Executive Summary of 2013 MVC Self-Study for HLC

Criterion One: Mission

*The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly: it guides the institution’s operations.*

Since its founding, Missouri Valley College has prepared students for successful lives through intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth. In 2009 the College refreshed its mission to make it more relevant to our modern knowledge-based global society. While the College’s mission is well understood within the institution, it is less well perceived by other constituencies. Therefore, the College is planning a new marketing campaign to articulate its message for all constituencies more clearly and widely.

The mission guides every facet of the College’s operations. The Strategic Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated, its elements monitored on a yearly basis to evaluate progress toward goals embodied in the College’s mission. Continuing assessment of students’ academic achievement will indicate improvements to be made in support services and academic programs. Technology is constantly updated to enhance learning. Support services are being improved to enrich student’s academic and social experience.

The general education curriculum has been revamped to emphasize communication and interdisciplinary skills needed in today’s world. Efforts continue to recruit faculty to better reflect the College’s broad diversity of students. To meet the needs of a growing diversity of religious creeds, a committee has been formed to extend opportunities for the exercise of non-Christian religions.

The revised mission and goals strengthen the College’s service to the local community. Outreach extends to students online and off campus. The public enjoy library resources, theatrical productions, art exhibitions, etc. Consultations with area businesses and health care enterprises have created hands-on learning, internships, and service opportunities.

Criterion Two: Integrity

*The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.*

Missouri Valley College has ethical policies to guide its academic, financial, personnel, and auxiliary functions. Faculty and staff have taken increasingly active roles in policy formation. The Board of Trustees has enacted detailed policies on conflict of interest, intellectual property, and nepotism. An affirmative action, equal opportunity employer, the College uses open, competitive recruitment to hire faculty and staff. Students adhere to a code of conduct, faculty and staff have established a grievance procedure, and a Judicial Board adjudicates students’ grievances and academic appeals.

The College has worked to be transparent. The public are informed about policies, costs, and requirements through digital and broadcast media, publications, and face-to-face interactions. A webmaster has been hired to keep posted information current.

The Board of Trustees remains independent, setting strategic priorities for the College and superintending its operations while delegating management to the administration and oversight of academic matters to the faculty. The Board is broadening its awareness of current trends in higher education, increasing the efficiency of its own deliberations, and making governance more inclusive. Faculty, staff, and students attend Board meetings to address issues and offer recommendations.

Academic freedom undergirds teaching and learning. At an institution focused primarily on teaching, academic research is not required of faculty, though many pursue publication and/or professional development, funds for which have been greatly increased. Faculty seek, write, and teach the truth as they find it; students likewise express themselves creatively, academically, and personally. Faculty and support staff guide students in the responsible conduct of writing and research. Intellectual property rights are honored, and academic dishonesty is punished.

Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

*The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.*

Missouri Valley College is greatly expanding its academic offerings on campus, online, and at an additional location. Eight new baccalaureate majors have been added recently, as has the first graduate
degree program, the Master of Arts in Community Counseling. Baccalaureate degrees in business and psychology can be earned entirely online.

All instructors must meet stringent qualifications. The same learning outcomes are required, whatever a course’s method of delivery. Faculty formulate the learning outcomes and tools for measuring achievement. The Office of Student Affairs is working to increase co-curricular programming and bolster students’ satisfaction with their whole educational experience. Last year the general education curriculum was revised to hone communication skills, emphasize interdisciplinary connections, and enhance multicultural understanding. Discussion continues on the assessment of the general education program. Academic support services have been bolstered, especially for students at risk. Individual tutoring and counseling are available, free of charge. Advising is being revamped and improved.

A master plan for implementing technological innovations is being formulated. And a multimillion dollar student center, now under construction, will enrich the entire college experience.

**Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement**

*The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.*

Determination of achievement of learning outcomes for each program is a top priority. Action plans are implemented for needed improvements on an annual basis. Each program undergoes a formal Program Review every five years, whereby faculty devise specific strategies for continuous improvements. Every course is assessed by students; every student’s achievement of learning outcomes is assessed by faculty. Faculty and staff are evaluated annually. Results of these formal assessment processes enable data-based decision-making to ensure the rigor and effectiveness of every program.

Further conversations among faculty on academic rigor will help identify common views and strategies for achieving appropriate levels of rigor in different courses and maintaining similar rigor in multi-section courses. Processes and indicators need to be determined for tracking graduates and evaluating their success.

With freshman-to-sophomore retention around 50% and a six-year graduation rate of 32%, attrition problems are being assiduously addressed. New positions for a Director of Student Success and two Student Success Counselors have been filled. Intensely individual personal instruction, coupled with improved academic advisement, is beginning to show positive results.

**Criterion Five: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness**

*The institution’s resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.*

Fiscal health restored, resources are being allocated to improve educational offerings and infrastructure. The living and learning environments have been enriched by five new residence facilities, a multimillion dollar student center, refurbished buildings and grounds, and ongoing updates in technology. Additional revenue streams are being explored and budgeting processes streamlined to conserve capital.

An Honors program has been inaugurated for students with high aptitude and achievement. Educational offerings on the Associate’s, Bachelor’s, and Master’s degree levels are being extended on campus, online, and at the additional site.

Human resources have been augmented. Salaries have been raised in four of the last five years despite the economic downturn. In 2012 the College employed 255 people, including 89 full-time and 69 part-time faculty. Staff are trained in specific skills relevant to their responsibilities; faculty must meet strict criteria for appointment and for promotion; funds for professional development have been increased.

A new Strategic Plan has reoriented priorities to align with the College’s revised mission and goals. Its specific target goals fit a practical timeline with performance measures to gauge progress. Great strides have been made to establish strategic planning in support of data-driven decision-making so that ongoing improvements can be implemented. In coming years the College is primarily focused on learning, improving retention, and raising resources.