



## Chapter 9

2019-2020



Request for Institutional Change **Change**  
**in Relationship with the Commission**

## CHAPTER NINE: REQUEST FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE - CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMISSION

### Introduction

MidAmerica Nazarene University has a nineteen year track record of developing and sustaining high quality graduate and adult degree programs. The University has demonstrated an ability to successfully manage multiple degree programs and this forms the basis of its request for expanded authority under the Stipulations on Affiliation Status (SAS) to offer Master's degrees in specific disciplinary fields.

The University's first master's level program, the Master of Education degree, was granted initial accreditation in August of 1989. The Master of Management and Master of Business Administration degrees were authorized two years later in 1991. The institution first offered the Master of Arts in Counseling in 1999 and the Master of Arts in Organizational Administration in 2005. Most recently, MNU received Commission approval to offer the M.Ed. program completely online. The University's graduate programs have demonstrated strong viability as evidenced by program enrollment and number of degrees granted.

### Proposed Change

#### *Specific Change*

MidAmerica Nazarene University seeks the amendment of its Stipulation on Affiliation Status which currently reads, "Accreditation at the Master's level is limited to the Master's degree in Education, the Master of Education Technology, the Master of Business Administration, the Master of Arts in Organizational Administration, and the Master of Arts in Counseling..." This statement is challenging for the University in that it reduces the ability of the institution to react to the employment needs of its stakeholders and the greater Kansas City metropolitan and regional marketplaces in a timely fashion. MidAmerica believes a cautious and incremental amendment of its Stipulations on Affiliation Status will allow the institution to grow at a reasonable and steady pace and allow it to achieve its goals in today's highly competitive environment.

The University respectfully requests that through its own internal curriculum approval and quality control procedures, it be authorized to offer new master's degree programs in defined discipline fields in the future without submitting a formal request to The Higher Learning Commission for approval of each new program. It is requested that the Commission adopt the following broader language in the SAS, "*Accreditation at the Master's level is limited to Master's degree programs in the fields of Administration/Leadership, Business, Counseling, Education, Nursing and Religion. Master's programs in the field of education and non-degree courses to meet Kansas*

*State Department of Education initiatives in teacher education may be offered through the Midwest Associated Colleges Consortium, at any Kansas location of its member institutions. International offerings are limited to a baccalaureate program through a contractual relationship, at the European Nazarene College, Büsingen, Germany, to baccalaureate courses at EuNC's extension sites at Vlaardingen, Netherlands, and Bucharest, Romania.”*

The foregoing SAS would encompass the University’s existing, approved master’s level programs: the Master of Arts in Counseling (MAC), the Master of Organizational Administration (MAOA), the Master of Business Administration (MBA) and the Master of Education (M.Ed.). The statement would also allow for additional degree programs in the future limited to specific discipline fields.

MNU acknowledges that growth at a reasonable and steady rate requires having the right organizational structure, support and safeguards in place to ensure that the University adequately addresses the issues that are relevant to adding new Master’s level programs. This chapter presents information that outlines the institution’s rationale for amending the University’s SAS as well as the organizational structures, procedures and safeguards that are in place and will be implemented to govern its own rate of development.

As part of this expanded authority, in the field of Religion, MidAmerica Nazarene University has plans to offer the Master of Arts in Pastoral Leadership<sup>1</sup> in Community Context. This chapter will also introduce this degree.

### ***Expected Outcomes of Proposed Change***

A broader mandate to begin new degree programs within specific disciplines will increase the University’s overall efficiency and allow it to more quickly respond to educational and market trends. An expanded authority will increase accessibility, enrollment, services to the University’s stakeholders, financial stability and improve the overall effectiveness of the University.

### **Increased Efficiency**

Currently, the process for seeking Commission approval to offer new master’s level programming is a 13 step process which takes up to 14 months to complete. The steps are as follows:

1. Program development. Faculty propose and develop the academic curriculum, staffing requests, grant proposals, and an assessment plan for the proposed degree. They conduct needs analysis and prepare a “business plan/model” for the perspective program.
2. Division approval.
3. Graduate and Adult Council quality review and approval.
4. President’s Cabinet review and approval.
5. Faculty Assembly quality review and approval.
6. Board of Trustee review and approval.
7. Request for Institutional Change report.



*Supporting information regarding the Master of Pastoral Leadership is available in Appendix One.*



*The Master of Pastoral Leadership degree is a new initiative.*

<sup>1</sup> Appendix One includes additional information regarding the Master of Pastoral Leadership degree.

8. Focused site visit.
9. Site team's report.
10. Institution's response.
11. Reader's panel.
12. HLC Board action and notice to institution.
13. Delivery and assessment. The University delivers and monitors the degree, reviews program success and quality, makes changes as necessary through the governance system.

For steps 1, 2, 3 and 5 above the following information is required for the approval process and reviewed for quality control purposes:

- Course name and number
- Catalog-ready description
- Outcomes
- Assessment mechanisms
- Rationale
- Place of the course in the curriculum
- Staffing impact
- Funding impact
- Library resources impact
- Sequence in faculty teaching load
- Record of action
- Date passed by Division
- Date passed by Graduate & Adult Council
- Date passed by Faculty Assembly

To illustrate the challenge associated with this process, it is useful to consider a timeline for MNU's recent development of an Online M.Ed. program.

1. August 2007 - Program development begins.
2. October 3, 2007 - Education Division approves the degree.
3. October 9, 2007 - Graduate and Adult Council completes quality review and approval.
4. October 18, 2007 - President's Cabinet reviews and approves the degree.
5. October 22, 2007 - Faculty Assembly completes quality review and approval.
6. November 14, 2007 - Board of Trustee reviews and approves the degree.
7. December 2007 - Request for Institutional Change Report written.
8. January 2008 - President and two associate academic deans travel to Chicago to discuss the proposal with the Commission.
9. January 2008 through May 2008 - Preparation for focused visit.
10. May 12-13, 2008 - Focused visit.
11. July 2008 - Team report issued.

12. August 2008 - Institutional response,
13. September 2008 - reader's panel review
14. October 2008 - HLC Board action.
15. October 2008 - MNU is notified that it may begin operations.

For the Online M.Ed. program, the internal and external approval processes required 15 months to complete, beginning in August 2007 and ending on October 20th, 2008. This change request, therefore, proposes to increase the efficiency of the degree approval process resulting in the following sequence:

1. Program development. Faculty propose and develop the academic curriculum, staffing requests, grant proposals, and an assessment plan for the proposed degree. They conduct needs analysis and prepare a "business plan/model" for the perspective program.
2. A new (additional) step will offer further safeguards to the process through the use of research-based quality assurance standards and rubrics to review all new graduate and adult degree programs.
3. Division approval.
4. Graduate and Adult Council quality review and approval.
5. President's Cabinet review and approval.
6. Faculty Assembly quality review and approval.
7. Board of Trustee review and approval.
8. Commission notification. MNU notifies the commission that it has completed the internal approval process and a research-based quality assurance program for a new master's level degree. The University also confirms that the degree falls within one of the pre-approved disciplines listed in the Stipulations on Affiliation Status.
9. Delivery and assessment. The University delivers and monitors the degree, reviews program success and quality, makes changes as necessary through the governance system.

It is expected that the major measurable outcome of this change request will be to make the approval process for new master's level programs in specific discipline areas more effective by removing four process steps and reducing the authorization time by up to ten months. MidAmerica is aware that HLC focused review offers a safeguard and quality check for new degree programs and the institution plans to compensate for the loss of this check and balance by implementing the research based-quality review program outlined in step #2 above. The following measures are proposed:

### **Quality Assurance Inventory For Classes**

An inventory containing the most important elements for effective online course delivery will be used in the approval process for both on campus and online coursework. Course developers, instructors, and administrators will use this device as a guide for determining if courses contain components that provide candidates with successful learning opportunities.



*The quality assurance inventory is a new initiative.*

LEARNING - FOCUSED

	Description	No Evidence	Limited Evidence	Clear Evidence
<b>Criteria</b>				
<b>Navigation &amp; Course Setup</b>	Navigation system enables students to quickly locate course information and materials.			
<b>Student Orientation</b>	Information tells how instructor structures learning process, includes a schedule of topics and assignments, communications modes and the types of activities/ assessments. Components may be in the syllabus or introductory materials.			
<b>Syllabus</b>	Prior to the start date, students access to a detailed course syllabus that contains crucial course information and requirements. The instructor follows the syllabus template: Course description, objectives, national standards addressed, requirements, schedule, grading system, policies, references			
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	Instructor provides students with a clear, measurable description of what they will be able to do, know, and/or experience in the form of goals and objectives.			
<b>Learning Activities</b>	Activities engage students and support the achievement of goals and objectives. An activity consists of one or more tasks and should have one or more objective associated with it.			
<b>Learning Assessments</b>	Assessments, formative, performance-based, and summative relate to the goals and learning objectives. Instruments include grading criteria/rubrics including final summary paper rubric.			
<b>Copyright requirements</b>	Course adheres to MNU policies for the use of third-party copyrighted material or evidence of appropriate copyright clearance.			
<b>Instructor response &amp; availability</b>	Instructor response and availability clearly communicated to students.			
<b>Course resource requirements</b>	Instructor clearly communicates additional hardware, software, and specialized resource needs and explains how to access resources outside the LMS.			
<b>Technical support</b>	Instructor posts information regarding access to technical support and information about topics such as log in how to retrieve passwords, use software, and report software failures.			
<b>Accessibility requirements</b>	The course adheres to MNU policies and guidelines regarding accessibility.			
<b>Course Improvement Plan</b>	Course instructor includes methods of soliciting feedback from students on an ongoing basis to inform course improvement.			
<b>Course Functionality</b>	All aspects of the course perform properly and support student progress.			

The quality assurance inventory is research-based and was developed from:

1. Regan, L. C. (2008, March). Quality assurance for online learning. PowerPoint presentation at the Academic Impressions Faculty Development in Blended and Online Learning, Atlanta, GA.
2. Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (2001) Best Practices For Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.
3. Chickering, A., & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education. AAHE Bulletin, 39, 3-7.
4. Graduate Studies in Education Faculty Handbook. (2008). Olathe, KS: MidAmerica Nazarene University.

In addition to the quality assurance inventory, if the course is online, the following quality assurance standards will be used for each new degree program launched under the amended SAS:

### Online Course Quality Assurance: 13 Criteria Points

#### STANDARD 1

##### Navigation

The course has a consistent and intuitive navigation system enabling students to quickly locate course information and materials.

Check	Navigation
	1. Course navigation is consistent and intuitive.
	2. Students can find their way easily back and forth throughout the course.
	3. The course management menu is set-up correctly.
	4. The following three questions can be easily answered.
	a. Where am I?
	b. Where have I been?
	c. Where can I go?
	5. The online course uses a consistent format and orientation that is easy to understand and navigate.



*The online course quality assurance program is a new initiative.*

LEARNING - FOCUSED

#### STANDARD 2

##### Student Orientation

A course orientation is used to familiarize the students with the course.

Check	Student Orientation
	1. There is a student orientation in the course.
	2. The orientation familiarizes the students with the course.
	3. The orientation gives a new student an idea of how the learning process is structured, how units function, how assignments are handled, and how to use the discussion board.
	4. The orientation provides further detailed review of syllabus materials.
	5. Learners are made aware of all university resources available to them.
	6. Learners can access all pages within a reasonable download time, and any free additional software or materials should be listed specifically in the syllabus with specific instructions for downloading. Any additional software/materials for purchase are available prior to the start of the course via the online bookstore.

#### STANDARD 3

##### Syllabus

Students have easy access to a course syllabus which contains crucial course information and requirements they need to know about the course prior to starting.

Check	Syllabus
	1. The course contains a detailed course syllabus in the GAS format which communicates expectations of learners including: learning outcomes, assignments and activities, rubrics, grading scales, online course policies, and MNU policies.
	2. The course is developed based on a weekly unit schedule; specific outcomes are addressed within each week or unit.

	3. The course content is presented in a logical progression.
	4. Each weekly unit highlights key topics, terms, and information.
	5. Learners can access all pages within a reasonable download time. Any free additional software or materials is listed specifically in the syllabus with specific instructions for downloading. Any additional software/materials for purchase are available prior to the start of the course via the online bookstore.

**STANDARD 4**

**Learning Objectives**

The course contains learning goals and objectives.

Check	Learning Objectives
	1. The course contains learning goals and objectives.
	2. Weekly learning objectives are listed in the weekly agendas.
	3. Course learning objectives are listed in the syllabus.
	4. Objectives provide a clear, measurable description of what students will be able to do, know, and/or experience as a result of having successfully completed the course.

**STANDARD 5**

**Learning Activities**

The course learning activities engage students and support the achievement of stated goals and learning objectives.

Check	Learning Activities
	1. Learning activities are present on each unit.
	2. There are a variety of learning activities.
	3. Activities engage students and support the achievement of stated goals and learning objectives.
	4. Instructional activities promote opportunities to engage in higher-order learning and critical thinking practices.
	5. Each weekly unit highlights key topics, terms, and information.
	6. Presentation of content targets a range of learning styles.
	7. Instructional media is used when feasible to enhance learning.
	8. Opportunities for student to student communications (e.g., group work, collaboration) are provided.

**STANDARD 6**

**Learning Assessments**

Learning assessments are used to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence to determine how well student performance achieves the course goals and learning objectives.

Check	Learning Assessments
	1. Assessments clearly defined.
	2. Assessments measure the objectives of the course.
	3. Learning outcomes are assessed with multiple types and levels of assessment.
	4. Appropriate combinations of formative and summative assessments are utilized with feedback provided to students in a timely manner.
	5. Assessments measure a range of cognitive levels (see Bloom's Taxonomy).
	6. Assessments require students to demonstrate content knowledge through application in realistic and relevant ways.

**STANDARD 7**

**Copyright Requirements**

The course adheres to the current University policies for the use of third-party copyrighted material or course instructors are able to provide evidence of appropriate copyright clearance.

Check	Copyright Compliance
	1. The use of educational materials and multimedia adhere to the institution's policy on Copyright Compliance.
	2. The use of educational materials and multimedia adhere to Fair Use Guidelines.
	3. Permission of the copyright holder been secured in writing.

**STANDARD 8**

**Instructor Response and Availability**

Instructor response time and availability is clearly communicated to the student.

Check	Instructor Response and Availability
	1. The instructor clearly communicates the response time and availability to students.
	2. Interaction and discussion of course concepts and content occur between the instructor and students in a frequent and meaningful manner.
	3. Instructor provides feedback in a timely manner.
	3. Interaction expands on the learning outcomes and relate to course content.
	4. Expectations regarding the amount and level of participation clearly stated.
	5. Instructor strives to create an open and inviting climate for communication, and opportunities for online community building.
	6. Students are encouraged to provide feedback and raise questions and concerns
	7. Several forms of communication are routinely used in the online classroom. Instructor demonstrates an understanding of how (and when) to use various communication tools to accomplish their goals.
	8. The instructor models good writing skills, encourage students to express divergent points of view, and reinforce critical thinking skills.
	9. Instructors provide clear directions, instructions, and helpful information to guide learners in successfully using the online classroom as well as successfully completing the course content and activities.

#### STANDARD 9

##### Course Resource Requirements

Hardware, software, or specialized resources required are clearly communicated to the students.

Check	Course Resource Requirements
	1. Software or specialized resources outside the course management system are clearly articulated to the students.
	2. Course design incorporates and makes effective use of external resources.
	3. Reasonable efforts are made to provide alternate activities in the event that connectivity, technological, or learner access issues arise.
	4. Instructors assist students with all questions in a timely manner and/or refer them to the appropriate technical support or University administrator.
	5. Learners are made aware of all university resources available to them.

#### STANDARD 10

##### Technical Support

Information regarding access to technical support is clearly communicated to the students. Technical support includes information about topics such as how to log in, how to retrieve passwords, how to use software, and how to report software failures. Technical support does not include help with course content, questions about assignments, exam dates, or academic issues.

Check	Technical Support
	1. Information is provided concerning technical support for the students.
	2. Instructors assist students with all questions in a timely manner and/or refer them to the appropriate technical support or University administrator.

#### STANDARD 11

##### Accessibility Requirements

The course adheres to University policies and guidelines regarding accessibility.

Check	Accessibility Requirements
	1. The course adheres to university policies and guidelines regarding accessibility.

#### STANDARD 12

##### Course Improvement Plan

There is a way to solicit feedback from students on an on-going basis to inform course improvement.

Check	Course Improvement Plan
	1. There is a course evaluation to gather feedback from students on an ongoing basis.

STANDARD 13

Course Functionality

The course functions well without technical problems such as incorrect links, missing media files, etc.

Check	Course Functionality
	1. Learning materials and course resources are available within 3 clicks?
	2. Web page links open in a second browser window.
	3. All web links work correctly.
	4. All instructional media files play correctly.
	5. The course is developed based on a weekly unit schedule.
	6. The course content is presented in a logical progression.

The course quality standards are research-based and were developed from:

1. Chickering, Arthur and Stephen C. Ehrmann. (1996). "Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever. AAHE Bulletin, October, pp 3-6. <http://www.tltgroup.org/programs/seven.html>
2. Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (2001). Best Practices For Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.
3. Chickering, A., & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education. AAHE Bulletin, 39, 3-7.
4. Chickering, A., & Reisser, L. (1993). Education and identity. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
5. Graduate Studies in Education Faculty Handbook. (2008). Olathe, KS: MidAmerica Nazarene University.
6. Graham, C., Cagiltay, K., Craner, J., Lim, B., & Duffy, T. M. (2000). Teaching in a Web-based distance learning environment: An evaluation summary based on four courses. Center for Research on Learning and Technology Technical Report No. 13-00. Indiana University Bloomington. Retrieved September 18, 2000 from the World Wide Web: <http://crlt.indiana.edu/publications/crlt00-13.pdf>
7. Online Course Standards (2006). Parkville, MO: Park University.
8. Palomba, C.A., and Banta, T. W. (1999). Assessment Essentials, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
9. Principles for good practice in undergraduate education: Faculty inventory. (1989). Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation, Inc.
10. Principles for good practice in undergraduate education: Institutional inventory. (1989). Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation, Inc.
11. Regan, L. C. (2008, March). Quality assurance for online learning. PowerPoint presentation at the Academic Impressions Faculty Development in Blended and Online Learning, Atlanta, GA.

These campus wide templates were adopted by Adult and Graduate Council on September 16th, 2008 and by Faculty Assembly on September 28th, 2008. They are mechanisms to ensure that blended and online programs are fundamentally sound, and consistent across every department on campus. The inventory is designed to take the guesswork out of course development, and give the faculty a clear roadmap.

## Increased Student Access and Enrollment

A change in relationship with the commission will increase access to faith-based graduate education for many students in the local and regional geographic area. “According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are over 4,000 degree-granting institutions of higher education in the United States. These include 1,600 private, nonprofit campuses, about 900 of which define themselves as “religiously affiliated.” However, only 102 intentionally Christ-centered institutions in the U.S. have qualified for membership in the Council for Christian College & Universities.” Currently, MidAmerica Nazarene University is the only CCCU institution in the Kansas City metropolitan area and with each new successful master’s level program, more local and regional students have access to faith-based higher education at the graduate level.

The University has demonstrated its ability to successfully increase access to master’s level degrees in the region and to, at the same time, manage multiple graduate degree programs. It has further demonstrated its capability and past experience in offering technologically facilitated instruction. The following tables illustrate the increased access that the University’s graduate and adult programs have provided to the community:

*Table A1-1: Graduate headcount by program and year*

Program	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	1999
MAOA	9	24	29	15	na	na	na
MAC	62	67	68	64	53	43	10
MBA	96	94	92	111	110	105	106
MEd	50	54	45	88	68	73	58
MET	48	39	58	52	45	73	na
MET blended	22	40	na	na	na	na	na
MSE	18	23	19	23	na	na	na
Non-degree (LTI, TT, Play Therapy)	121	195	111	166	238	159	na
Total Grad. and Prof.	426	536	422	469	514	453	174

*Table A1-2: Graduate degrees conferred by year*

Program	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	1999
MAC	25	17	15	14	10	7	0
MAOA	25	19	na	na	na	na	na
MSE	12	7	11	0	0	na	na
MBA	31	46	49	59	42	36	36
MEd.	60	52	83	73	56	74	77
MET	68	37	49	71	36	na	na
Total Master’s degrees	221	178	207	217	144	117	113

With regard to the Master of Pastoral Leadership degree, the blended nature of this program will give, “regional pastors unprecedented flexibility in obtaining ongoing theological education. In addition, cost comparison with local institutions indicates that our courses are competitive with other sources of theological education in the area. Comparison to similar online degree programs offered by seminaries accredited through ATS show that we at a competitive cost advantage, even for non-regionally affiliated pastors.”

### **Stakeholder Benefits**

The ability to more efficiently respond to marketplace need will benefit MNU’s employer stakeholders by increasing the pool of qualified laborers in the region. It will benefit student stakeholders by providing new avenues of educational programs and services. With regard to the master’s degree in Pastoral Leadership it is anticipated that the program will become a pastoral recruiting tool for the administrative arm of the Church of the Nazarene and will give the Church training tools to offer local pastors in the form of lifelong learning/CEU credits. The program has the potential to serve alumni stakeholders with a program that deepens the theological inquiry begun in our undergraduate program or for those graduates from other programs who now wish to augment their degrees with practical theological study.

### **Increased Financial Growth**

As the May 2008 focused visit team was quick to point out, MNU administrators from the Division level to the President’s office recognize that graduate programming is “not an economic panacea, but view it as a logical development of MNU program delivery.” The team found that “there was a campus-wide recognition that the 100% online masters degree program should not and would not be utilized as a “cash cow” to simply reduce institutional debt. The graduate programs of MidAmerica Nazarene University consistently exhibit financial self-sufficiency and returned an average of 61.8% to the institution’s operating budget in 2005-06 and 57.6% in 2006-07. While not a magic bullet, a greater efficiency in bringing new graduate programs to the end user will add stability to the financial picture at MidAmerica and help it to achieve its goals in today’s highly competitive environment

### ***Impact of the Change on the University’s Mission***

This proposal doesn’t significantly impact the institution’s mission in that the mission already provides that university offers “selected professional and graduate degrees” and must “transform the individual through intellectual, spiritual, and personal development for a life of service to God, the church, the nation and the world.” Rather, the proposed change in relationship with the Commission will allow the University to more readily search for and develop programs which are a good fit and logical extension of its faith-based mission.

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2 See Appendix 1B

With regard to the Master of Pastoral Leadership, this program will help the University further accomplish its Christian mission: “Embedded within the university system in the Church of the Nazarene are the values of mutual servanthood and mutual submission. We are designed to serve the church and the church serves and supports the university with students and funding to carry out our mission. We both exist to fulfill the Great Commission as equal partners. When both parties experience the sacrificial giving of each other, the relationship flourishes and both are made stronger and healthier. As the university receives ongoing financial support through the local church, the university has a moral obligation to give back to the local church as part of the relationship, based on our mission and core values. Pastors who feel listened to, cared for and contributed to are most likely to experience high regard for the university and thus support the system with their influence, their financial resources, and their buy-in to the shared mission of the church and the university.”

### ***Commission Policy Relevant to Proposed Change***

This request for change represents a change in relationship with the Commission (policy 3.2(d)4). Specifically, it is a proposal to change the stipulations within the current affiliation status.

## **Factors Leading the Institution to Undertake Proposed Change**

### ***Needs Analysis***

In consulting with its staff liaison at The Higher Learning Commission, it became apparent to MidAmerica Nazarene University that its track record of offering multiple successful master’s level programs for nineteen years might qualify the institution to seek the amendment of its relationship with the Commission. While the University considered asking to become a Master’s level institution across the board, in working with its staff liaison, it seemed the more cautious and incremental approach was to ask for expanded authority within well defined and carefully selected discipline areas. This led to a review of the extensive procedures followed by the institution to obtain approvals for its Master of Organizational Administration and Online Master of Education programs and a critical evaluation of the efficiency of these processes. Eventually, MNU concluded that a change was warranted in its Status of Affiliation to reduce cost, increase efficiency and to ensure a timely response to marketplace needs.

### **Growth of Graduate Degree Programs**

Since the last accreditation visit in 1999, the University has seen steady growth of its graduate enrollments. See Table A1-1 and A1-2 above. These tables show programmatic increases since the last decennial visit with an 59% percent increase in graduate headcount enrollment and a 114% increase in number of degrees conferred. MNU has earned a Carnegie Classification Code designation of Master’s Colleges and Universities, Master’s L. The Master’s L designation is for master’s institutions awarding in excess of 200 master’s degrees per year. Graduate programs offered by MNU’s three graduate divisions serve as important career development tools via licensure and certification into professional fields requiring graduate level coursework. The University’s Strategic Plan and the individual vision statements of the three divisions, GSM, GSE

and GSC, serve as evidence that graduate study will continue to be an important aspect of the University's mission.

### **Self-study 1999**

In its 1999 report the Commission recommended that MidAmerica Nazarene University “develop and implement recruitment strategies that will allow the institution to achieve its admission goals in today's highly competitive environment.” HLC also encouraged MNU to “develop a plan to strengthen the image of the university in Olathe and the surrounding area.” The evaluators cited comments from community members who said “that the University was the ‘best kept secret’ in town”<sup>3</sup> and then go on to recommend that “there could be more attention given to developing closer ties with the community.” MidAmerica has been working to develop new Master's level programs which will help it achieve its admission's goals and which will help to lift the “veil of secrecy” surrounding the University and make the University's offerings more accessible to Olathe and the surrounding area. Increasing the efficiency of the approval process will further aid in the accomplishment of this goal.

### **Requested Focused Review 2008**

The 2008 focused review site team found that the MNU local educational market share has been “declining and the institution has turned to online deliveries as a logical means of improving the curriculum and increasing its availability to a wider niche audience, the students who prefer a faith-based graduate education.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to its Online M.Ed. program, MidAmerica has been working to develop new land-based graduate programs which will help it to improve curriculum and reach a wider niche audience. Increasing the efficiency of the approval process will further aid in the accomplishment of this goal.

### ***Advisory Committee and Needs Analysis***

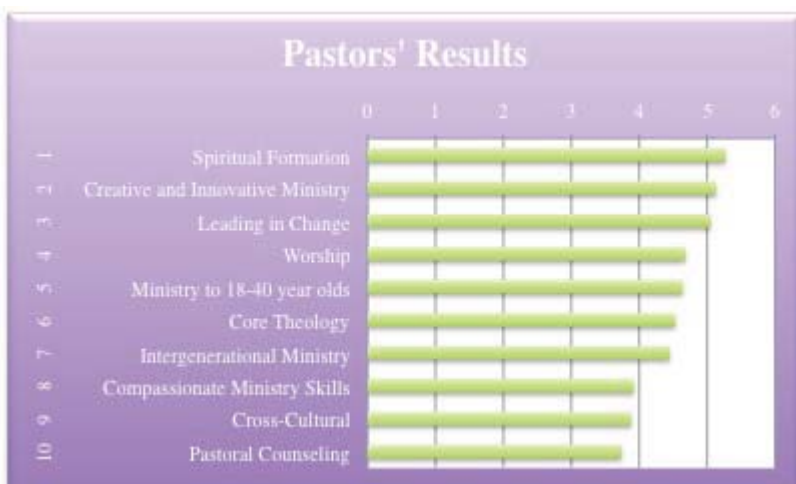
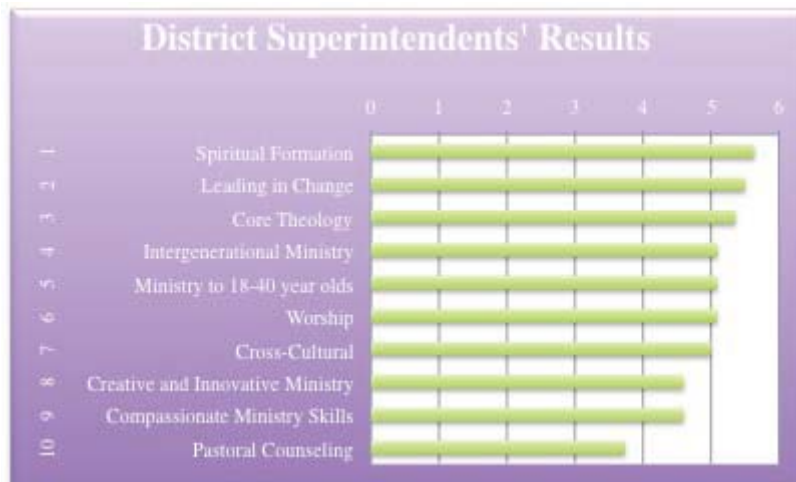
Various constituencies are used by the University to complete needs analysis for new degree programs. A group of stakeholders was used to help develop the first program, which is anticipated under the new relationship, the Master of Pastoral Leadership. The advisory committee for the Master of Pastoral Leadership found that the degree would be beneficial for students. First, we identified potential areas of continuing education through direct pastoral experience and reports, listening at district assemblies, pastors' retreats, and interviews with church leaders. Secondly, we did several surveys of local ministry professionals who attended the University's Ministry Resource Center conferences, consulted with the presenters who presented at these MRCs and engaged in informal conversations with pastors nationwide. Primary concerns of the pastors based on these preliminary ventures were program cost and availability in hard to reach areas.

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3 Report Of A Visit To MidAmerica Nazarene University For The Commission On Institutions Of Higher Learning Of The North Central Association Of Colleges And Schools, February 22, 1999-February 24, 1999, p. 23

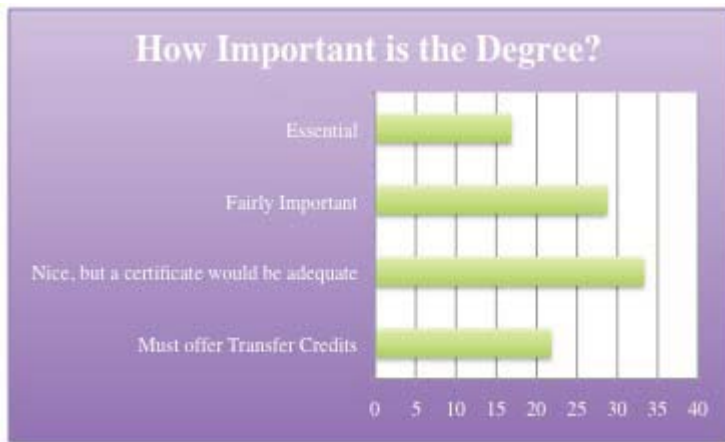
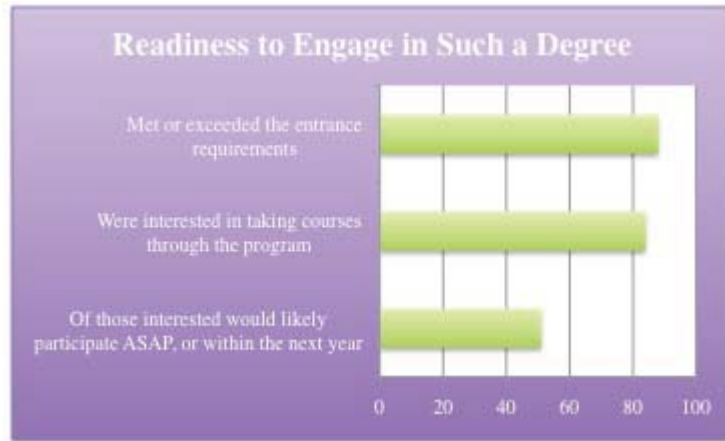
4 Report Of A Requested Focused Visit For Change, Assurance Section, p.8, May 12-13, 2008.

Third, we attended graduate education and continuing education forums attended by others in our denomination who are already running graduate programs for comparative purposes. Fourth, we surveyed District Superintendents and selected pastors on the region. While their perceptions differed somewhat, there was significant overlap. (See Table)



Fifth, we did an open comparison to other Nazarene graduate programs to discover how we could make a unique contribution to the Wesleyan Theological union. Sixth, we looked at programs that are accredited through ATS, and sought to utilize their research to help us identify trends in successful programs.

Seventh, we hosted a pastors' luncheon in conjunction with the regional prayer summit, listening to their needs and running sample curriculum past them for comment. Finally, we opened the sample program to a complete e-mail listing of pastors from our region to ascertain their level of interest in pursuing master's level coursework, and asked for their responses to the proposed curriculum, as well as their assessment of personal readiness to engage in such a program via an online survey. (See table)



Ultimately, the curricular approach includes elements of all the identified areas of interests with the exception of pastoral counseling (the lowest rated curricular concern); however, the degree of need for this program and the specificity of the skills it covers, merits its own attention and is being addressed through a program jointly pursued by NTS, our sister seminary and Graduate Studies in Counseling here on the MNU campus.

Given the strong interest within this surveyed community, our immediate student market, we have comparative reason to believe that an extended national market will be similarly interested. Northwest Nazarene University began its online degree program based on a survey of only 40 with a smaller degree of interest than was evidenced by this survey. After five years, their program enrollment exceeds 125 students per year. Given the unique parameters of this degree program, including such factors as its multidisciplinary approach, its immediate contextual application, and its ease of accessibility through online community combined with modified cohort support and annual ground classes, we believe the program will have immediate appeal and lasting value.<sup>5</sup>

***Relationship Between the Proposed Change and Ongoing Planning***

This request for change in relationship is part of an overall initiative to develop new graduate

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1D for the full plan.

programs and bring them to market in a reasonable time frame. The Strategic planning, budgeting and self-study processes include findings that provide the impetus for action. The expansion of graduate programming is consistent with the MNU strategic plan, findings included in institution's comprehensive self-study report and the mandate of the Strategic Positioning Committee. The need to expand educational opportunities for adult learners is clear. As part of the planning process, MidAmerica has hired a consultant for the development of new graduate initiatives.<sup>6</sup>

## **Necessary Approvals Obtained to Implement Proposed Change**

### ***Internal Approvals Required and Confirming Documentation***

Before MidAmerica Nazarene University submits a new program to the Commission for approval, it follows a rigorous procedure to obtain the necessary internal approvals. These safeguards will continue to be in place after the proposed change in relationship with the Commission and a new quality review process will be implemented to provide additional precautions. These steps are aimed at ensuring that the institution has the financial, physical and human resources necessary to offer any new program. In addition, each new program is reviewed and assessed to ensure that it continues to meet the ongoing needs of the University's constituents.

The request to change the stipulations within the current affiliation status has been approved by the president's cabinet and the board of trustees.

The first degree proposed under this expansion of authority, the Master of Arts degree in Pastoral Leadership in Community Context (MAPL), has been approved by the Religion division, the graduate and adult council, faculty assembly, president's cabinet and the boards of trustees.<sup>7</sup>

### ***External Approvals Required and Confirming Documentation***

There are no external approvals required for this proposed change of relationship with the Commission.

## **Possible Impact of Proposed Change on Challenges Identified by Commission**

In its February 1999 Team Report<sup>8</sup>, The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) identified institutional challenges and provided advice and suggestions for improvement which are related to and may be affected by this proposed change.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1E

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1G

<sup>8</sup> Report Of A Visit To MidAmerica Nazarene University For The Commission On Institutions Of Higher Learning [Of The North Central Association Of Colleges And Schools, February 22, 1999-February 24, 1999.](#)

First, the commission encouraged MidAmerica Nazarene University to “develop and implement recruitment strategies that will allow the institution to achieve its admission goals in today’s highly competitive environment.” This embedded request for institutional change is one of several new ways that MidAmerica Nazarene University is responding to the team report by requesting an expanded authority to develop new programs which are consistent with the University’s mission and which will, in turn, aid in the recruitment of students and further allow the university to achieve its admission goals in a highly competitive environment. With regard to the Master of Pastoral Leadership, this proposed program will create an additional method of broadening MNU’s constituency by offering a program with a high-interest, yet largely unaddressed, curricular focus. Additionally, one of the anticipated soft benefits of this graduate program is that a positive experience with MidAmerica’s educational programs will help to make regional and international pastors favorably inclined to refer potential undergraduate, as well as graduate, students within their spheres of influence to our programs. Since many of the individuals within these pastor’s spheres of influence are in alignment with the University’s mission and vision, they are likely to be strong candidates who can be reached most effectively through personal contact.

Second, HLC recognized that MidAmerica Nazarene University had a “high percentage of debt” which needed to be reduced. This request for institutional change is one measure to address the commission’s concern by providing new streams of revenue which will assist the university in meeting its budget and retire existing debt. This chapter makes the case that MidAmerica Nazarene University’s graduate and adult offerings are financially self-supporting and will help the institution’s balance sheet rather than hinder it.

Third, the commission encouraged MidAmerica Nazarene University to “develop a plan to strengthen the image of the university in Olathe and the surrounding area.” On page 23 of the team report, the evaluators cite comments from community members who said “that the university was the ‘best kept secret’ in town” and then go on to recommend that “there could be more attention given to developing closer ties with the community.” MidAmerica Nazarene University has responded to this concern in a variety of ways since its last self-study. There are several current initiatives underway to strengthen MidAmerica Nazarene University’s “brand” identity and it is suggested that this request for institutional change plays an important role in the overall strategy. With regard to the Master of Pastoral Leadership, a new course of study perceived to be responsive and relevant will help to promote awareness regarding the University and its offerings.

Finally, in its 1999 report, the evaluation team identified other institutional challenges and provided additional advice and suggestions. These other items are not directly connected to the Request for Change and would only be impacted tangentially.

## **Organization's Plan to Implement and Sustain Proposed Change**

MidAmerica Nazarene University believes that sustaining additional degree programs as well as amending the limitations in the SAS is a matter of effectively managing the institution's financial, physical and human resources. The University plans to implement additional master's level degree programs in specific disciplines by following its own internal guidelines and implementing a research-based quality review program for new degree approval. This will enable the University to efficiently respond to market and stakeholder demands and to grow at a reasonable and steady rate.

### ***Administrative Structure Necessary to Support Proposed Change***

Over its nineteen year history, the graduate and adult studies arm of the University has developed an infrastructure of administration, faculty, staff and governance which supports stability and growth. The institution has developed strong policies to carry out graduate education in the Graduate and Adult Studies area.

The University currently coordinates graduate programs through a Graduate and Adult Council.<sup>9</sup> Comprised of graduate program directors and at-large faculty representatives, the council also is chaired by the Associate Dean for Graduate and Adult Studies. The council is an academic policy committee that recommends to the Faculty Assembly standards for admission into the graduate programs, the establishment of new graduate programs and degree requirements.

The appointment of an Associate Academic Dean for Graduate and Adult Studies provides a direct link to the Office of Academic Affairs and strengthens institution-wide coordination of graduate programming. The associate academic dean also sits as a member of the Deans' Cabinet and Academic council. These duties ensure consistency of the academic planning process across disciplines. The associate dean assists the vice president for academic affairs in a variety of administrative duties including staff relations, problem solving, daily program management and supervision of two admissions specialists and the director of each graduate program.

Each graduate office is comprised of a director, professional support staff and faculty.

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9 Appendix 1L

Figure A1-1: Graduate and Adult Council's Role in the Academic Structure

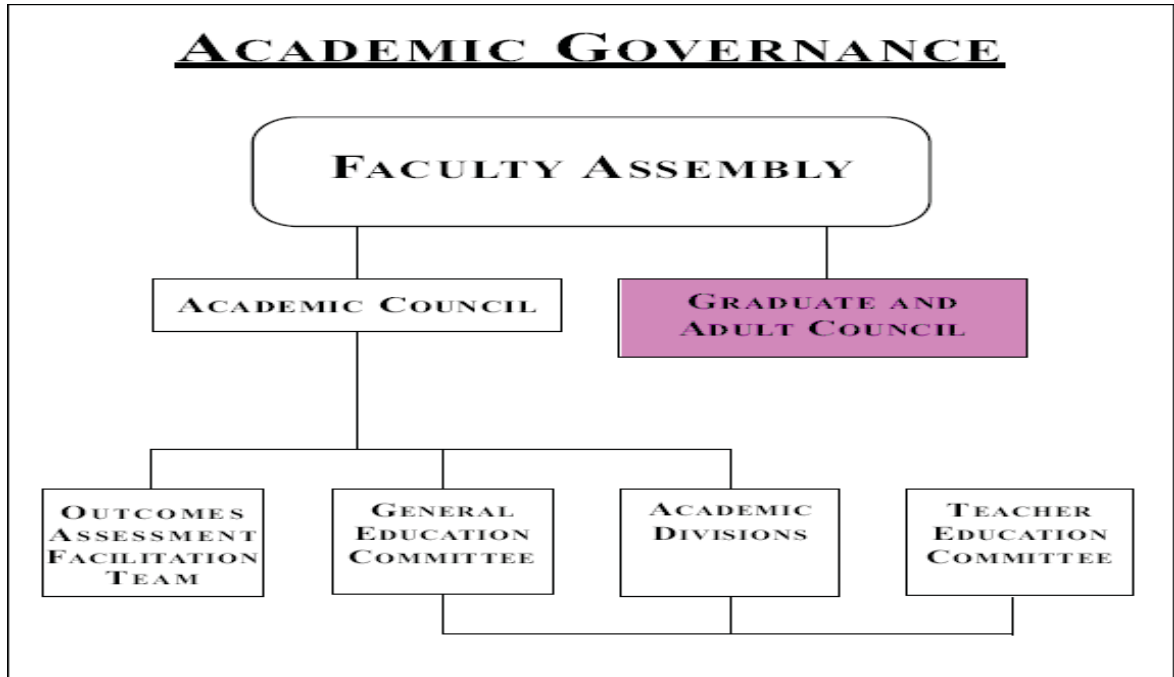
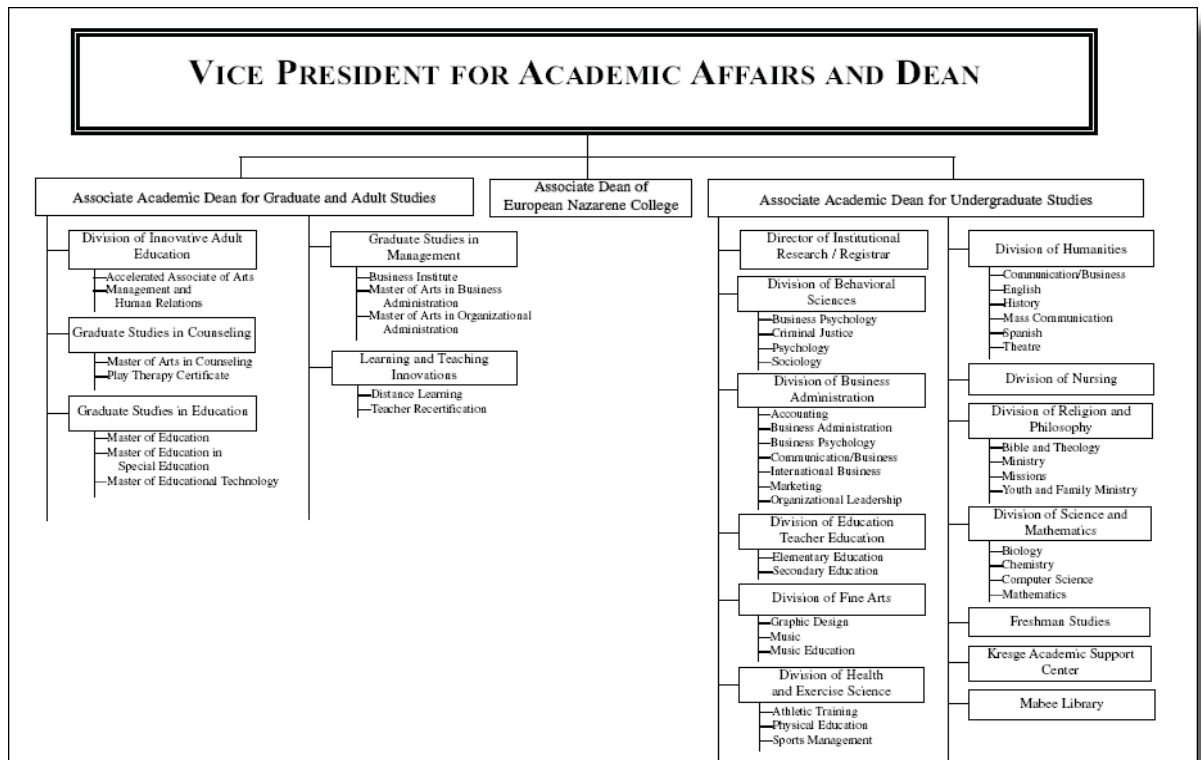


Figure A1-2: Graduate Dean's Role in the Academic Structure



With regard to the proposed Master of Pastoral Leadership program, the management of blended online learning courses and degrees will be managed by the Office of Graduate Studies in Religion under the supervision and leadership of the associate dean for graduate and adult studies. The director of Graduate Studies in Religion is a full time, eleven month administrative position responsible for managing this graduate program and teaching a half-time load. The position is also supported by one full-time graduate assistant and one student worker. The director will oversee efforts in marketing, general advising, registration, receipt of payment, and issuance of Blackboard passwords for online courses (see process map). The director also is responsible for establishing and scheduling classes, initiating contracts with approved developers and facilitators, and monitoring the contracts of faculty for teaching online learning courses.

### ***Faculty and Staff Involvement to Accomplish Proposed Change***

Included in the Master of Leadership proposal are process maps detailing various processes engaged as the initiative has been developed.<sup>10</sup>

Full-time faculty members from MidAmerica Nazarene University who carry the proper credentials and who are content experts may apply to develop and/or teach courses offered through Graduate Studies in Religion. When non-full-time faculty members desire to teach graduate religion courses, their credentials are reviewed by the Graduate Studies in Religion director and associate dean of adult and graduate studies to ensure they meet guidelines and that there is a clear mission fit with the institution.

Once approved, the graduate studies in religion director, associate dean for graduate and adult studies and the vice-president for academic affairs issue contracts for faculty to teach in the graduate studies in religion program. Specific training requirements must be met by all contracted faculty before teaching their first online course.

### ***Support Services and Learning Resources for Adult and Graduate Students***

#### **Student Support Services**

The Master of Pastoral Leadership will be a blended delivery program. The technical requirements and required technical competence for Internet online learning students are listed on the MidAmerica Nazarene University's Web site ([http://www.MidAmerica Nazarene University.edu/services/it/help/min\\_computer\\_spec.php](http://www.MidAmerica Nazarene University.edu/services/it/help/min_computer_spec.php)). Students complete a self-assessment instrument to determine their technology readiness as part of the admission process. Student eligibility for and admission to an online learning course is governed by the same requirements governing on campus courses.

Assessment data gathered from the online student survey and graduate student exit surveys of online learning students reveal that students are generally satisfied with the online learning courses,

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1H

programs, and services offered through existing graduate studies programs at MNU. Student data collected from 2006-2007 end-of-course surveys indicate satisfaction with the online learning experience. Three questions in the survey ask for feedback about appropriate facilitation of online usage. Of 336 students surveyed 287 responded with an 84% approval listed as either always or frequently satisfied.

### **Library Resources**

MidAmerica Nazarene University's, Mabee Library provides access to a variety of library resources and services to electronic distance education students online, by telephone, and through the mail.

Services include:

- Electronic delivery of articles in the library's collection
- Electronic & postal delivery of articles and books from the collections of other institutions
- Postal delivery of books in the library's collection
- Research assistance via online chat, e-mail, and telephone
- Online access to the library's catalog
- Online access to a variety of research databases and indexes, including full-text periodical articles
- Online access to reference guides

Mabee Library also provides information to faculty on copyright protocols in the creation of instructional materials for electronic distance education courses.

### **Academic Advising**

Graduate Studies in Religion faculty and staff members will be charged with performing the primary advising function for electronic learning education courses and programs. Online advising information is readily available for all graduate students both through the MidAmerica Nazarene University website and through its course management system, Blackboard. Additional assistance is provided as needed through the Graduate Studies in Religion office, director and other staff members assigned to this program.

### **Financial Aid Counseling**

Information concerning financial aid is readily available to online learning students through MidAmerica Nazarene University's Web site ([www.mnu.edu/services/sfs/](http://www.mnu.edu/services/sfs/)). Counseling services also are available by e-mail and telephone.

### ***Financial Capacity to Implement and Sustain Proposed Change***

Delivery of a hybrid program is not unprecedented for MidAmerica Nazarene University. The school has always been willing and able to locate funding for new programs which it deems viable. The Master of Education and baccalaureate Management of Human Relations have been in existence

for nearly twenty years. Each was initially subsidized out of operating expenditures and both have consistently returned 50% to the institution over annual operating costs. While the anticipated return from the Master of Arts in Pastoral Leadership in Community Context is not anticipated to bring in revenue at the rate of those programs, it is anticipated that the program will support itself and contribute to faculty resources available to both the graduate and undergraduate faculties.

## **Strategies to Evaluate the Proposed Change**

MidAmerica Nazarene University uses a variety of strategies to ensure that all of its programs meet specific institutional standards and outside accreditation standards. At present, the University has several methods of evaluating our various academic programs. Each year, every academic unit conducts performance reviews for each instructor and student course evaluations to examine teaching ability.

The University also relies on academic program reviews which are completed on a rotating basis on a five year cycle. Between five year cycles, each academic unit on campus completes program analysis and reports its findings in an annual report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The University has an assessment plan and incorporates student learning assessment into each graduate degree program as a means of evaluating the success of its students and of the academic unit's programs.

Finally, GSE's graduate programs, are reviewed and accredited an external agency, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). GSC's graduate programs are currently pursuing accreditation with the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Authorization for off campus degree authority at the Liberty location must be applied for and approved by the Missouri Department of Higher Education. The Higher Learning Commission provides authorization and review of graduate degree programs as part of the comprehensive institutional accreditation process.

For the proposed Master of Pastoral Leadership, students in each module evaluate both the faculty facilitation and the module content in terms of the overall quality of their learning experience. A standardized set of evaluations will be included in each Blackboard template. The evaluations will be tabulated electronically and reviewed by the Director of Graduate Studies in Religion.<sup>11</sup> A summary of the written feedback will be provided to each facilitator for each course taught.

The following example of student learning assessment is proposed for the Master of Pastoral Leadership program and will align with the overall assessment plan for the University:

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<sup>11</sup> For a complete plan of the Assessment Guidelines, see Appendix 1J.

## ***Assessment Plan for MAPL***

### **Assessment mechanisms:**

As part of ongoing assessment the program will complete the following:

1. Each course will assess students on the basis of one implementation project and one summary project. 90% of students will score 80% or above on each project completed.
2. Students will engage in ongoing weekly self-assessment through the mechanism of the synchronous group growth reports. 90% of students will rate their personal participation at 4 or above on a five-point scale in 80% or more of their weekly reports.
3. Students will engage in weekly peer review through participation in synchronous growth groups. 90% of students will participate in 80% or more of the peer reviews.
4. Students will engage in program review on a course by course basis, offering feedback on both course content and course facilitation. The results of these reviews will be available to facilitating faculty, course designers, and the program director.
5. Courses will be reviewed by their designer annually and will include analysis based on student and professor feedback; revision of content will be made annually as deemed appropriate.
6. Students will participate in a matriculation interview before proceeding to the research phase of their degree. The results of the matriculation interviews will be analyzed and reported to the Graduate and Adult Council annually.
7. All students leaving the program, whether before or after program completion, will participate in an exit interview process to help identify strengths and weaknesses of the program in meeting student need. All exit interviews will be analyzed and reported to the Graduate and Adult Council annually.
8. District superintendents from our region will be interviewed biannually to assess needs that may need to be reflected in course content or the development of new programs
9. Program graduates will be interviewed at the first, third, and seventh anniversary of their graduation to track long-range effectiveness of the program.

### **Impact of Assessment**

Faculty facilitators will be trained through a technology unit and a content-specific unit prior to teaching any course. Faculty and adjunct faculty will be expected to participate in ongoing professional development on an annual basis. Written faculty evaluation procedures will be presented to program faculty and supervisors at the beginning of each evaluation period and

whenever changes are made in the procedures. Assessment data will be analyzed annually, and modules will be redeveloped on the basis of trends in feedback over a two-year period.

## Conclusion

With this chapter, MidAmerica Nazarene University has demonstrated how making a change in relationship with the Commission will affect the institution. The amendment of the Stipulations on Affiliation Status will enable greater student access to the distinctive, mission-based graduate education MidAmerica Nazarene University provides in carefully selected disciplines.

The ability to quickly respond to market forces clearly aligns with the greater University plan. Giving the University a broader mandate to begin new degree programs increases its overall efficiency and allows it to more quickly react to educational trends. In conclusion, an expanded authority will increase accessibility, enrollment, services to the University's stakeholders, financial stability and improve the overall effectiveness of the University. Therefore, MidAmerica Nazarene University respectfully requests that the limitations contained in the Stipulations on Affiliation Status be amended so that the institution can grow at a reasonable and steady rate.