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April 23, 2025

Dr. David Travis
President
Lake Superior State University
650 W. Easterday Ave.
Sault Sainte Marie, MI 49783-1699

Dear President Travis:

Attached is a copy of the Multi-location Visit Report completed following the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) visit to Lake Superior State University (the institution). As detailed in the report, the pattern of operations at the locations appears to be adequate and no further review or monitoring is necessary.

Within the Multi-location Visit Report, you will find brief comments on the instructional oversight, academic services, student services, facilities, marketing and recruitment information and adequacy of assessment of student performance. Please consider these comments as advice for continued improvement of the additional locations.

Per HLC policy, completion of these visits and fulfillment of the requirement will be noted in your institution's history record and the completed report will be included in your institution's permanent file.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the Multi-location Visit or the attached report, please contact accreditation@hlcommission.org.

Sincerely,
Higher Learning Commission

cc: Kimberly Muller, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Steph Brzuzy, HLC Staff Liaison

Multi-location Visit Peer Review Report

Institution: Lake Superior State University (LSSU)

Additional Locations Visited:

Location Name	Location Address (<i>street, city, state and ZIP code</i>)	Date Reviewed
Escanaba Regional Center	2001 N. Lincoln, Escanaba, Michigan, 49829, United States	3/18/2025
Petoskey Regional Center	1515 Howard St., Petosky, Michigan, 49770, United States	3/19/2025

Peer Reviewer

Name: Dr. Alexandria Guth

Institution: Michigan Technological University

Title: Dir. Academic Accreditation and Compliance

Instructions

In order to document effective administrative systems for managing multiple additional locations, please complete the following. For each item, check **adequate** or **attention needed**, and indicate in Comments the institution's strengths and/or opportunities for improvement in controlling and delivering degree programs off-campus. If comments pertain to a specific location, they should be included along with the identity of that location.

Submit the completed report as a PDF file at hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Final Reports" from the list of submission options to ensure the institution's materials are sent to the correct HLC staff member. The report is due within 30 days after the last additional location is visited.

Overview Statement

Provide information about current additional locations and the institution's general approach to off-campus instruction. Describe the growth pattern at the institution since the last review of off-campus instruction. Provide information about the involvement of external organizations or other higher education institutions.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

LSSU has 5 additional locations listed as “Active” per the ISR, however there is currently no programming offered at the Kinross Correctional Facility. Since the last multi-site visit in 2019, LSSU has closed the Les Cheneaux Culinary School and Restaurant and St. Helen Regional Center. At this point there are no plans for additional locations.

Instruction is provided via distance education (with both asynchronous online and synchronous options) by full-time faculty from LSSU’s main campus, with supplementation by adjuncts as needed.

The Escanaba and Iron Mountain locations are hosted on Bay de Noc (Bay) Campuses and make use of their physical facilities. The Escanaba campus has office space for Heidi Rife, Director of Regional Centers and an Administrative Assistant (position currently vacant).

The Petoskey Location is hosted by North Central Michigan College (NCMC).

LSSU has arrangements with the Community College partners to allow for dual enrollment of students. Part of the arrangement is that LSSU does not offer courses if they are also offered by the partner colleges and only offers degree completion programs (no associates or certificates).

There is currently no requirement for students to be on location at the Bay or NCMC locations for their LSSU courses.

Institutional Planning

What evidence demonstrates that the institution effectively plans for growth and maintenance of additional locations? Identify whether the institution has adequate controls in place to ensure that information presented to students is adequate. Describe whether the financial planning and budgeting process has proven effective at additional locations.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

LSSU appears to carefully curate their additional location sites. While they have operated a number of additional locations over the last 20 years, “in each case, these locations served an important role for their time and place, but were deemed to be no longer viable as regional needs and enrollment changed over time”.

Budgeting for the regional facilities is handled by the Director of Regional Centers and mainly includes funds to support that position and supply local material costs. Faculty costs are part of the main LSSU budget.

Facilities

What evidence demonstrates that the facilities at the additional locations meet the needs of the students and the curriculum? Consider, in particular, classrooms and laboratories (size, maintenance, temperature, etc.); faculty and administrative offices (site, visibility, privacy for meetings, etc.); parking or access to public transit; bookstore or text purchasing services; security; handicapped access; and other (food or snack services, study and meeting areas, etc.)

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

The degree completion programs offered by LSSU at the visited sites are currently completely online. None of the programs require in-person attendance or the use of laboratory facilities. Due to utilizing facilities at active community colleges, the available spaces are in good shape and provide the expected range of amenities should students be on campus.

The Director of Regional Centers' primary office is located at the Escanaba Campus in one of the main buildings. Conversations with Escanaba campus students indicated the Director is readily accessible both in-person and virtually.

Parking was abundant with multiple handicap spots and the buildings were highly accessible (long shallow ramps to main entrances, no stairs inside the buildings). The Escanaba campus has an on-site health clinic, library, and bookstore. While the Iron Mountain location does not have a library or bookstore, materials are shipped between campuses as needed. Bay has housing available for their students, which could, in theory, be utilized by LSSU students at the Escanaba or Iron Mountain campuses if they remain dual enrolled. The Escanaba location had a food court and multiple vending machines.

The NCMC facilities were similar in their suitability and accessibility.

Only the program offered at the Chippewa Correctional facility is in-person and would require the regular use of a physical space.

Instructional Oversight

What evidence demonstrates that the institution effectively oversees instruction at the additional locations? Consider, in particular, consistency of curricular expectations and policies, availability of courses needed for program and graduation requirements, faculty qualifications, performance of instructional duties, availability of faculty to students, orientation of faculty/professional development, attention to student concerns.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

Faculty teaching the LSSU courses are the same faculty who teach at the main campus or are adjuncts hired through standardized processes by LSSU. Faculty hiring, orientation, review, student evaluation, and course assessment processes are the same across all locations. Faculty teaching online and

synchronous online courses have virtual office hours and indicate communication options to the regional campus students.

Students at all locations complete evaluations for each course. These evaluations are reviewed by the faculty and pertinent dean.

Should a student have an unresolved issue with a faculty member, the Director of Regional Centers will assist students with getting a response and navigating the chain of command if escalation is required.

Institutional Staffing and Faculty Support

What evidence demonstrates that the institution has appropriately qualified and sufficient staff and faculty in place for the location, and that the institution supports and evaluates personnel at off-campus locations? Consider the processes in place for selecting, training, and orienting faculty at the location.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

As all classes are currently delivered remotely by main-campus faculty, the qualification and evaluation standards, and provided faculty supports do not differ across locations.

However, with the lack of differentiation it is noted that there is no specific training for faculty teaching online. As the programs offered at Bay and NCMC have shifted over time away from in-person and live synchronous classes with student attendance on the partner campuses, it is suggested that LSSU consider specific training for faculty responsible for online teaching. This would ensure all online faculty have some in-depth training in best practices for online teaching, going above and beyond a core technical orientation to the Moodle LMS.

Student Support

What evidence demonstrates that the institution delivers, supports, and manages necessary student services at the additional locations? Consider, in particular, the level of student access (in person, by computer, by phone, etc.) to academic advising/placement, remedial/tutorial services, and library materials/services. Also, consider the level of access to admissions, registration/student records, financial aid, and job placement services, as well as attention to student concerns.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

Students noted that the Director of Regional Centers was easy to get ahold of and was instrumental to their success. She directs students to needed resources that are available either on campus or online, both on an as-needed basis and regular communications semesterly for commonly required services like financial aid, academic support, and counseling services. Three students from the Escanaba campus

volunteered to participate in the site visit and they noted no perceived issues with accessing the support they needed and getting questions answered.

The Escanaba campus provides a testing center with flexible hours which can be used for proctored exams. Library materials, career services, and tutoring can be accessed online. The library offers interlibrary loan to both the Iron Mountain and Escanaba campuses. LSSU also has a virtual career services platform that is available to all students excepting those at the correctional facility. Special career programming (including a focus on small business startup based on student interest) and a job fair will be implemented for students at the Chippewa correctional facility. The correctional facility students elect a student representative to serve on a “Student Voice Council” which provides a mechanism to voice any concerns to the LSSU administration, MDOC’s administration, and warden.

Similarly, the NCMC campus has a library and testing center available to students.

LSSU is in their 3rd year of providing a 24/7 online tutoring service that is available for all students. Regional center students have the same access to services as main campus students.

Several substantive changes have been implemented because of student concerns elevated from the regional centers. In addition to better distinguishing between several course modalities available for distance education (further described in the Continuous Improvement section below), the timing of courses with required synchronous engagement were adjusted to better meet the needs of students with jobs and clinical or K-12 school placements. Additionally, in a survey conducted by the Director of Regional Centers, students expressed concern about the quality of a specific course. As a result, a separate synchronous section of that course was added for spring 2025 to better meet the need of regional center students.

Overall, LSSU demonstrates care and attention to the student populations at their additional locations.

Evaluation and Assessment

What evidence demonstrates that the institution measures, documents, and analyzes student academic performance sufficiently to maintain academic quality at the additional locations? How are measures and techniques employed at a location equivalent to those for assessment and evaluation on the main campus? Consider, in particular, the setting of measurable learning objectives, the actual measurement of performance, and the analysis and use of assessment data to maintain/improve quality.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

LSSU describes a robust and structured set of outcomes for assessment of student learning, with course, general education, program, and institutional-level outcomes. Each has specific assessment processes.

End-of semester surveys are conducted for students to provide feedback on their courses and instructors. Course evaluation data and comments are pooled across all sections and reviewed by the faculty member and relevant dean, allowing for action if warranted.

The Director of Regional Centers conducts additional surveys to collect data about the students' LSSU experience and solicits feedback on what could be better. Surveys are also administered 6-months after graduation to collect information about job placement and starting salary.

LSSU also actively monitors data across student locations.

For example, some programs like Business utilize nationally normed exams that allow comparison across locations and to a national mean.

Further demonstrating a commitment to collect quality data, the Business School recently switched to a different nationally normed test specifically to better identify strengths and weakness at a more actionable level of detail.

For programs without such exams, the use of main-campus faculty allows for a direct comparison of student work, particularly capstone projects, across locations. Mean grades for students at the different locations are also compared at the course level.

Continuous Improvement

What evidence demonstrates that the institution encourages and ensures continuous quality improvement at its additional locations? Consider in particular the institution's planning and evaluation processes that ensure regular review and improvement of additional locations and ensure alignment of additional locations with the mission and goals of the institution as a whole.

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

Assessment processes are the same as for programs at the main LSSU campus. All programs offered at the regional centers are also programs offered at the main LSSU campus and have the same programmatic learning outcomes. The use of main campus faculty helps maintain consistent content delivery and assessment practices between locations.

The Director of Regional Centers is a direct conduit between students at the regional centers and main campus administration. One example of continuous improvement based on student feedback was clarifying in the registration system if a class was asynchronous online, synchronous with expected live participation ("Mid-Flex"), or synchronous with recorded lectures where students could opt-in to the live sessions as desired ("Hyflex"). This change has benefitted students at all locations, as well as the faculty, as class expectations are more clearly communicated at the time of registration.

An example of faculty-initiated continuous improvement is that a math tutor was sent to the Chippewa correctional facility based on faculty concerns for student success. This effort was successful and will continue.

Marketing and Recruiting Information

What evidence confirms that the information presented to students in advertising, brochures, and other communications is accurate?

Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:

☒ Adequate

☐ Attention Needed

Comments:

The Regional Centers have their own budgets that handle marketing, which is mainly printing and supply costs. The Directors work with the LSSU Marketing Department to develop materials.

Many students become aware of the LSSU program through the Director of Regional Center's presence on the Escanaba campus, through word of mouth, or social media. The director visits community college classes by invitation to discuss the program as well.

Media for the STEP UP program are created by LSSU and distributed to potential students by MDOC.

The students interviewed (Escanaba n=3) indicated that the programs they were in were exactly as they expected with no surprises. Their impression was that all encountered marketing materials were accurate.

Summary Recommendation

Select one of the following statements. Include, as appropriate, a summary of findings.

- ☒ Overall, the pattern of this institution's operations at its additional locations appears to be adequate, and no further review or monitoring by the Higher Learning Commission is necessary.
- ☐ Overall, the pattern of this institution's operations at its additional locations needs some attention as defined in this report. The institution can be expected to follow up on these matters without monitoring by the Higher Learning Commission. The next scheduled comprehensive evaluation can serve to document that the matters identified have been addressed.

Note: In the Summary of Findings below, identify the specific areas needing institutional attention.

- ☐ The overall pattern of this institution's operations at its additional locations is inadequate and requires attention from the Higher Learning Commission.

Note: In the Summary of Findings below, identify the specific concerns and provide a recommendation for HLC monitoring.

Summary of Findings:

LSSU provides adequate oversight and monitoring of programs offered to students at its regional centers. Students have access to the same faculty and resources as main-campus students. While they are in online courses, the regional center campuses provide students with access to physical resources like libraries and testing centers. LSSU is intentional about their use of regional sites and growth of programs at those locations. They have processes for assessment and continual improvement, and it is evident they seriously consider and respond to student feedback.

With the move away from classes with required on-site attendance, providing specific training for faculty teaching online is suggested.

Notification Program for Additional Locations Approval Form

Complete this form **only** if an institution has been granted access to the Notification Program for Additional Locations. The Institutional Status and Requirements Report for the institution will indicate whether the institution has access to the Notification Program under the Additional Location Stipulation.

The institution has at least three active additional locations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
During the previous three years, the institution has not been subject to HLC monitoring for issues related to the quality of instruction at its additional locations and campuses, or to the oversight of its additional locations and campuses.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
During the previous three years, the institution has not been placed on Notice or Probation or issued a Show-Cause Order by HLC.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
The institution has no other HLC or other legal restrictions on additional locations and/or programs offered off campus.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
The institution has appropriate systems to ensure quality control of locations that include clearly identified academic controls; regular evaluation by the institution of its locations; a pattern of adequate faculty, facilities, resources and academic/support systems; financial stability; and long-range planning for future expansion.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No