations were visited as a part of the multi-location visit.

Minneapolis Community College, where Metro houses its Management Education Center, and the School of Urban Education was one of the locations visited. The classrooms for the School of Urban Education are located in main building for the two-year college and thus students have easy access to food/snack service and study areas. The Management Education Center was located across the street in a very recently renovated building. Faculty, staff and student representatives were involved in multiple planning sessions with architects to design these renovations. Employees from both Metro and Minneapolis College as well as students were very proud of the facility and of the future possibilities this building will provide. In addition to classrooms including up-to-date technology the building had numerous small group collaborative work/study rooms throughout. Being located within another educational institution also ensured that issues such as handicapped accessibility or security were addressed. As with any major building renovation a few "glitches" occurred once actual usage began, however it was noted these were take care of quickly. Regular meetings between Metro and Minneapolis staff at multiple levels ensure a successful partnership at this location. A parking ramp is located immediately across the street and there is a walkway directly from it into the Minneapolis College main building. Students from Metro can park there as a part of their tuition. Public transportation also serves this location.

The second facility which was visited was the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Stillwater. The educational wing where Metro holds classes is in a secure area and includes classrooms on two floors. There was a main classroom which is where a class was observed, a library across the hallway and an art room on an upper level. The area was well light, and a comfortable temperature. There was sufficient spacing for the tables and chairs used by the students attending class to allow for interaction not only with the instructor but also with other students. Because of the type of location some features such as internet access in the classroom are not allowed.

Instructional Oversight

What evidence demonstrates that the institution effectively oversees instruction at the additional locations? Consider, in particular, consistency of curricular expectations and policies, availability of courses needed for program and graduation requirements, faculty qualifications, performance of instructional duties, availability of faculty to students, orientation of faculty/professional development, attention to student concerns.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

Except for the Individualized Studies program, all academic programs are primarily offered at only one location. Thus, it really is not an “additional” location, it is THE location. This facilitates instructional oversight in the fact that the Dean is located at that single location where the classes are offered. In the case of the Minneapolis College location, the Dean of the School of Urban Education and the Dean of the College of Business and Management are located not only at that site but in the very buildings where the two programs are offered. Additionally, curricular expectations, policies, faculty assignment, academic assessment and academic program review, and attention to student concerns are all in line with the quality expectations of the institution as a whole.

The Individualized Studies Program which is offered at the Stillwater prison falls under the Dean of the College of Individualized Studies. Given this offering is not unique to this location the direct supervision of the program falls to the Director, College in the Prison Program-TREC. In addition to this position there is a Prison Education Program Coordinator assigned to this location. Although prison faculty positions are part time assignments, they tend to be from the University’s core faculty and have been identified not only because of their curricular focus but their unique skills for working in a prison setting. Whether it be faculty qualifications or curricular content, expectations of consistency with the main campus exist.

Institutional Staffing and Faculty Support

What evidence demonstrates that the institution has appropriately qualified and sufficient staff and faculty in place for the location, and that the institution supports and evaluates personnel at off-campus locations? Consider the processes in place for selecting, training, and orienting faculty at the location.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

The staffing and academic support is sufficient for the course offerings and course enrollment at each of the locations visited. Academic deans are directly responsible for the assignment of faculty and staff to a specific location in support of the overall instructional effectiveness and current enrollment trends. These locations are handled in no way differently than the main campus. There are several policies which are

associated with instructional assignments at Metro State, and these are applied uniformly to all individuals and all sites. These include Policy 5140: Resident Faculty Assignment of Workload and Application for Overload Assignments, Policy 2200/ Procedure 220 Minimum Faculty Qualifications.

In the case of the Minneapolis College location where two entire departments are housed, the Institutional Effectiveness and Technology Division has identified a dedicated IT professional. This was especially helpful with the recent major remodel and will continue to be so given the focus on increasing programing at that location.

In the case of the Transformation and Re-entry through Education and Community (TREC) program at Stillwater dedicated staff manage the University's relationship with the Minnesota Department of Corrections. There are two individuals, the Director, College in Prisons Program (TREC) and the Metro State Prison Education Program Coordinator who assure that instructor and student needs are met.

Student Support

What evidence demonstrates that the institution delivers, supports, and manages necessary student services at the additional locations? Consider, in particular, the level of student access (in person, by computer, by phone, etc.) to academic advising/placement, remedial/tutorial services, and library materials/services. Also, consider the level of access to admissions, registration/student records, financial aid, and job placement services, as well as attention to student concerns.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

Metro State serves a very diverse and dispersed population of non-traditional students, many of whom are employed. Although there are students who regularly use both in-person and online support, it was noted that 2,180 respondents to their fall 2024 Student Impact Survey indicated that they largely prefer online (synchronous) and email-based student support. For students on the Minneapolis campus, they have access to Library material and support in person on the St Paul campus but also electronically. Zoom based synchronous tutorials are available and the writing center also offers asynchronous writing tutorials. Any student may go to the main campus but can also use technology for a variety of student support areas. In conversation with students, it became apparent that for many they do not identify with a single Metro location and have their needs met at the location and time of most convenience to them.

Given the restrictions of the TREC students at the Stillwater Prison a more structured plan is in place for the providing of student support. Regular academic advising occurs with onsite faculty advisors. Through the cooperative efforts of Metro and MDOC staff, students are advised and registered for courses. Weekly learning labs are scheduled twice a week at the facility to provide writing and other academic support. Although there is a library at the prison, its collection is more casual reading, and thus a Metro faculty librarian provides library resources and research support. For TREC students with disabilities there is an accessibility plan in place to provide accommodation. Students' access to instructional technology is limited, although they do have access to DOC issued laptops, which are regulated and monitored by DOC and a LMS which has specifically been designed for prison sites.

Evaluation and Assessment

What evidence demonstrates that the institution measures, documents, and analyzes student academic performance sufficiently to maintain academic quality at the additional locations? How are measures and techniques employed at a location equivalent to those for assessment and evaluation on the main campus? Consider, in particular, the setting of measurable learning objectives, the actual measurement of performance, and the analysis and use of assessment data to maintain/improve quality.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

Although Metro State operates at multiple locations it uses a central coordinating approach, with off-campus locations being treated no differently than if they were located on campus. Regarding assessment and evaluation, the University has a comprehensive process which includes evaluation of student outcomes at both the course and program levels. The measures or methods of data collection do not vary by location, although they may vary by academic discipline. Assessment results are incorporated into the academic program review process. Faculty and Deans have access to course-level success data. Academic programs' Annual Assessment Reports are evaluated by a standard reflection rubric, and these reports are integrated into the academic program review cycle and ongoing planning for the institution. The University shared that the Program Learning Outcome Inventory is currently being reviewed and updated to ensure that all program outcomes reflect college-level rigor. The reviewer for this multi-location visit had the opportunity to sit in on a class at both locations and observed that each was focused on what would be considered college level work. In fact, it was noted that the depth of conversation and the content that was being actively discussed within the class at the prison was at a level that could be considered that of at a graduate level.

Continuous Improvement

What evidence demonstrates that the institution encourages and ensures continuous quality improvement at its additional locations? Consider in particular the institution's planning and evaluation processes that ensure regular review and improvement of additional locations and ensure alignment of additional locations with the mission and goals of the institution as a whole.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

Metro State has a number of processes in place that are embedded within their institutional culture and organization's operational structure that encourages continuous quality improvement not only at the two sites visited but throughout the organization. A sampling of these processes includes Program Annual

Reflections, Annual Division Strategic Work Planning, Assessment of Student Learning and Academic Program Review.

What was specifically noted at the Minneapolis College location was the level of communications on an ongoing regularly scheduled basis that permeated all levels of the two organizations. Monthly meetings of two groups were mentioned, the first that included administrative levels that would address planning and policy level decisions and a second group that reviewed and discussed more operational issues. It was obvious that this frequent conversation allowed for both efforts that addressed continuous quality improvement of current programming but also allowed for strategic future focused planning.

In relation to Metro's offering at the Stillwater Prison, it was obvious that Metro's faculty and staff in concert with the DOC educational program staff work as a Team with a focus on enhancing the inmate's success within the restrictions of a prison environment. For instances when the facility implemented restrictions related to the use of paper Metro in concert with the prison's educational staff responded in developing alternatives within the restrictions to maintain a quality instructional process.

Marketing and Recruiting Information

What evidence confirms that the information presented to students in advertising, brochures, and other communications is accurate?

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

The major source of marketing for Metro State's publicly offered programs is its web presence. While there are numerous content liaisons from various departments, actual changes to the website is limited to the marketing and IT staff. Any change must be requested through a service portal which allows for the review of all proposed content for accuracy.

For the correctional facility at Stillwater the identification of potential participants is closely coordinated with DOC. The direct link between the Metro campus and individuals who are Metro employees located at the prison ensures that current program and course information is available. The Metro correction-based employees then work closely with the correctional facility employees to assure that accurate information is provided to the inmates through their one-on-one advising.

Summary Recommendation

Select one of the following statements. Include, as appropriate, a summary of findings.

- ☒ Overall, the pattern of this institution's operations at its additional locations appears to be adequate, and no further review or monitoring by the Higher Learning Commission is necessary.

- ☐ Overall, the pattern of this institution's operations at its additional locations needs some attention as defined in this report. The institution can be expected to follow up on these matters without monitoring by the Higher Learning Commission. The next scheduled comprehensive evaluation can serve to document that the matters identified have been addressed.

Note: In the Summary of Findings below, identify the specific areas needing institutional attention.

- ☐ The overall pattern of this institution's operations at its additional locations is inadequate and requires attention from the Higher Learning Commission.

Note: In the Summary of Findings below, identify the specific concerns and provide a recommendation for HLC monitoring.

Summary of Findings:

Metropolitan State University demonstrated exceptional operational practices at both the Minneapolis and Stillwater locations as observed during this multi-location visit. All the criteria included in this review were very effectively addressed. The institution excels in utilizing multiple locations to provide accessible, high-quality education to students and communities. Their Minneapolis location serves as a model for the potential benefits of strong partnerships; while the learning occurring at Stillwater demonstrated the impact that quality educational instruction can have on students. At both locations, the experience, knowledge, excitement, and the student-centered focus demonstrated by the faculty and staff contributed to the effectiveness of these locations.

Notification Program for Additional Locations Approval Form

Complete this form **only** if an institution has been granted access to the Notification Program for Additional Locations. The Institutional Status and Requirements Report for the institution will indicate whether the institution has access to the Notification Program under the Additional Location Stipulation.

The institution has at least three active additional locations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
During the previous three years, the institution has not been subject to HLC monitoring for issues related to the quality of instruction at its additional locations and campuses, or to the oversight of its additional locations and campuses.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
During the previous three years, the institution has not been placed on Notice or Probation or issued a Show-Cause Order by HLC.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
The institution has no other HLC or other legal restrictions on additional locations and/or programs offered off campus.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
The institution has appropriate systems to ensure quality control of locations that include clearly identified academic controls; regular evaluation by the	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

institution of its locations; a pattern of adequate faculty, facilities, resources and academic/support systems; financial stability; and long-range planning for future expansion.	
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