The Executive Summary provides an overview of the major findings of the College of St. Catherine self-study based on a two-year comprehensive review process. The self-study examines the College past, present and future.

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

The College of St. Catherine is a vibrant and thriving institution that places primary focus on the undergraduate education of women. Comprehensive, Catholic, and deliberate about carefully grounding every degree program in the spirit and content of the liberal arts, the College offers associate, baccalaureate and graduate degree programs on campuses in St. Paul and Minneapolis and, in a few cases, at approved sites in Minnesota and other states. The College's close ties with its founders and sponsors, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, lend the College's curriculum, its campus ethos, and educational philosophy a special flavor that stems directly from the Sisters' mission and their vision in founding the college in 1905.

In 1986, the College of St. Catherine acquired St. Mary’s Junior College, a two-year institution in Minneapolis founded by the Sisters to prepare students for productive careers in the healthcare industry. Although each campus retains its special flavor and spirit, administrative processes and, increasingly, curricular endeavors are closely coordinated.

The College of St. Catherine is the largest Catholic college for women in the United States and one of the nation’s largest colleges for women. It is the third largest private college in Minnesota. In the Fall of 2002, the College enrolled 4,704 students in its associate, baccalaureate and graduate degree programs and many more through its array of continuing education programs. Among private colleges in Minnesota, the College is a leader in recruiting and enrolling students of color, transfer students, and non-traditional age students.

Over the last decade, the College of St. Catherine has enjoyed remarkable success in increasing its enrollment, solidifying its financial base, improving its campus facilities and greatly extending its visibility. The College has become stronger through the work of its faculty and administrators, through a highly visible and successful campaign to raise $80 million, and through strengthening its Board of Trustees, volunteer base, marketing coherence as well as its advertising messages. The College has achieved marked improvement in its financial base as well, increased its position and respect among business, educational and corporate leaders, and achieved record enrollment in each of the past five years.

THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

The self-study offered the College of St. Catherine an important opportunity to step back and assess its growth and development over the past ten years, its current strength and demonstrable outcomes in attaining its mission, and its
plans to insure a strong and vibrant future. The self-study goals and expectations shaped the self-study process and challenged the steering committee to reflect the dynamic nature of the College, to reflect the College’s capacity to meet and exceed the HLC Criteria, to demonstrate how the College has addressed concerns from the previous comprehensive site visit and to improve the institution during the self-study. The goals were established early in the self-study and served as guideposts as they were reviewed and evaluated throughout the entire process.

The President appointed Brian Bruess, Dean of Students and Susan Cochrane, Dean of Professional Studies as co-chairs of the self-study process in the Fall of 2000. Mary Margaret Smith, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty served as the liaison to the President’s Cabinet. Drawing on extensive experience as administrators, team leaders and process experts, these deans led a talented and broadly experienced team of self-study leaders from both campuses:

- Betty Biernat, Professor, Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Joan Demeules, Program Coordinator, Access and Success
- Al Dees, Director of Computing Services
- Linda Distad, Associate Dean of Education Programs
- Cindy Egeness, Registrar
- Pam Johnson, Associate Dean for Enrollment
- Sara Kerr, Assistant to the President for Institutional Research and Planning
- Cecilia Konchar-Farr, Associate Professor, English
- Kathleen Matuska, Associate Professor, Occupational Therapy
- Ellen Richter-Norgel, Director, Career Development
- Susan Pauly, Director, Minneapolis Learning Center
- Deb Sellheim, Assistant Professor, Master of Physical Therapy
- Tom Thieman, Professor, Psychology

The process for the self-study involved the members of the committee breaking into subcommittees based on the criteria for evaluation. Each subcommittee spent a year gathering data from every corner of the college. Key constituencies had multiple opportunities for input regarding the process and the report.

**ACHIEVEMENTS AND MAJOR EVENTS SINCE THE 1993 SITE TEAM VISIT**

The self-study built upon and around a number of significant developments over the past decade, most of them decidedly positive. Several of these include:

- Minneapolis Campus received major renovation (1993-1994).
- Enrollment Management Matrix established to improve recruitment and retention (1994).
- New Core Curriculum implemented for baccalaureate students (1994).
• Butler Center for Athletics, a recreational and sports complex, opened (1995-1996).

• Andrea J. Lee, IHM, elected and inaugurated as President of the College (1998-1999).

• Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty appointed for both campuses (1998).

• Strategic planning process initiated and plan approved (1998-2000).

• Board of Trustees reorganized its structure for greater effectiveness (1999-2000).

• Compensation plan implemented to increase salaries to median of comparison group (1999).

• Academic administration restructured; three deans administer programs across two campuses (1999-2000).


• $20,000,000 gift received from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (2000).


• Faculty governance document approved uniting the two campus faculties (2001).

• *Leadership in Mind, the Campaign for the College of St. Catherine*, announced with $80,000,000 goal (2001).

• Renewed mission statement approved by the Board of Trustees (2001).

• Construction commenced on new $42,000,000 student center/learning commons (2001).

• Campaign reaches nearly $60 million or 75% of goal (2002).

Many of the accomplishments of the past decade have resulted in the resolution of concerns identified by the North Central Association (now Higher Learning Commission) in 1993. Some changes were made in direct response to the 1993 Site Visit Report; others are the result of new leadership and implementation of a strategic plan.

**COLLEGE RESPONSE TO THE 1993 SITE TEAM REPORT**

During the 1993 evaluation, the College was reaccredited for a ten-year period.

The 1993 Report of a Visit to the College of St Catherine listed seven concerns identified by the North Central Association Site Visit Team. The College has made significant progress in each of the areas of concern.
CONCERNS:
Faculty and Administration

*The “acquisition” has not yet resulted in a “merger.” This is particularly evident in such things as communication of basic information, policies and changes in programs. In other words, there is a confused identity related to the lack of “holistic systems approach” in the institution.*  
(NCA Team Report, 1993)

The College of St. Catherine is one college. The College has made significant systematic change, which has resulted in a full merger. The College acquired St. Mary’s Junior College in 1986, and the two campuses operated as separate entities. In the last ten years, the College has made significant changes in academic programs, governance and administrative structures, as well as support services. When the President was elected in 1998, she was charged by the Board of Trustees to create “one college.” The President hired a new Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty with responsibility for both campuses. Together they created a new academic dean structure in which the deans have responsibility for related programs across the two campuses. Academic Affairs also merged administrative structures for the registrar and library. The Vice Presidents for Student Affairs, Development and External Affairs, and Finance and Business integrated administrative structures and functions across the two campuses, including computing services, student accounts and business services.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, together with the faculty, developed a new faculty governance system. Approved by the Faculty in May 2001, the new system provides for joint governance across the two campuses. The new system is in the early stages of implementation, but the evaluations of it to date have been positive.

College publications, most notably the undergraduate academic catalog and student handbook, have been merged into documents representing both campuses. This has involved not only editing of materials to be consistent, but a thorough review and revision of College policies to provide consistency wherever possible.

*Assessment, although evident for the academic progress of students, needs to be improved, and efforts coordinated among all institutional programs.*  
(NCA Team Report, 1993)

The College has successfully developed and implemented an assessment program. The assessment efforts have engaged the community in systemic assessment and evaluation of the educational mission for the explicit purpose of improving teaching and learning. An ad hoc Assessment Committee began work coordinating assessment activity on both campuses in 1994. Since the restructuring of faculty governance in 2001, the College has an Assessment Committee, with membership including elected faculty, and ex-office representation from the Office of Institutional Planning and Research, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and the student body. The committee monitors institutional
assessment activities for regular review of assessment plans of the core curricula, curricular and co-curricular programs. The Assistant to the President for Institutional Planning and Research assists with the collection and dissemination of data concerning assessment and strategic planning.

The elected Faculty Personnel Committee (FPC) coordinates and oversees the process of evaluation of faculty performance for faculty evaluation. The published Faculty Personnel Handbook communicates expectations and procedures for evaluations. Faculty evaluation documents submitted to the FPC include student, peer and chair evaluations together with the faculty’s narrative assessment and goals. FPC reviews each faculty’s document and writes a recommendation. This recommendation is forwarded to the academic deans and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Promotion and tenure recommendations are forwarded to the President for a final decision.

_The reported lack of “modeling” of policies that especially affect students and staff, in light of the mission of the institution to serve women, seemed inconsistent. This is evident in such things as childcare, flextime hours and job sharing. In addition, support offices that provide services to “nontraditional students” are perceived as inadequate in their delivery of services to needy students._

(NCA Team Report, 1993)

Women and their needs, as affirmed by the College of St. Catherine Mission Statement, are central to the College and permeate all decisions and policies. Currently, 76% of the College’s employees are women. Women make up 85% of executives, 88% of the professionals, and 80% of the faculty. Over 27% work part-time and are eligible for medical and dental benefits. The College administers a pre-tax dependent care spending account program, which provides a financial benefit to employees with children. In addition, educational needs of employees are a high priority and the College provides 100% tuition remission for employees taking undergraduate classes and classes in five graduate programs. Weekend College was created 23 years ago to meet the specific needs of working women.

Programs and facilities that address student needs are prominent and accessible on both campuses. Examples of relevant programs and facilities are described throughout the self-study document. These include Access and Success services and dedicated housing for student parents, emergency loan funds and child-care subsidies, a lactation room and a child-friendly lounge for students with an attached play area in the new student center. The Early Childhood Center has options specifically designed to be supportive of student parents, such as scheduling on a full or half day basis, a MWF or TR or M-F option, as well as the option not to have care during the January break. Nontraditional as well as traditional students benefit from expanded support services and hours, as well as on-line services. On-line services include an electronic Student Kiosk through which students can access records and account information, online library resources, syllabi and an online textbook ordering process through the bookstore website.
The proliferation of master’s degrees seems to have occurred without full assessment of support needs and documentation. (NCA Team Report, 1993)

The College has implemented a careful process for approving graduate programs. The process includes a careful consideration of fit with the mission, impact on existing academic programs, and budget implications. The approval process begins with the program faculty of the proposed program, academic deans, and the Educational Policies Committee. It is then brought forward for a faculty hearing, faculty vote, administrative approval and endorsement by a committee of the Board of Trustees.

The College is proud of its graduate programs. Since 1993, the College has added graduate programs in education (Master of Arts in Education) and has moved from offering a Masters of Physical Therapy to offering a clinical Doctorate of Physical Therapy. These programs strengthen the College, meet documented needs of the community, connect closely to strong programs in the undergraduate curriculum and provide leaders to critical areas of society.

Since 1993, enrollment in graduate programs has grown substantially. Enrollment in all graduate programs in Fall 2002 is 1,135 in a total headcount (graduate and undergraduate) of 4,704. Three hundred forty nine of those 1,135 are new students in the Fall 2002. With this growth, the College has established more coherent and centralized systems for graduate admissions, registration, advising, marketing and overall program management.

Students

The enrollment management efforts seem to have an unclear focus, unclear goals and needs, and a lack of coordinated planning. (NCA Team Report, 1993)

The College has established a focused and effective enrollment management program evidenced in 2002 by the largest first year class in 14 years, five consecutive years of enrollment records and a total enrollment of over 4,700 students. The enrollment management program includes strategic initiatives in both recruitment and retention of students. The Enrollment Management Matrix committee (EMM), a widely representative body responsible for enrollment planning and coordination, has been in place since 1994. EMM works under the direction of the Vice President for Student Affairs to coordinate enrollment efforts. The EMM has made use of projection and forecasting mechanisms that have been developed since the last visit. These projections and forecasts, which have proven quite precise, have been integrated into the College’s strategic plans and provide a reliable basis for budget development and program planning.

Although the College of St Catherine stresses inclusiveness, the diversity of the student body was not evident to this team, especially on the St. Catherine campus. (NCA Team Report, 1993)

The College of St. Catherine ranks fourth among colleges and universities in the State of Minnesota for student diversity, according to the US News and World Report College Survey. In a state that is 12% multicultural, the College of St. Catherine has significantly increased the number of students of color.
undergraduate student population of color grew from 9% in 1993 to 17% in 2002 (not including 72 international students). In 2002, 25.7% of first-time, first-year students in the baccalaureate day program and 29.8% of the new students in associate programs are students of color. The College’s strategic direction to create paths to higher education for students of high ability who have been historically underserved or for whom economic or social barriers hinder access articulates the institution’s commitment to diversity. Bush Foundation diversity grants have advanced the College’s progress related to faculty and curricular development.

Facilities

*Parking, especially at the St. Mary’s Campus is a problem, not due just to lack of space but also to the cost of parking for faculty and students.*

(NCA Team Report, 1993)

Parking capacity on the Minneapolis campus has increased from 55 spots in 1993 to the current 220 spots, with nearly unlimited parking availability for students and faculty in evening programs. The increase was managed through expansion of spaces in the adjacent Riverside Campus of the Fairview University Medical Center and use of another nearby parking ramp. Handicap and guest parking is also available. As with other institutions in dense urban areas, daytime parking is an ongoing challenge, although cost of parking is lower than most. The College is cooperating with the City of St. Paul, to insure that parking is adequate to meet College needs and neighborhoods expectations. Development of a Transportation Management Plan is underway, with expected completion in March 2003.

**MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE SELF-STUDY REPORT**

**STRENGTHS**

Through the self-study process, the College of St. Catherine identified a number of verifiable institutional strengths. Most significant are the following:

**Mission and Vision**

- The College of St. Catherine is mission-driven and mission-focused.
- The College’s mission statement is unequivocal in its commitment to the education of women as the central element of its identity.
- The founding Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet are strongly and visibly committed to the College, as is the Board of Trustees.
- There is a strong, pervasive commitment among trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students and alumnae/i to the central elements of the College mission: women, Catholic and liberal arts.

**Excellence of Educational Programs and Services**

- The College is committed to academic excellence, evident in the faculty’s dedication to teaching and learning and to helping each student achieve her full potential.
• The central focus of the College is students and their learning. The predominant and preferred pedagogy is collaborative and intentionally focused on integrated student learning.

• The College offers outstanding curricular and co-curricular programs.

• Students are a major strength of the College. They are increasingly diverse, articulate, committed to education, and engaged in their own learning.

• The College is committed to using assessment methods, characterized by high levels of faculty and staff ownership and involvement, to provide the means of monitoring its performance as a learning community.

• The College responds skillfully to the community and to market demands.

• Alumnae are effective and visible ambassadors for the college, ably representing the values of a St. Catherine's education.

Human, Fiscal and Physical Resources

• The College has committed and engaged leaders, faculty and staff who are committed to the mission and focused on student learning and success.

• There is an effective organizational structure for the Board of Trustees, the President’s Cabinet and the new Academic Affairs structure with three deans who work collaboratively and oversee academic programs across the two campuses. Student affairs and business services functions have been integrated across the two campuses as well.

• The College successfully launched a comprehensive capital campaign and has raised more than 75% of its $80,000,000 goal within just 30 months, the majority of it in unrestricted gifts. A $20,000,000 gift from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet is the largest single unrestricted gift to a women’s college.

• Moody’s Investment Services upgraded the College’s credit rating in 2002, authenticating the fact that the College is well-managed financially, has a history of balanced budgets, and well-managed debt.

• The College has undertaken construction of a $42,000,000 student center and learning commons/library.

• Renovation projects are underway to enhance the learning environment in two main classroom buildings, Whitby and Mendel Halls.

• The College has two campuses located in a vibrant urban area, offering ample opportunities for students to engage in broad array of social, cultural and educational activities.

• The grounds of the college on the St. Paul campus are beautiful and pastoral in nature.
**CHALLENGES**

**Mission and Vision**

- The College of St. Catherine must sustain and deepen institutional focus on, and commitment to, the College’s unique mission.

**Educational Programs and Services**

- The College must remain institutionally responsive to students given the complex realities of its diverse student population and multiple levels of programs – certificate, associate, baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral.
- The College must maintain dynamic programs that are simultaneously true to the College’s liberal arts roots and, for professional programs, responsive to workforce demands.
- The College must respond to changing student demography and provide a responsive array of services that meet complex and shifting student needs.
- The College must anticipate shifts in a highly competitive enrollment marketplace and maintain agile institutional capability to respond to the market and remain faithful to mission.
- The College must improve its use of existing assessment data and more comprehensively assess stated student outcomes.
- Campuses in two cities and institutional complexity challenge the College to find effective methods of integrating faculty across two campuses.

**Human, Fiscal and Physical Resources**

- The College must intensify efforts to recruit and retain students, faculty and staff from diverse experiences and backgrounds.
- The College must enhance its market presence more clearly and position itself better within a competitive marketplace.
- The College must meet its enrollment goals.
- The College must position its tuition pricing to better reflect its market position and academic program strengths.
- The College must manage within the constraints of finite resources, especially related to faculty and staff compensation.
- The College must preserve and enhance its aging physical plant through wise and creative use of resources.
- The College is a complex organization that should enhance internal communication structures and functions.
- The College must strengthen its external communications through strategic connections to alumnae, external audiences, prospective students, and corporate and community partners.
In addition to easily discernible strengths and challenges yielded through the self-study, the process also stimulated discussion, analysis and creative planning within multiple College venues. These discussions focused on topics as diverse as the College’s relationship with the Alumnae Association, its Catholic identity, the liberal arts within the curriculum, student retention and graduation rates, tuition pricing philosophy and facilities planning. These discussions are likely to continue, broaden and intensify in positive ways. Other new discussions will likely emerge. In many ways, the self-study process helped the College of St. Catherine focus on its core identity, and then develop a strategic plan to move the College into its second century with a clear sense of purpose, and with the institutional and fiscal strength necessary to attain its vision to be the world’s pre-eminent Catholic college educating women to lead and influence.

CONCLUSION

The College of St. Catherine is well positioned for the next decade. It is strong and vital and will continue to fulfill its mission and purposes in the future. The College has addressed past concerns, and its many strengths enable it to respond to current and future challenges. It has adequate resources to accomplish its mission and they are effectively organized. Ongoing assessment initiatives provide evidence of the College’s effectiveness in attaining its mission and illuminating the path toward future curricular and organizational improvement.