COLLABORATION

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:
Bismarck State College (BSC) has experienced great growth, in both academic programming and enrollment figures, in the past few years. Because of this growth, BSC has been able to expand its collaboration efforts in many areas. The four main areas of collaboration identified through our data gathering sessions will be explored in this concept paper:

• Collaboration between BSC and businesses
• Collaboration between BSC and four-year schools
• Collaboration between BSC and high schools
• Collaboration between departments on the BSC campus

Collaboration between BSC and Businesses
Business and postsecondary education have found a common cause for preparing highly skilled personnel that are entering into the workforce and to perform retraining for current workforce personnel to refine their skills and upgrade their education.
BSC has played a major role in the past in collaborating with business to achieve their goal of either training or retaining current workforce personnel for high-wage, high-skilled jobs. BSC has many partnerships already in place and will continue collaborating in the future to build new partnerships with businesses that will benefit both parties.

Collaboration between BSC and Four-year Schools
BSC also has a long history of collaborating with other North Dakota University System (NDUS) institutions. Each of the eleven North Dakota colleges accepts the transferability of courses taken at other NDUS schools. The NDUS also offers courses that can be taken by a student from another institution. This partnership allows students from other colleges to take classes at BSC, as well as allowing BSC students to take courses offered at another NDUS school. Between academic years 2008-2011, an estimated 532 BSC students took courses at another institution. Another 764 and 183 students have taken courses at BSC who have a “home” campus of Dickinson State University and Minot State University respectively.
BSC has become a hub of higher education in the Bismarck-Mandan area. The University of North Dakota, Minot State University, and Dickinson State University offer multiple bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral level degrees on the BSC campus and online, as well as having transfer offices on BSC's campus.

In November 2011, BSC announced an articulation agreement that will allow BSC students enrolled in ten program areas to transfer even more easily to the University of Mary to earn bachelor's degrees in those areas. The agreement with the University of Mary ensures that general education and specific program classes that students take at BSC are wholly integrated with the University of Mary's programs.

In March 2009, BSC began offering online classes to members of the U.S. military through partnerships with the U.S. Navy, U.S. Army and the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). These partnerships
allow military students to complete a two year degree through BSC or take general education classes to transfer to the CCAF for completion of a degree.

Collaboration between BSC and High Schools
Dual credit and early entry programming allow high school students to enroll in college courses for credit prior to high school graduation. Early entry students take a college class for college credit only, while dual credit students can earn high school credit and college credit at the same time. Both dual credit and early entry students get firsthand exposure to college-level work and a head start on their college education.

Dual credit legislation was enacted in 1997 in North Dakota and BSC offered its first dual credit classes in the fall 1998 semester. By fall 2011 semester, BSC had 479 students enrolled in dual credit classes for a total of 2,116 semester credit hours.

Collaboration between BSC Departments
Collaboration among departments on the BSC campus has been an ongoing process. With our continued growth, collaboration is needed more than ever, but it is also more challenging. There are initiatives that are currently being explored to improve collaboration among departments that will increase efficiency and effectiveness. Process mapping is one of these initiatives. Put in place within the last year, process mapping is a facilitated program that is available to BSC staff and faculty who need assistance with streamlining processes within a department or between departments.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Communication is key.** Dual credit programming at BSC has experienced rapid growth within the last few semesters. Due to this growth, there is an apparent need for more open communication among BSC departments. Areas such as the admissions process, expectations about the classes taught, transferability of credits and tuition waivers are all subjects that need to be communicated across many campus departments. The need for more open communication between the high school counselors, parents, and college offices is also apparent.

- **Streamline processes.** Dual credit paperwork process also needs to be reviewed. Currently all paperwork (admissions application, course registration forms, tuition waivers, etc.) is entered manually by staff in multiple BSC offices. A more streamlined and time-efficient process should be explored and implemented.

- **Common processes are needed.** Although a NDUS procedure is in place for the Collaborative Student Process, there are a few areas that need improvement. Each of the eleven NDUS institutions has its own form when submitting courses for registration. A streamlined process for admission and registration would be beneficial moving forward. This continuity between institutions will also be beneficial for auditing purposes.

- **Transparency.** Include all pertinent parties when working on new or changes with current collaborative endeavors in order to alleviate inconsistencies.

- **Build on strengths.** The rapid growth in partnerships between BSC and businesses has continued to grow over the last decade. BSC needs to build on current relationships already
established and use the models we have already built to establish new partnerships with other businesses.

- **Take bold steps.** BSC has been able to break the mold of the old traditional train of thought on how partnerships should be established. We have taken bold steps to think outside of the box in order to establish new, innovative ways to deliver training for businesses.

- **Be proactive.** BSC is being proactive in going to the industry to see how we can serve businesses’ needs instead of waiting for the businesses to come to us. This has increased the direct training revenue from the year 2003 of $704,116 and training for 2,698 participants (unduplicated) to the current revenue for year 2011 of $1,758,284 and training for 4,456 participants (unduplicated). (“Train ND Southwest” Year-end report for 2003 and 2011)

- **Cross departmental boundaries to collaborate.** Where a department falls under the organizational chart seems to determine which departments naturally collaborate together. However, a need for collaboration across these natural boundaries is needed. It is important for the dean and department chairs to encourage collaboration between academic departments.

**National Trends/External Picture:**

Dual credit programming is prevalent in many states, including North Dakota. Nationally, an increasing number of high school students are taking part in dual credit or dual enrollment programs. A large number of these programs are through two year and community colleges. A growing concern among students and colleges is the transferability of credits.

Collaboration between two and four year schools is another national trend that is quickly growing. Because of this collaboration, many two year schools are now offering their students the opportunity to complete a bachelor’s degree (or higher) on their campus by partnering with four year schools. By transferring lower-division credits from the two year school and completing upper-division credits offered on-site or online by the four year school, students can complete numerous undergraduate and graduate degrees without leaving their two year campus.

“Community colleges are the institutions that stand closest to the crossroads of higher education and the real world, where Americans need to apply a mix of technical knowledge, business acumen, and creativity to add value in firms whose imperative is to compete on innovation.” ("New Directions for Community Colleges," Special Issue: The New Vocationalism in Community College 2001, (115) (2001): 73–80.) Therefore, the trend for colleges in the future is leaning towards more technical training for a highly skilled employable workforce as well as the retraining of current workforce employees to keep up with current technology trends. These two items go hand in hand making partnerships between businesses and colleges continue to rise. With these partnerships, both businesses and colleges will prosper and grow.

Colleges are now focusing on integrated skill sets and innovative instructional models. This provides a framework to address college students’ needs by challenging the existing instruction silos. It envisions the possibility of enriching classroom learning with real world content and values offering applied and work-based learning experiences, while focusing on generating benefits for students, colleges, and
Due to federal and state budget cuts, many colleges and universities nationwide have been forced to explore collaborative efforts across or between departments in an effort to meet the needs of the college without utilizing additional financial resources. North Dakota has been able to avoid these large budget cuts, but BSC needs to remain proactive with cross-departmental collaboration to continue to provide quality services.

**STRATEGIC THEMES:**
There are several strategic themes stem from the lessons, data gathering, and trends that have been identified:

- **Cost** – Currently, high school students taking a dual credit course through BSC at the high school receive a waiver that covers approximately 70% of tuition. This greatly impacts the revenue that BSC obtains. Also, the courses taught at the high school span a full high school academic year, whereas a course taught at BSC only spans the 16 week semester. This impacts enrollment and revenue as we are only able to count these students as BSC students for the fall semester.
- **Time consuming manual processes** – Each dual credit student applies for admissions to BSC through a paper application, is individually registered by the Academic Records office manually, and tuition waivers are manually applied to student’s accounts.
- **Quality of instruction** – There is a concern regarding the quality of instruction when the course is being taught at the high school by a high school instructor. The quality of the courses taught at the high school should match that of the courses taught at BSC.
- **Decreasing high school enrollments** – According to the Department of Public Instruction, the state of North Dakota has seen a gradual decrease in the number of students enrolled in public high schools over the last 10 years (2000-2010). In 2000, the number of enrolled public high school students was 36,563. This number dropped to 30,241 in 2010. This decrease will likely have an impact on the number of students taking dual credit courses.
- **High school grading** – Dual credit students who take a course at the high school will receive a grade of Incomplete on their first semester transcripts until their grade is finalized at the end of the second semester. This is a manual process to monitor these grades because after a certain date the “I” becomes an “F,” even when the student had actually earned a letter grade.
- **NDUS procedures** – When creating new collaborative agreements with other institutions within NDUS, BSC needs to be to be consistent with all 11 NDUS schools (cost structure, processing, etc.). Currently, the NDUS institutions are following NDUS Procedure 404.0 Collaborative Student Procedure. This guideline maps out the procedures used for both Home and Provider institutions.
- **Business partnerships** – BSC must continue to improve and expand on current partnerships with businesses, as well as being proactive in developing new partnerships. Both parties, BSC and their business partners, need to learn to work through the logistics of developing these partnerships. Faculty and administrators must learn that the norms of the past will not allow growth and prosperity of future partnerships with businesses.
• **Internal collaboration** – If BSC employees understand how collaboration benefits both the college, as well as individual departments, they may be more willing to collaborate. The benefits of collaboration should be communicated across campus for maximum impact.

**SHORT- AND LONG-TERM PLANS:**

Short Term Plans:
• Continue building strong relationships with local high schools by offering dual credit programming opportunities and streamlining the dual credit process. We also need to improve the visibility at rural high schools already engaged in dual credit programming.
• Continue marketing 4 year degree options available in partnership with BSC, especially new opportunities through the University of Mary.
• Build on current partnerships with businesses by offering training for their specific needs.
• Be proactive in recruiting new businesses partners.
• Encourage staff and faculty departments to take advantage of process mapping to help streamline collaborative efforts and to eliminate the duplication of processes.

Long Term Plans:
• Reach out to more rural schools to encourage participation in dual credit programming opportunities.
• Monitor the current collaborative degree opportunities and evaluate the need for additional degree options.
• Continue to work on building and refining collaborative relationships/processes with both NDUS and non-North Dakota institutions.
• Secure legislative funding for a higher education building on the BSC campus to house collaborative programs.
• Be proactive in creating partnerships and provide training opportunities to businesses that have acquired new technologies.