

# **ASSURANCE SECTION**

## **SECTION TWO REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT**

TO

**Kansas State University  
Manhattan, Kansas  
22-24 October 2001**

FOR

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

### **EVALUATION TEAM**

Carol A. Cartwright, President, Kent State University  
Russell K. Dean, Associate Provost, West Virginia University  
Charles W. Donaldson, Vice Chancellor for Education and Student Services/  
Dean, University College, University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
Fred W. Emshousen, Associate Dean, School of Technology, Purdue University  
Celestino Fernandez, Professor of Sociology, University of Arizona  
Donald E. Hanna, Professor of Educational Communications, University of Wisconsin-  
Extension  
Mary E. Huba, Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, Iowa State  
University  
David L. Meabon, Associate Professor of Foundation and Leadership, University of  
Toledo  
Dina A. Zinnes, Merriam Professor of Political Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-  
Champaign  
Victor K. Wong, Director, Information Technology Campus Initiatives, University of  
Michigan,  
Ann Arbor (Chair)

# ASSURANCE SECTION

## I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

### A. Institutional Context:

Kansas State University (K-State or KSU) was founded February 16, 1863, under the Morrill Act as a land-grant college, originally known as the Kansas State Agricultural College. It was first accredited by NCA in 1916. Since then, it has developed into a comprehensive, research, land-grant university.

The main campus covers 668 acres in the town of Manhattan, KS. In 1991, K-State's College of Technology and Aviation was established via a merger with the former Kansas College of Technology in the city of Salina, KS, about 70 miles west of Manhattan, KS.

During the past 15 years, K-State has benefited from a remarkably stable leadership team, e.g., the current top administrators (president, provost, and both vice presidents) were already in place for the previous NCA visit ten years ago. The present visit is to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the doctor's level. At this 2001 visit, K-State has nine colleges and about 22,000 students.

K-State is one of six Kansas Board of Regents universities. It is considered as one of three research universities in the State; the others are University of Kansas and Wichita State University. The Kansas Board of Regents, restructured in 1999, governs six state universities as well as supervises and coordinates 19 community colleges, 11 technical colleges and schools, and a municipal university.

### B. Unique Aspects of Visit:

This 2001 visit is one of the first to participate in the new Higher Learning Commission Team Report Pilot.

### C. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited:

Salina, KS, where the K-State College of Technology and Aviation is sited.

### D. Distance Education Reviewed:

Continuing education and distance learning at Kansas State University provides support for students studying at a distance, including face-to-face instruction offered at off-campus locations, such as Fort Riley, Kansas City, and Wichita. The Division of Continuing Education sponsors, in conjunction with academic departments, K-State courses and programs offered using a variety of print and electronic technologies. The Division also supports the K-State OnLine shell, which provides technical, student, and faculty support for both campus-based and off-campus courses offered in part or in whole via the Internet and the Web. Overall enrollment in the off-campus programs has been relatively stable during the past decade.

The range of technologies utilized is impressive. In addition to offering courses via the Internet and the Web, the University uses advanced videoconferencing, Internet2 for course sharing with other research universities nationwide, and satellite distribution of language courses to high school students throughout Kansas and the Midwest.

Evidence that K-State is meeting standards for distance learning include the following:

- Programs offered are consistent with K-State's land-grant research, teaching, and extension mission.
- Faculty teaching off-campus and through distance learning are approved through campus academic departments, and are usually full-time faculty members.
- Student access to library resources is supported by the K-State Library.
- Technology resources provided for faculty members are accessible, well utilized, and up-to-date.
- Students have a help service that provides basic technology support and assistance, available to both on- and off-campus students.
- Students studying through off-campus and distance learning also have available via e-mail and toll-free telephone a student service representative who acts as an advocate and problem-solver for the student.
- Development for faculty teaching off-campus courses and programs is accessible and encouraged.

**E. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies:**

**Executive Management**

Board of Regents – Executive Director  
 Board of Regents – Vice Chair  
 President  
 President's staff  
 Vice President for Administration and Finance  
 Vice President for Institutional Advancement  
 Associate Vice President/Dean of Student Life  
 Assistant Vice President for Educational & Personal Development  
 Provost  
 Associate Provost, International Programs

Associate Provost for Planning and Analysis  
 Associate Provost for Diversity and Dual Career Programs  
 Vice Provost for Academic Services & Technology and Dean of Continuing Education  
 Vice Provost for Research/Dean of the Graduate School  
 Deans' Council  
 Dean, College of Arts & Sciences  
 Dean, College of Technology and Aviation  
 Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences  
 Associate Dean, Academic Programs, College of Agriculture  
 Associate Dean, College of Technology and Aviation

Assistant Dean & Director of College Advancement, College of Technology & Aviation  
Assistant Dean for Program Development and Marketing, Continuing Education  
UGE Council Chair

### **Faculty**

Faculty Senate leadership  
Faculty Senate members  
Faculty & Staff – Open meeting  
Faculty members of Assessment Advisory Committee  
Multi-institutional course using Internet2  
Professors – Technology in Classrooms  
Professor, Veterinary Medicine  
Underrepresented Faculty – a group  
Women Faculty – a large group

### **Management & Staff**

Director for Administrative Systems  
Director of Athletics  
Director of Career & Employment Services  
Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching  
Director for Division of Continuing Education Information Systems  
Director of Distance Education Facilitation Center  
Director, Kansas Regents Educational Communications Center  
Director of Housing & Dining  
Director, International Student Center

Director, International and Area Studies  
Director and Co-Director of Leadership Studies  
Director, KSU Libraries  
Director of Libraries, College of Technology and Aviation  
Director, Residence Hall  
Director of Student Financial Assistance  
Assistant Director for Technical Support  
Head, Department of Arts, Sciences and Business  
Head, Department of Aviation  
Head, Department of Engineering Technology  
Information Technology Leadership Team  
Registrar, Division of Continuing Education

Coordinator of Assessment and Evaluation  
Coordinator for Degree Completion Programs  
Coordinator of Multicultural Programs  
Assistant, Library Services

### **Students**

President, Student Government  
President, Black Student Union  
Student groups – Residence Hall  
Students – Open meeting  
  
African American students (10)  
International students (3)  
Students with Disabilities (2)  
Undergraduate Students – several

## **F. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed:**

1. Kansas State Self-Study Documents  
  
Self-Study Report with BID

Undergraduate catalog  
Graduate catalog  
Campus Directory

Faculty Handbook or University Handbook  
Undergraduate Student Handbook (in Directory)  
Graduate Student Handbook  
University Viewbook

2. Kansas State Administrative Documents

Annual Financial reports  
Business Procedures manual  
Facilities Master Plan  
Faculty Teaching Assignment Information  
Legislative Budget Requests  
Regents Policies and Procedures Manual  
University Budget  
University Committees

3. Kansas State Internal Academic Review/Assessment Documents

Assessment of Basic Skills—Planning, Results  
Assessment of Majors—Planning, Results  
Assessment of University General Education—Planning, Results  
Graduate Program Reviews  
Regents Review Documents

4. Kansas State External Accreditation Documents

Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology  
Accreditation Committee for Programs in Hospitality Administration  
Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism  
American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business  
American Association of Laboratory Diagnosticians  
American Council for Construction Education  
American Dietetics Association  
American Institute of Certified Planners  
American Speech Language Hearing Association  
Certified Financial Planners Board of Standards  
Committee on Marriage and Family Therapy Education  
Council on Social Work Education  
Federal Aviation Agency  
Foundation for Interior Design Education and Research  
Institute of Food Technologists

5. Kansas State Websites

The Team benefited from numerous websites, many linked to <http://www.ksu.edu/accreditation/websites.html>

## II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

### A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process:

The current self-study process began about two years prior to this 2001 visit. A 20-member Steering Committee was established, with a staff of five, and headed by the associate provost for Planning and Analysis. The majority of the Committee members were representatives of the major academic units, including the nine colleges, the Graduate School, Libraries, Continuing Education, Research, and Academic Services and Technology. The remaining members were representatives of Administration and Finance, Institutional Advancement, central administration, Faculty Senate, Student

Senate, and Classified Senate. Each unit representative submitted inputs for the draft report, and the Review Coordinator provided oversight for the final writing.

From comments at the open meetings and interviews with administrators, faculty, staff, and students, the Team concludes that all major sectors of the campus participated in the self-study process and that the comprehensiveness of the process appeared to be quite acceptable.

#### **Integrity of the Self-Study Report:**

The Self-Study Report is “intended to give a self-critical account of the University’s current operations and structure, but its central and most meaningful content is a response to the North Central Association’s current emphasis on achievement of mission, assessment of outcomes, and the program improvement cycle – particularly for our academic programs...” (Self-Study Report, page 4). The Report is self-critical and does contain listings of concerns, especially from the academic units. In addition, the Report is clearly keyed to the extensive collection of web resources (linked from the home page <http://www.ksu.edu> under the heading Accreditation 2000-2001) and a complementary collection of hardcopy resources available to the Team in the Resource Room during the visit. Although some sections of the Self-Study Report are more descriptive than evaluative, the Team found the Report to be useful and found no evidence to impugn the integrity of the Report.

#### **B. Capacity to Address Previously Identified Challenges:**

##### **1. Institutional Capacity to Address and Resolve Previously Identified Challenges:**

Based on the institution’s response to previously identified challenges, the Team confirms the institution’s capacity to identify, address, and resolve issues.

**2. Inadequately Resolved Challenges:** None noted.

#### **C. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment:**

Requirements fulfilled.

**Comments:** The Team reviewed the three third-party comments received (all three were positive and two raised particular issues) and found that the institution has adequate processes in place to address the issues raised.

### **III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS**

The Team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information.

**Comments:** The well organized process for handling complaints documents them and follows through to the disposition of issues raised by the complaints.

#### IV. AFFIRMATION OF the GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Based on the self-study review and other documentation, the Team confirms that the institution continues to meet each of the twenty-four General Institutional Requirements.

**Comments:** Wording on the statement of affiliation (in the Undergraduate Catalog, for example) needs to be corrected in two ways: 1) the statement should read “North Central Association” and not “North Central Accrediting Association;” and 2) the statement should separate institutional accreditation from specialized professional accreditation (the current wording makes it appear as if specialized agencies accredit the entire University). Since the Commission is now the Higher Learning Commission, K-State should consult the Higher Learning Commission for appropriate wording.

#### V. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

##### A. CRITERION ONE

The institution demonstrates that it has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

##### Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

##### 1. Evidence that demonstrates fulfillment of criterion:

In 1991, the Kansas Board of Regents reaffirmed K-State’s mission to be “a comprehensive research land grant institution serving students and the people of Kansas, the nation and the world.”

This mission has been institutionalized into the fabric of the institution by constant communication and intentional involvement in planning and goal setting.

Public comments and discussions by campus constituencies include references that place their programs and services within the scope of the University’s mission.

The University’s purpose is well known to students and supported by student groups.

The clarity of student understanding and support of K-State’s priorities has been proven by the stated support of student leaders to assist and participate in the institutional planning for proposed tuition increases.

##### 2. Evidence that needs strengthening:       None noted.

##### 3. Evidence that requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up: None noted.

### **Recommendation of the Team**

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended

### **B. CRITERION TWO**

The institution demonstrates that it has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

#### **Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion**

##### **1. Evidence that demonstrates fulfillment of criterion:**

The administrative/governing structure is fairly traditional with a state-level Board of Regents providing overall control for the institution. There are an institutional president, a provost, and two vice presidents to provide campus leadership along with deans, directors and chairs. The governance structure serves the institution well.

The institution has in place a well-established planning process that involves constituencies from across campus. There is widespread support for the process and it appears to influence operating decisions. The Faculty Senate plays a major role in the strategic planning process with its own Committee on University Planning and through representation on various University-wide planning groups by the Senate president, president-elect, and past-president. Students are also appointed to major University planning committees and feel that their contributions are appreciated.

Faculties are well qualified to deliver the academic programs offered by the institution. On average, 60% of the faculty work effort is devoted to teaching, 28% to research and 12% to service. The faculties are predominantly tenured, white and male with 88% holding appropriate terminal degrees.

Undergraduate students are well qualified with the average ACT composite score for new students rising from 22.6 to 23.5 over the last ten years. Since 1986 a total of 87 undergraduate students have received Rhodes, Marshall, Truman, Goldwater, and Udall scholarships. This accomplishment places the institution first among all public four-year institutions in the country.

Since the last NCA visit, a \$30 million addition/renovation has been made to the main library, adding 153,000 square feet and doubling the seating capacity to 2,000. This effectively addressed a concern raised in the last NCA report.

The library staff is commended for their strong efforts to manage resources effectively and to move the library forward into the information age. There are a variety of valuable electronic resources now available to both on- and off-campus

students using Endeavor's Voyager system. As of 1999, the Libraries held 450 full-text electronic journals and have article access to another 9,000 titles.

Since the last NCA visit, the campus has added 874,000 gross square feet at a cost of \$114 million. In addition, based upon a one-time legislative allocation of \$35 million, several facilities needs such as ADA access as well as classroom and laboratory modernization have been addressed. A plan for an additional 373,000 square feet of space costing \$126 million has been developed.

The libraries face the same serials inflation pressure as all other libraries across the country. Initially, the response was to cut serials and other acquisitions. Subsequently, the institution mounted a successful proactive effort to address funding needs by identifying several new streams of revenue: In 1998 the Kansas Legislature allocated of \$328,000 to the library base budget and \$150,000 in one-time funds; in 1999 students passed a \$1 per credit hour fee increase that provides \$504,000 annually; in recent years the K-State Foundation has embarked upon a campaign to raise a \$10 million endowment to support ongoing operations of the library. These various sources of funds are expected to increase the acquisitions budget by \$1.8 million by FY2003.

The institution has invested heavily in information technology. The result is a modern and effective system that delivers telephone, data, television, video and ISP services campus-wide. It consists of a high-quality network composed of 17 centrally supported LANs, 26 high-tech classrooms, and video conferencing facilities in three locations. University researchers have access to Internet2.

## **2. Evidence that needs strengthening:**

Kansas State University is committed to the concept of diversity as well as the concept and practice of equal opportunity and affirmative action in all aspects of student recruitment and faculty/staff employment.

However, achievements in broadening racial diversity of the student body, faculty and administration have been quite modest compared to recent progress in areas such as funded research, student enrollment and quality, library facilities and collections, and facilities upgrades. Diversity – both broadening ethnic diversity in the University community as well as strengthening diversity skills through the University experience – is as much a part of being a top-tier land-grant university as are the other areas in which the University has excelled over the past several years. The Team urges the University to make diversity a high priority for the future by setting clear goals to be achieved.

## **3. Evidence that requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:**

None noted.

### **Recommendation of the Team**

- Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended

### **C. CRITERION THREE**

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

#### **Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion**

##### **1. Evidence that demonstrates fulfillment of criterion:**

The faculty have designed and implemented an Undergraduate General Education (UGE) program with clearly formulated intended learning outcomes, a requirement for using pedagogy that promotes learning, and a process for approving courses. They have developed and begun to implement a two-phase assessment process that evaluates achievement of learning outcomes and monitors course alignment with the UGE framework.

Within the past 10 years, K-State has developed a substantial technological infrastructure, including the Kansas Regents Educational Communications Center, to support learning, research, and extension. Through the K-State OnLine shell, learning technologies are integrated throughout the institution, and a significant percentage of faculty members are incorporating the Web and other technologies into their courses, both on- and off-campus.

For at least the past decade, K-State's strategic plan has identified international initiatives as one of its major themes for program development and enhancement. Through the Office of International Programs, led by the associate provost for International Programs, K-State has made important advances in several areas pertaining to this theme, including strengthening University-wide coordination of international programs; expanding opportunities for study abroad; enhancing services for international students; fundraising for facilities, scholarships, and programs; and assisting with curricular faculty support.

Extramural support for research has almost tripled since the last review, demonstrating K-State's increasing effectiveness in fulfilling its research mission.

As a land-grant institution, K-State continues to fulfill its extension responsibilities in an impressive manner. In an effort to better serve the Kansas community, K-State's Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service were merged in 1994 to form K-State Research and Extension. Personnel from this unit are located in all 105 counties as well as in several regional centers. Several of the programs in Research and Extension, such as plant breeding, cereal grain utilization, and food safety, are nationally and internationally known.

**2. Evidence that needs strengthening:** None noted.

**3. Evidence that requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:**

The Board of Regents has required K-State to develop an outcomes assessment program, but it has not provided consistent leadership in fostering the program's continued development.

There is not presently a coherent, widespread understanding that the purpose of assessment is the continuous improvement of student learning (although this understanding is reflected in the assessment of the University General Education program). Moreover, there is not agreement about the types of information that constitute an effective outcomes assessment strategy; as a result, the ability to develop effective assessment plans and programs is limited.

Faculty ownership of assessment in academic programs has not developed consistently across campus, and assessment in graduate education has not begun. No plans have been made to assess the effectiveness and equivalency of student learning in distance learning programs.

Students have not participated in the development or implementation of the University's assessment program.

The K-State assessment program is in its infancy; the supporting infrastructure has not been fully developed. A year ago, the provost appointed the associate provost for Planning and Analysis to the position of director of the newly created Office of Assessment and Program Review. The director's role is to coordinate and monitor assessment efforts on a half-time basis. However, a year is not enough time to develop the structures needed for (a) educating the University community about assessment, (b) providing administrative leadership that will lead to embedding the assessment process in the institutional culture, and (c) ensuring the sustainability of the assessment program.

In terms of the NCA Higher Learning Commission's Levels of Implementation in Assessment Matrix, K-State is functioning primarily at level one, Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs. In some areas, the institution is showing some characteristics of level two, Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs (e.g., Shared Responsibility—Administration, Institutional Support—Resources). However, these characteristics result from recent changes in the University's assessment program, and they are not typical of overall functioning.

#### **Recommendation of the Team**

Pattern of evidence demonstrated; Commission follow-up recommended (check all that apply; provide rationale in Part VI)

Focused Visit

## D. CRITERION FOUR

The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

### **Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion**

#### **1. Evidence that demonstrates fulfillment of criterion:**

Kansas State University has an excellent track record of achievements linked to strategic priorities developed by the president and his senior leadership team. The evidence in written documents and interviews reveals a broad commitment to the priorities identified through the planning process and a widespread understanding and sense of pride in the results. Documented improvements have been made in enrollment (quality as well as quantity), extramural research funding, private fund-raising, capital improvements, faculty salaries, library facilities, and IT infrastructure and support. Generally, this bodes well for the future.

The Kansas Legislature approved a new funding model effective July 1, 2001, which will provide major strategic opportunities for K-State. The University's top leadership provided creative ideas and strong advocacy for the development of the new approach which will provide "tuition ownership" and a "block grant" to each of the Regents' universities. The prior approach required that tuition revenues be directed to the State's general fund and provided very little flexibility for institutions to direct resources to key priorities.

The new funding model is welcome news to K-State's leadership. They understand that new approaches will be needed to ensure consultation about priorities and communication about decisions. To date, appropriate actions have been taken. For example, the provost and vice president for Administration and Finance have made an extensive set of visits throughout the campus to discuss various tuition plans; and a Prioritization and Financing Retreat was held in March 2001 to identify the 4-5 key imperatives for the next few years.

The Self-Study provides evidence that K-State understands the elements of vision, governance processes, and strategic planning that must be managed to create a bright future. Supporting documents and Team visits validate that there is broad understanding of the importance of these elements and genuine commitment to achieving them.

#### **2. Evidence that needs strengthening: None noted.**

#### **3. Evidence that requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up: None noted**

**Recommendation of the Team**

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended

**E. CRITERION FIVE**

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

**Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion**

**1. Evidence that demonstrates fulfillment of criterion:**

Kansas State University College handbooks, guidebooks, policy statements and publications are up-to-date, straightforward, and accurate. They meet the Higher Learning Commission standards and expectations regarding institutional operations and relationships.

The University's website <http://www.ksu.edu/> appears to be well coordinated, while still under overall development and expansion.

The University's partnership agreements are numerous, and the University has in place appropriate review processes to ensure integrity of relationships.

The University's Strategic Planning process is public and allows for appropriate internal participation by faculty, students, and staff.

**2. Evidence that needs strengthening:** None noted.

**3. Evidence that requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:** None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended

**VI. TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

**ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIP:**

**CONTINUED ACCREDITATION**

**Next Comprehensive Visit: 2011-2012**

**Rationale:** In the past ten years, K-State has made great strides in improving student enrollment (both quantity as well as quality), extramural funding for research, capital improvements, faculty salaries, library facilities, IT infrastructure and support, and others. From reviewing numerous self-study and other documents and from extensive interviews on campus, the Team concludes that K-State is not only meeting all 24 of the General Institutional Requirements but also fulfilling all five of the Criteria for Accreditation. The weight of evidence in leadership, governance, resource allocation, and planning indicates that K-State has the institutional processes in place to warrant another ten-year accreditation cycle.

**DEFINERS OF RELATIONSHIP**

1. **Degree Level:** *Doctor's*  
Retain original wording
2. **Ownership:** *Public*  
Retain original wording
3. **Stipulations:** *None*  
Retain original wording
4. **New Degree Sites:** *Prior Commission approval required.*  
Retain original wording

**COMMISSION FOLLOW-UP**

- Focused Visit:** 2005

**Rationale and Expectations:**

The Team recognizes and commends the many accomplishments in assessment found in various disciplines/departments at K-State. Nevertheless, in evaluating the matrix of assessment characteristics, the Team finds that K-State is at the beginning level of implementing assessment programs across the University, with little evidence of making much progress beyond the beginning level. There is also some evidence that student learning outcomes assessment is being confused with other forms of evaluation such as academic program review, accreditation, etc.

The Team recommends a focused visit to evaluate whether the institution is making progress in implementing a program to assess student learning outcomes. By the time of the focused visit in 2005, there should be evidence that K-State is moving toward maturing levels of continuous improvement and that faculty, students, and administrators across the University are involved in the assessment process.