



# Introduction to the Saginaw Valley State University 2003 Self-Study Report

Saginaw Valley State University is pleased to submit this self-study report and request for re-accreditation to the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

The Higher Learning Commission *Handbook* clearly states that the process by which an accreditation self-study is carried out is a significant component of the institutional evaluation. Those who developed, organized, and carried out this process at Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) understand that the process must be inclusive of all institutional constituencies, evaluative of all units and the university as a whole, and grounded in patterns of evidence produced through assessment processes.

In presentations at the 2003 Higher Learning Commission annual meeting, the “Restructured Expectations” effectively reiterated those expectations in the context of revised criteria. Although this institution will be evaluated under the former standards, this self-study has also anticipated those restructured expectations.

This Introduction provides an overview of SVSU’s self-study process, measures the university’s process against the “Hallmarks of an Effective Self-Study,” and provides a brief overview of the Self-Study Report.

## Section I.1

*This Self-Study Report, organized around the goals defined in the university five-year strategic plan, Next Steps 2000-2005, demonstrates that Saginaw Valley State University meets all General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation defined by the Higher Learning Commission/ NCA.*

## I.1 Overview of SVSU’s Self-Study Process

This Saginaw Valley State University self-study report has been produced by a Steering Committee, appointed by the President of the university, in collaboration with an Editorial Board. The report, organized around the goals defined in the University Five-Year Strategic Plan *Next Steps 2000-2005*, demonstrates that Saginaw Valley State University meets all General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) and Criteria for Accreditation defined by the Higher Learning Commission/NCA.

Over the past 18 months, well over 100 people across campus have directly contributed to the self-study process through participation in committees, sub-

committees, workshops, and focus groups; this number increases considerably when all those who participated in surveys and interviews are also included.

The following chart identifies the members and their roles within the three groups who carried out the major self-study tasks – the Self-Study Steering Committee, the Self-Study Editorial Board, and the Operational Committees:

<b>Self-Study Steering Committee</b>	<b>Self-Study Editorial Board</b>
Robert S. P. Yien (Chair) <b>Vice President, Academic Affairs</b>	Mary Hedberg (Coordinator) <b>Assistant Vice President, Academic Affairs</b>
Mary Hedberg (Coordinator) <b>Assistant Vice President, Academic Affairs</b>	Diane Boehm (Editor) <b>Director, Instructional Support Programs</b>
Diane Boehm <b>Director, Instructional Support Programs</b>	Eric Gardner (Editor) <b>Associate Professor, English</b>
Merry Jo Brandimore <b>Assistant Vice President/Director, Residential Life</b>	Sandra Nagel <b>Assistant Professor, Psychology</b>
Clifford Dorne <b>Assistant Dean, Arts and Behavioral Sciences</b>	Mamie Thorns <b>Special Assistant to the President, Diversity Programs</b>
George Eastland <b>Professor, Chemistry</b>	Jack Wood <b>Head, Library Circulation, Media, and Archives</b>
Eric Gardner <b>Associate Professor, English</b>	<b>Operational Committee Chairs</b>
Gene Hamilton <b>Special Assistant to the President, Government Relations</b>	Clifford Dorne <i>Mission, Planning, and Governance</i>
Robert Maurovich <b>Vice President, Student Services &amp; Enrollment Management</b>	George Eastland <i>Campus Culture</i>
James Muladore <b>Vice President, Administration &amp; Business Affairs</b>	Mary Hedberg <i>Academic Programs</i>
David Pape <b>Professor, Mechanical Engineering</b>	James Muladore <i>Resources</i>
Mamie Thorns <b>Special Assistant to the President for Diversity Programs</b>	

**Steering Committee:** The Self-Study Steering Committee was chaired by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, who appointed the Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs as the Self-Study Coordinator. Steering Committee membership included three of the four Vice-Presidents, faculty, and staff. The Self-Study Coordinator appointed four Steering Committee members as Operational Committee chairs.

The Steering Committee served as the oversight and coordinating body, evaluating data and report drafts as they became available, with special responsibility for addressing the cited issues of concern in the 1994 Visiting Team's Report. The Steering Committee charged and supervised the work of an Editorial Board and the Operational Committees described below, and approved all drafts and documents. The chair of the Steering Committee was also responsible for communication with both the HLC/NCA and the university community.

**Editorial Board:** The Editorial Board, chaired by the Self-Study Coordinator, was responsible for the coordination and production of the University Self-Study Report, based on information and analysis provided by the four Operational Committees.

To undertake the self-study, the Editorial Board developed a sequential process. It correlated the goals and objectives of *Next Steps 2000-2005* with the GIRs and Criteria of the Higher Learning Commission. It then conducted a number of workshops for Operational Committee and subcommittee chairs, as well as multiple forums about the self-study process for faculty, staff, Board of Control members, students, and community members. The forums not only informed people about the accreditation process, but also recruited people to become involved in the process in order to make it as inclusive as possible. The next step was the formation of the four Operational Committees to study defined aspects of the university (see below).

Following this work, the Editorial Board organized, identified, and categorized the information, resources, evidence, and documentation provided by the four Operational Committees, and drafted and produced the self-study report under the advisement of the Steering Committee. The Editorial Board also developed and maintained a resource room and an electronic portfolio to disseminate the final report. In addition, the Editorial Board regularly published a newsletter, *The Self-Study Update*, to keep the university community informed about the self-study process and its progress.

**Operational Committees and Subcommittees:** The four Operational Committees appointed to carry out the work of the self-study used the relevant General Institution Requirements (GIRs) and Criteria for Accreditation; the Operational Committees were organized according to goals outlined in *Next Steps 2000-2005*:

- University Mission, Planning, and Governance
- Academic Programs
- Resources
- Campus Culture

The four Operational Committees were charged as follows:

- To provide the context/description for their assigned area of university organization/culture
- To gather and interpret data, providing patterns of evidence to demonstrate progress toward the established goals and criteria
- To provide an evaluative summary of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement in the area being studied, based on the evidence gathered.

Each of the four Operational Committee chairs, who served as members of the Steering Committee and as *ex officio* members of the Editorial Board, organized subcommittees; the subcommittee chairs comprised the membership of the four Operational Committees.

## I.2 Hallmarks of an Effective Self-Study

The “Hallmarks of an Effective Self-Study Process,” included in the new *Higher Learning Commission Workbook* available at the 2003 Annual Meeting, guided those organizing the SVSU self-study to align their work with the published standards, demonstrating that the SVSU self-study process is consistent with the Higher Learning Commission’s expectations, as the following analysis of these Hallmarks demonstrates:

### **SVSU’s self-study process and report fit the distinctive nature of the organization.**

The SVSU Self-Study Report structure is based on the *Next Steps 2000-2005* document, which elaborates SVSU’s mission and serves as the foundation for university planning. The Self-Study Report addresses the appropriate GIRS and Criteria within that structure through a careful cross-referencing process. The Editorial Board recognized that there would be some overlap, but sees this as a positive aspect of the process, because it reinforces the idea that this is a functionally integrated institution and that no unit is solely charged with fulfilling the institutional mission.

SVSU chose this approach, rather than an organizational model based primarily on the Criteria and GIRS, because it can provide a more coherent perspective of this institution and its distinctive nature. (This approach, approved by our HLC liaison, has been adopted as a viable method in the new *Workbook*.)

### Section I.2

*In addition to involving a large number of people on committees and subcommittees, the Self-Study Update newsletter has provided information to the campus community on the self-study process.*

**The Self-Study process and report achieves stated goals that guide the plan and conduct of the process.**

SVSU President Eric Gilbertson explained the purpose of the self-study to the university community in the first *Self-Study Update* campus newsletter: “This process requires us and gives us the occasion and opportunity to look at virtually every aspect of our institution and make our own critical judgments as to how we are performing and where we should improve. And then we will have our own judgments assessed with the fresh and objective perspective of outside evaluators.”

Understanding gained from Higher Learning Commission meetings and documents provided a foundation for the Core Values for this self-study, defined at the beginning of the self-study process and reprinted in each *Self-Study Update*:

- Self-study is an ongoing process to measure how effectively we are accomplishing our university mission and vision
- Effective self-study is based on patterns of evidence that inform university planning and practice
- Every person associated with Saginaw Valley State University is a stakeholder in the self-study process. All stakeholders are invited to participate.

**The self-study process and report ensures effective evaluation of the whole organization.**

The Steering Committee and Editorial Board organized the self-study around institutional planning goals and university organizational structures to demonstrate who SVSU is as an institution. The Editorial Board adopted the continuous improvement model—Plan/Act/Review/Revise—as its logo and has used the self-study process to disseminate those values to the institution.

Through faculty and staff forums and workshops, the process was presented to all units of the institution, as well as the SVSU Board of Control, the Board of Fellows, and the Alumni Board. To reach more stakeholders, receptions were held for adjunct faculty, and student focus groups were conducted. The Student Association and the SVSU student newspaper were also consulted and actively involved in disseminating of information. This outreach to all units of the campus community emphasized the reciprocity of information being gathered and shared.

**The self-study process and report engages multiple constituencies of the organization.**

As the Self-Study Coordinator organized Operational Committees and subcommittees, the Coordinator invited members from every unit on campus to participate in the self-study, bringing people from the various units of the institution to work together on committees and subcommittees that described and evaluated areas outside their own units. The most successful work and the most positive perspectives emerged from groups that were drawn from various units and who had diverse membership.

**The self-study process and report builds naturally on existing and ongoing self-evaluation processes.**

At the beginning of the process, many of those involved were unsure that SVSU had sufficient existing and ongoing self-evaluation processes around which to build a satisfactory self-study. As the Steering Committee began collecting data from multiple units, many of these concerns were alleviated.

However, the data collection process also uncovered an underlying critical need for ongoing communication of institutional data to all units to clearly show how such data is used in planning and assessment. Occasionally subcommittees struggled with data collection and reinvented processes that already existed; they were relieved to realize they could base their evaluations on work already being done.

**The self-study process and report has strong presidential and board support.**

The President and the Board of Control have stated from the outset that they have high expectations for organizational learning from the self-study process. The Self-Study Coordinator has made several reports to the Board of Control. Each of these presentations provided overviews of the process and a progress report. The Board has been given copies of the 1994 Evaluation Team Report and booklets summarizing the current GIRs and Criteria. The Board also receives copies of the *Self-Study Update*, which is included in the campus *Interior* publication about once each month. The Board and the President have reviewed self-study documents. Members of the President's Planning Council and staff serve on the Self-Study Steering Committee, and some have attended the HLC/NCA meeting in Chicago.

**The self-study process and report draw on the expertise and credibility of recognized leaders throughout the organization.**

The Self-Study Steering Committee includes three of the four Vice-Presidents, program directors, an assistant dean, and faculty members, including faculty who have experience in professional program accreditation. The Special Assistant to the President for Diversity Programs also serves on the Steering Committee and Editorial Board. Deans have served as chairs and members of the Operational Committees and subcommittees which produced the working papers from which the Self-Study Report was written. The Editorial Board includes the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs/Director of Assessment and the Director of Instructional Support Programs, as well as the university archivist. The Library Director chaired one of the subcommittees. Student leaders worked with the Director of Residential Life in focus groups. Those who were not members of committees or subcommittees were often surveyed and interviewed, often by more than one group, on their work and perspective of the University. The Director of Institutional Research, the Institutional Planning Officer, and personnel from University Communications and Information Technology have provided invaluable information as well as production support.

While this process drew on the expertise of various university personnel, it also asked people to study aspects of the university with which they were less familiar, to promote widespread understanding of the university, as well as to enhance the evaluative function of the committees. People found themselves chairing one committee while responding to surveys or providing information for other committees.

This approach brought faculty and staff into contact with people across the institution and provided a richer perspective on the university. It promoted an appreciation for its complexity as well as increased understanding of the multiple challenges involved in fulfilling the mission of the institution.

**The self-study process and report maintains regular and effective communication links with institutional constituencies.**

In addition to involving a large number of people on committees and subcommittees, the *Self-Study Update* newsletter has provided information to the campus community on self-study progress, including a regular updating and reprinting of the timeline. The Core Values for the self-study, which informed the process, have been reprinted in each issue. Articles in the *Self-Study Update*

have identified various issues and examined ways in which the self-study is addressing them. The Editorial Board solicited articles from various constituencies within the institution, including the Faculty Association.

The self-study website will make the report more widely accessible than any previous reports have been and will be maintained in order to facilitate future accreditation processes.

Presentations and workshops on the self-study have been made at a number of university occasions, including faculty orientation meetings, division staff meetings, Deans and Chairs meetings, Alumni Board, and Board of Control meetings and retreats. Additional forums for the campus community have been planned to discuss the report in anticipation of the Evaluation Team visit.

**The self-study process and report produces evidence to show that the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation are met.**

The self-study process has been organized around functional areas of the institution in alignment with the *Next Steps 2000-2005* planning document. To ensure that all General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation were addressed, the Editorial Board created a matrix to cross-reference the GIRs and Criteria with all defined areas of the self-study. (See Appendix A.) Though subcommittee reports showed some overlap, this was better than risking gaps. It is also instructive to approach certain issues from more than one perspective.

The four Operational Committees and their associated subcommittees defined the patterns of evidence appropriate to the issues under their purview. Once committee and subcommittee reports/working papers were submitted to the Steering Committee, members of the Editorial Board synthesized those reports into a coherent document that was reviewed by all members of the Steering Committee and Editorial Board, as well as the university President. Each self-study chapter begins with a citation of the GIRs and Criteria being addressed and the *Next Steps 2000-2005* planning goals that are the focus of the respective chapters.

The Steering Committee also reviewed all areas of concern defined in the 1994 Evaluation Team Report and formulated the institutional response to those concerns. That response comprises the major section of Chapter Two, SVSU's accreditation history.

**The self-study process and report produces a self-study report that meets the Commission’s needs.**

As previously noted, to present a coherent and comprehensive picture of this institution, this self-study is organized around the university five-year plan *Next Steps 2000-2005* (with the approval of the Higher Learning Commission liaison).

The institution’s comprehensive self-study process demonstrates that Saginaw Valley State University meets all General Institutional Requirements; these and the Criteria for Accreditation are addressed in relevant chapters, and identified at the beginning of each chapter.

Section I.3  
*Chapters 3-6 of this Self-Study represent the work of the Operational Committees and sub-committees; cross-references to the relevant GIRs and Criteria for Accreditation are presented at the beginning of each chapter.*

### I.3 Overview of the SVSU Self-Study Report

The Self-Study Report includes an introduction and eight chapters, as well as appendices:

- Introduction to Self-Study Document
- Chapter 1: SVSU: Overview and History
- Chapter 2: Accreditation History
- Chapter 3: Mission, Planning, and Governance
- Chapter 4: Resources
- Chapter 5: Academic Programs
- Chapter 6: Campus Culture
- Chapter 7: Conclusion
- Chapter 8: Request for Re-accreditation
- Appendices

This Introduction has addressed the SVSU self-study process, relating it to the HLC “Hallmarks for an Effective Self-Study,” and introduced the report. Chapters 1 and 2 lay the foundation for the remaining chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the institution and its 40-year history. Chapter 2 details the accreditation record of the university and responds to issues raised in the previous HLC/NCA evaluation team report.

Chapters 3-6 represent the work of the Operational Committees and subcommittees. These chapters are organized around university structures and the goals and objectives of the *Next Steps 2000-2005* strategic planning document, with cross-references to the relevant GIRs and Criteria for Accreditation defined by the Higher Learning Commission, which are presented at the beginning of each chapter.

Chapter 7 presents the findings of the self-study, bringing together the conclusions from each chapter. Chapter 8 concludes the report with the formal request for re-accreditation.

Appendices include the matrix cross-referencing GIRs and Criteria with the Self-Study Report, Basic Institutional Forms, the Electronic Portfolio website, and Acknowledgements.

This Report has also been published electronically in the Self-Study Electronic Portfolio ([selfstudy.svsu.edu](http://selfstudy.svsu.edu)). The electronic portfolio parallels the print document. It is the intent of the university to maintain the electronic portfolio as part of ongoing evaluation.