**Criterion Four**

*The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.*

Concordia’s mission statement reads: “Concordia is a Christ-centered learning community where students are prepared to be dynamic servant leaders in the church and world”. The community that is Concordia exists for the purpose of learning, in a Christ-centered environment. Everything that Concordia does revolves around the goal of developing a life of learning for all its constituents. But for Concordia, learning does not take place just for its own sake. Concordia strives to develop leaders, people who can work with others to accomplish new and great things. It does this by providing students with faculty, staff and administrators who are leaders and who model a life of learning. And Concordia cultivates leaders by providing students with opportunities beyond the classroom, where they can develop their creativity, their analytic skills and their potential. In keeping with its identity as a Christ-centered learning community, Concordia strives to prepare leaders who see in their role a responsibility to serve those they lead, and to lead those they serve toward ends that benefit society. Concordia intentionally provides students with opportunities for service and for leadership inside and outside the classroom, so that its students will be prepared to be servant leaders for the church and world.

**Core Component 4a:** *The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty and staff, that it values a life of learning.*

Concordia’s dedication to a life of learning flows from its mission: *Concordia is a Christ-centered learning community where students are prepared to be dynamic servant leaders in the church and world.* This goal is accomplished through degree programs in professional education and the liberal arts. In addition, Concordia's faculty, staff and students are committed to service to the church and community and to scholarly activity and research. (Catalog)

One of the core values of the University is a “Christ-Centered Learning Environment”, which the University understands as: “Demonstrating our commitment to one another in love by nurturing mind, body, soul and spirit through faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.” (Mission-Vision-Values)

Concordia’s vision for its future is to develop the opportunities for learning and for leading. Its vision statement reads: “Concordia University, Nebraska, will be recognized as a model for Christ-like, servant leadership in a diverse, contemporary culture and be among the leading regional liberal arts universities in its class.” (Vision Statement; Mission-Vision-Values)

Concordia involves all its stakeholders (Board, Administration, Faculty, Staff, Students, Alumni, Community) in developing and assuring this future through its strategic planning.
Concordia’s board and administration promotes a life of learning as stated in its personnel handbook: “Concordia’s foremost goal is the education of the whole person for effective Christian living and for ministry to the church and world.” (Personnel Handbook) It does this by providing principles, resources and opportunities for all members of the academic community to be involved in a life of learning.

For faculty and staff:

Concordia’s Board of Regents has established the importance and extent of Academic Freedom in the Personnel Handbook for Members of the Faculty:

The academic freedom of the Concordia faculty is defined in the Handbook of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (1.09, 2.39c, 6.43)

The faculty further endorses the 1940 statement of principles on academic freedom of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

“(a) The teacher is entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of his/her other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
(b) The teacher is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his/her subject, but s/he should be careful not to introduce into his/her teaching controversial matter which has no relation to the subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment. (This is done at Concordia.)
(c) The college or university teacher is a citizen, a member of a learned profession, and an officer of an educational institution. When s/he speaks or writes as a citizen, s/he should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but his/her special position in the community imposes special obligations. As a person of learning and an educational officer, s/he should remember that the public may judge his/her profession and the institution by his/her utterances. Hence s/he should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that s/he is not an institutional spokesperson.”

The contract signed by Concordia faculty spells out the importance, extent and limitations on academic freedom. (Faculty Contract)

The Board of Regents demonstrates its commitment to a life of learning by allocating resources for continuing growth and development of the faculty.

For each of the past two years, the university has supported two one-semester sabbatical leaves. This is seen as a beginning, as sabbatical leaves had not been supported in previous
years, and the administration has expressed a hope to expand the sabbatical program as resources are available.

The institution supports faculty professional organization membership and conference attendance. It devotes roughly $5000 - $12000 per year on conference fees. (However, this has decreased from $11,500 in 2001 to about $7000 in 2006. Also, in 2001 the percent of these fees that went to administrative offices (Provost, Registrar) was 20%, while in 2006 it had gone to 58%.) The institution’s support for non-library dues and subscriptions up from $300 in FY01 to $15,000 in FY06. (However, the percent of this that went to the Provost, Assessment and Registrar went from 22% to 37% in the same time frame.) Support for academic (non-recruiting, athletics) travel (airfare, lodging, meals, etc) increased from $38,000 in FY01 to $61,000 in FY06.

There has also been institutional support for departmental improvement, including $9,500 for computers for Art (2004), $18,000 for Biology microscopes (2005), $85,000 for organ update for Music (2005) and $225,000 for new faculty laptops (2006).

The University has also recently instituted a program of awarding two research grants of up to five thousand dollars are available to full time faculty. These grants are open to proposals evaluated by a faculty and administrative committee.

- Support for advanced degrees

To support all faculty, staff and administration, the Human Resources area has for the past two years offered various training initiatives, such as training for various computer software, for preventing unlawful harassment, for health and wellness and for understanding benefits. These workshops are advertised throughout the University and are available for all employees.

The faculty promotes a life of learning by engaging in such a life themselves, and by involving their students.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, among faculty returning the 2005-2006 “Report of Faculty Professional Activities Not Assigned Formal Loadweight,” 71% of faculty report holding at least one professional membership, while 68% report having attended at least one professional conference or discipline-relevant workshop (file available in Dean of Arts & Sciences’ office). The College of Education’s activities, although reported in a slightly different format, indicate professional involvement as well. In 2003-2004, the education faculty reported having nine publications, two research projects, five presentations, and five consulting/leadership events. In 2002-2003, the results included six publications, one research project, four presentations, and two consulting/leadership events (NCATE report, page 84).

While it is not possible to list all the research undertaken by the faculty, some representative examples from the following departments will show the dedication to a life of learning shown by Concordia’s faculty.
• Art: Each member of the art faculty is a practicing artist, continuing to produce new work and exhibit/publish it regularly. Please refer to individual faculty vitae for information about exhibitions/publications.

• DCE: Thad Warren is presently doing research on DCE Program quality for his dissertation. Last year ('06) Prof. Blanke completed a research piece – “The State of Religious Education in the LCMS” for the foundational element of a new institute on campus.

• ECTA:
  For Lisa Ashby: Four volunteer tutoring/training/mentoring positions, current research includes:
  “Utopian Communities, the Shakers and Transcendentalists, and College Communal Life.” Faculty Research Grant, 2005-2006
  “Impacts of Therapy Animal Placement on the Interpersonal Communication of Care Providers and Patients in Residence Care Facilities.” Noah’s Research Team, 2005

For Bruce Creed: Seven conference presentations, papers or workshops
For Renea Gernant: Three published journal articles, plus nine conference presentations, and offices in three state or national debate or forensics associations.
For Jenny Mueller-Roebke: Thirteen conference presentations or workshops
For Mira Wiegmann: Four presentations at conferences, several awards, plus the following:
  1999 A Postmodern Approach to Visionary Drama dissertation at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln
  2001 Love is as Strong as Death, an original reader’s theatre script of compiled love poetry performed but not published.
  2003 Created a 40 minute reader’s theatre adaptation of Melba Beal’s memoir Warriors Don’t Cry performed July 10 by high school students, but not published.
  2003 Created a 20 minute reader’s theatre script I wouldn’t Change a Thing compiled from biographical narratives of selected residents at Grand Court.

For Denise Banker: Several poetry readings, and conferences, plus:
Nebraska Poet Laureate, William Kloefkorn’s Poetry of the Plains, Nebraska Public Radio, May 2006; Forthcoming *Prairie Schooner*, Winter 2006. (5 poems)

Departmental:

- Book Bound reading series (area writers and libraries are invited to participate). Plum Creek Festival (our writing workshop, assistance with the Literature Bowl).
- Sigma Tau Delta yearly literacy events (annual children’s lit event, book drive for prison, school supplies drive for needy children, etc.)
- Pi Kappa Delta yearly communication events (election debates, Toastmaster’s style speakers days, home school speech workshop)

- HHP: Dissertations completed by Vicki Boye and Eunice Goldgrabe. Post-doctoral research by Mark Lemke. CUS-CPAW research by Vicki Boye, Eunice Goldgrabe, and Judy Kretzschmar (RF) under the auspices of CUS-CPAW and LEA: the status of health education and physical education in Lutheran secondary and elementary schools.

- Music: Dr. Blersch’s compositions published with CPH: (22 recent compositions)
  - Dr. Herl: Six articles published, four books authored and/or edited, five hymns composed, plus 1 hymn translation, 3 hymn tunes, and 19 hymn settings in *Lutheran Service Book* (2006);
  - Dr. von Kampen: Doctoral Dissertation: “Examination of Factors Influencing Nebraska high school directors’ decisions to use sight-singing instruction” (2003)

**For students**

As Concordia is primarily a teaching institution, most of the research opportunities on campus are geared toward introducing students to the importance and practice of research. Most departments have courses that require students to produce and analyze data, or to produce or perform works of art. Some examples of this type of research conducted by students in various departments are:

**Art**

- 8-9 exhibits per year
- 2-3 student exhibitions (including general student exhibitions) per year
- 1-2 faculty exhibitions per year
• 1-2 exhibitions from the permanent collection
• Remainder (3-5 exhibitions) from artists outside Concordia

**Biology**
• In the past, biology students taking Ecology (Bio 317) were required to conduct independent research, including a proposal, data collection and analysis, and presentation.
• Biology students are now required to participate in a 3 hour research course or internship
• Each year, from 3 – 11 biology students participate in a research project studying protein behavior in rat brains that can enhance or reduce Alzheimer’s disease.

**Business**
A new class (Bus 366) in Marketing Research was added in 2007 in order to provide students an opportunity to learn about market research by engaging in an actual research project.

**Music**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Student Recitals</th>
<th>Faculty Recitals</th>
<th>Guest Recitals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Drama**
Each year the drama program puts on two major performances, plus two series of one-act plays, often written and directed by students.

**Director of Christian Education Program**
At least three courses in the program (Theo 487, Educ 483) students are required to gather and analyze data from congregations regarding issues of religious education that the students choose. The students are required to design their own research question, to acquire the data in a methodologically reliable way, and to analyze it in a manner consistent with standard education research practices.

**Psychology/Behavioral Science**
Students taking advanced psychology courses (Psy/Soc 306, Psy/Soc 406) are required to develop a research proposal, and then to conduct the research, analyze the data, and present the results. The research proposal and extensive background in research methodology in Psy/Soc 306 is required for all psychology and
behavioral science majors; the seminar involving the actual conduct of the research is recommended for those majors.

In addition to student research as a part of individual courses, all departments encourage and in some cases require student internships. Some representative results:

Art: For at least the past 10 years, approximately twelve BFA-Graphic Design students per year receive a design practicum experience via the ConcorDesign Studio, a student / faculty collaborative studio.

Biology: Each year several 3-9 science students participate in summer research internships.

Business: Business majors complete an internship with a local business as a part of their program.

ECTA: Most communication majors do some kind of internship. Some recent internships include:
- Malone Center--Intercultural Communication/Project Coordinator Community Newspapers--Journalism Intern
- Campaign/Political/White House Interns
- Church Support/Visitation
- Seward County Attorney
- Court Appointed Special Advocates—Event Management
- EGT Public Relations/ELL Tutoring
- Cattle Bank—Customer Service
- Missouri Department of Tourism—Marketing
- Seward Youth Center/Sunderman—Activities Assistant
- Channel 8 in Lincoln
- Maryland State Patrol

Social Science: The internships in the department are well developed in our pre-social work program. Students must complete two semesters as part of this program while taking SW 311 and 312 to fulfill the 135 hours required for each of the supervised field experiences.

HHP: Required for majors in sport management and exercise science and those receiving a coaching endorsement. Approximately 10-12 yearly. Take place with sports teams, fitness facilities, physical therapists, hospitals, YMCA’s, recreation departments, schools, etc.

Education: All education majors experience several internship opportunities through teacher aiding, practicum experiences, and student teaching.
To ensure that all students are able to reach their potential, Concordia’s Academic Support Services are available to all students, for support in basic academic skills like note-taking, test-taking, writing and time management, and for support in many first- and second-year courses. This service utilizes both professional support and selected student tutors, to emphasize the community nature of our learning environment, that everyone is here for the opportunity to succeed. The services are available for the general student population, as well as for students on academic probation, or for students who have ADA needs. Each year approximately 7-18 ADA students are able to make use of the Academic Support Services, as do 25-50 on academic probation. Overall, the service sees 600-800 student-tutor contacts per semester. These contacts may be with the full-time staff, or with the 30-50 student tutors who are available to help with 30-40 individual courses, as well as with general writing and study skills.

Not only does the University provide resources and opportunities for academic success, but the University is proud of the work of its administration, faculty, staff and students, and it takes care to recognize those who have been especially productive. Timely achievements are recognized in “Connections”, the weekly faculty/staff newsletter. Other achievements are publicized in the “Broadcaster”, the University’s informational magazine that it sends to all alumni. In addition, some departments send out newsletters or keep web pages informing the public about their activities; for instance, the Art department sends out a newsletter twice per year, describing the work of the faculty and students in the department. Finally, in his State of the University and Commencement addresses, the President of the University acknowledges many of the special achievements made by faculty, staff and students throughout the year.

For the Community

The university supports and encourages a wide variety of activities in the community. From the efforts of individuals giving presentations in their disciplines at area schools or providing public viewing at the University’s observatory, to broad regional activities such as the Gathering of the Talents or the Plum Creek Literacy Festival that bring thousands of children and adults to the campus, the University’s administration, faculty and staff foster a life of learning throughout Seward and Southeast Nebraska.

Assessment

Each department produces an annual planning document for administration review. In these planning documents, the departments’ objectives are reviewed, assessments are made regarding staffing and the overall direction of the department goals for the upcoming academic year. With the emphasis on teaching as the primary task of the institution, each department reviews assessment strategies which in turn inform the department in making organizational and educational improvements to the department’s curriculum.

The Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) given in the 2005-2006 school year, indicates that students are very satisfied with the quality of the instruction they receive, with the academic atmosphere on campus, and with the relationships they form with the faculty, things that are all very important to them.
About 15% of seniors report working with a faculty member on a research project outside of class. This is comparable to, although somewhat below, the results for seniors at peer institutions, and across the NSSE sample. This reflects the university’s emphasis on faculty teaching rather than research, as well as smaller programs in areas traditionally associated with “research”, such as science, and history, and larger programs in education, the arts and business. Also, 27% of seniors reported working on a culminating “capstone” experience. This is also significantly below the level reported by our peer institutions, and somewhat below all NSSE participants. While some programs do not have a capstone experience, some of this discrepancy may be due to the way student respondents view the idea of a capstone experience. For instance, all education majors (nearly XX% of all Concordia students), go through a professional semester involving student teaching and professional courses designed to transition the students into the teaching profession. While the faculty would consider this a “capstone experience”, clearly many students do not understand it that way. Finally, GS-401/Theo-489 was intended to be a capstone course for the General Education component and is required for all students, but it is not viewed by students as a capstone course.

**Core Component 4b:** The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

Concordia’s commitment to the breadth of study flows from its mission to prepare servant leaders for the church and world, as expressed in its catalog: “Concordia’s programs promote intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual growth. They nurture religious commitment, enlarge social and cultural understanding, provide insights for Christian action in the world and facilitate the ability to communicate effectively. The programs provide an opportunity for intelligent selection of vocations for service to God, church and society, and they are designed to develop the professional competencies and commitment required for responsible participation and leadership in a complex and diverse society.” (Undergraduate Catalog)

To meet its mission and ensure that all Concordia students receive an education that develops the whole person to live in a complex, diverse society, all students are required to complete the general education component of the curriculum. This general education requirement is the same for all students, and contains work from a wide variety of study. “Within the hours required for graduation each student completes a program of 44 hours of general education. This component of Concordia’s curricula is a basic liberal education that seeks to broaden and develop people who are socially and religiously sensitive, who see the interrelatedness of learning between the disciplines, who are culturally aware, physically and intellectually rounded and more capable of coping with the demands of life.” (Undergraduate Catalog)

The General Education component was revised in 2001, with the following goals:

1. To enhance the understanding of and commitment to the Christian faith.
2. To stimulate the growth and development of the total person to most fully exemplify Christian servant-leadership and discipleship.
3. To develop individuals who apply Christian principles and ethics in their personal living and in dealing with problems of society and environment.

4. To assist students to understand, critically appreciate, and live in a global society of diverse cultures and traditions.

5. To assist students to understand contemporary issues and problems.

6. To encourage further development of fundamental skills, such as:
   a. reading and listening
   b. oral, written, and visual communication
   c. ways of learning and thinking
   d. dealing with different points of view
   e. critical thinking and problem solving
   f. mathematical thinking

7. To deepen understanding of major concepts, principles, and methods of investigation in significant areas of the human experience, such as:
   a. religion
   b. fine arts, humanities, languages, and the human heritage
   c. health and wellness
   d. social and behavioral sciences
   e. mathematics and symbolic thought processes
   f. natural sciences

8. To integrate/infuse common concepts and themes throughout General Education courses in order to emphasize the interrelatedness, as well as the distinctiveness of, discipline-based knowledge:
   a. Christian consciousness
   b. environmental considerations
   c. problem-solving orientation
   d. critical thinking
   e. futuristic concerns
   f. multicultural awareness and understanding
   g. historical perspectives
   h. racial and gender equity issues
   i. social justice
   j. aesthetic awareness
   k. usable technology
   l. moral and ethical imperatives

9. To encourage the interconnectedness of understandings and skills from the several academic disciplines.

The General Education component includes requirements for students to complete a minimum number of courses in each main area of the curriculum: English, Social Science, Math, Science, Fine Arts and Health and Human Performance. In addition, the key to Concordia’s General Education component is a series of four courses, to be taken one per year, called the General Studies Program. The General Studies Program provides an interdisciplinary component to the General Education, to ensure that students are prepared to live and work as socially responsible leaders in a diverse, global society. These courses have an outward-looking component for how the student fits into his or her community, society and world, and they have an inward-looking
component to help the students discover and be aware of their core values, their strengths, and their perspectives. In particular, GS-101 and GS-301 provide opportunities for students with opportunities to learn in experiences outside the classroom.

GS-101 introduces the students to the idea of themselves as servant leaders individually and in their local community. It includes projects to help students clarify their identity, help them transition to a college environment, and help them to understand the importance of engagement in their world through a service component.

GS-201 helps students to grow in their awareness of the world and their role in it. It uses an interdisciplinary analysis of contemporary global issues such as insularity, poverty and sustainability to develop student awareness, critical thinking, and perspective on the effect their choices have on the world around them.

GS-301 is an experiential course designed to give students the opportunity to develop their leadership skills in service-learning situations. A classroom component teaches leadership concepts such as time management and conflict resolution, while the practicum component gives students the chance to practice these skills and to reflect on their skills and abilities as leaders.

GS-401/Theo-489 builds on the progression of the previous courses to culminate in learning about the student leader as a professional. The course develops views of vocation and ministry, and expands students’ perspectives on how one can be a servant leader in their chosen profession.

Surveys of students demonstrate that the General Studies and General Education programs are helping students understand themselves better, to better understand their role and impact in the world, and to recognize the need to continue in a life of learning.
Beyond the general education component required for all students, many individual programs have internships, practicum opportunities, or “capstone” experiences that provide students a more “realistic” experience to hone their skills, such as the education practicum and student teaching, business internships, art shows, music recitals and biology research.

There are also many opportunities for students to study and to serve abroad. Every year there are typically 2-4 study tours available to students for credit. These tours include trips to England to study important sites in history and literature; trips to various countries in Europe to study the arts; trips to Central America to study biology; and sometimes trips to Europe and Asia to study history. Many years one of the University’s choirs, bands or orchestras is also able to perform abroad.

The University has agreements with several other institutions (such as the University of Nebraska and Valparaiso University) to send students to their sites in England, China, Mexico and Germany. For about 12 years Concordia had an agreement with Oak Hill University in England, where students were able to spend a fall semester studying. There was a semester in India program from about 1996 through 2000, but it was cancelled in 2001, after the attack on NYC.

A program called SILOAM was developed in 2005 as another opportunity for students to serve and to experience other cultures. The SILOAM Project is inspired by John 9 where Jesus sends
the blind man to the pool at Siloam (which means "sent") and his eyes are opened. Concordia initially partnered with the four LC-MS high schools in Nebraska to send groups of college age and high school students to various international sites to take part in service learning projects in these multicultural settings. (Beginning in 2007, the program is no longer for high school students.) Students will have the opportunity to make a difference, to be stretched in new leadership situations, and to have their "eyes opened" to life and ministry situations in a global context, to the glory of God. SILOAM is an acronym for “Service International Learning Opportunities and Ministries”. (SILOAM Summary Piece) In 2005, 3 events took place with 22 participants and 5 leaders serving in Belize, Manitoba and Hong Kong. In 2006, 6 events with 38 participants and 13 leaders served in Belize, Slovakia, Panama, Manitoba, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In 2007, 2 events with 16 participants and 4 leaders served in Hong Kong and Manitoba, as the program moved from being supported by a grant to being self-supporting. Lindsey Aurich, a participant in the 2005 Manitoba event expressed the value of the experience for her:

“My Canada mission experience changed my life. I have matured in my faith, developed a deeper passion for sharing my faith, grown in confidence in leading large groups, learned how to deal with change and conflict, felt the humbling experience of serving others, grown in appreciation of small things, improved my listening and relational skills, become more patient, learned not to judge others, began feeling secure in Christ, not worldly items, made new friends, etc. etc. etc. Overall, I have just become a better person.”

Finally, several student service organizations (for example, Mission-Minded Students and Habitat for Humanity) travel within the country or abroad over spring break for service events.

Concordia recognizes that students grow in situations outside the classroom or the organized tours as well. Student organizations provide students with a chance to be involved with real-world experiences and to develop their leadership skills. The Director of Student Activities and Student Life Education provides support, guidance, and education for students in organizations. Over half of all Concordia students are involved in student organizations, which provide opportunities for service, growth and education. The list of student organizations includes:

ACS (American Chemical Society)  CYM (Concordia Youth Ministry)
APO-AEM (Alpha Phi Omega- Curtain Club (Drama)
Alpha Epsilon Mu) Dance Team
C-Club, Men's  FCA (Fellowship of Christian
C-Club, Women's Athletes)
Campus Red Cross  Habitat for Humanity
CASE (Concordia Association of LIPHE (Leaders in Physical and
Students in Education) Health Education)
Cheerleaders  MAC (Multicultural Awareness
Circle K Club)
Clowns for Christ  MENC (Musical Education National
College Republicans Conference)
Concordia University Jivers  Mission-Minded Students
The results of the NSSE show that students do acquire a breadth of knowledge, and the skills they need. The NSSE results point to some obvious strengths and challenges facing Concordia, as well as to at least one non-obvious challenge. First, Concordia is strong in personal development – deepening sense of spirituality, a sense of ethics, understanding yourself and contributing to your community. These form the basis of Concordia’s mission to create servant leaders. Second, Concordia faces a challenge in diversity – the NSSE results for understanding and interacting with people of different ethnic backgrounds, or of different points of view, are significantly below average. The non-obvious result deals with the details of the “traditional” aspects of the education students receive at Concordia. While graduating students report strong support for the statements “I am able to experience intellectual growth here”, and “There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus” in the Student Satisfaction Inventory, student responses to particular academic aspects on the NSSE are generally poor. Acquiring job-related skills is above average, but most general academic responses – such as solving complex real-world problems, acquiring a broad general education, writing and speaking clearly and effectively, thinking critically and analytically and analyzing quantitative problems, using computing and information technology and learning effectively on your own – are all below the average response for Concordia’s peer groups. The results suggest that while Concordia’s students recognize Concordia’s special niche strengths, they do not regard its broad educational program as being particularly strong. The faculty may benefit from looking at these results and seeing if the curriculum can be strengthened by providing greater academic challenges for students, and working to ensure that the “academic” aspects of each class are emphasized as much as the “relational” aspects.

**Core Component 4c:** *The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, technological society.*

Concordia’s commitment to curricula which are useful to students living and working in a diverse, global society stems from its mission to prepare servant leaders “…for the Church and world.”

The Undergraduate Catalog says about Concordia’s academic programs, “The programs provide an opportunity for intelligent selection of vocations for service to God, church and society, and
they are designed to develop the professional competencies and commitment required for responsible participation and leadership in a complex and diverse society.” (Catalog)

These opportunities come from a variety of sources, from the choice of major to the individual courses chosen, but Concordia ensures that all students receive an education that prepares them to live and work in a global, diverse, technological society through its general education program. The breadth of the general education program assures that students have the breadth of knowledge to living in a rapidly-changing world. The themes that run through the general education curriculum, themes such as problem-solving, critical thinking, equity and social awareness, are designed to provide students with the basic skills and understanding needed to live in a global, diverse and technical society. In particular, the General Studies component of the general education curriculum was designed to ensure that students have the skills to succeed in a diverse, global environment.

GS-101 (First Year Seminar) is designed to help students to learn about themselves as members of a local community – the University itself, the town of Seward, the region of Southeast Nebraska. It utilizes activities and assessments to help students learn about themselves and their strengths, and to understand how they fit into and interact with their local community.

GS-201 (Global Issues) moves the focus outward beyond the local community to develop an understanding of the global community and of some of the challenges faced within the global community, and especially to how the students fit into that world-wide community, and the role they can play in meeting the challenges.

GS-301 (Servant Leadership Practicum) builds on the work of the previous classes by bringing the focus back to the student, and to how he or she can play a leadership role in improving a community. The student learns leadership skills, and then is able to use those skills within the community in a role related to his or her vocation or interest.

GS-401 (Ministry in a Changing World) culminates the sequence by helping students think through what it means to serve or minister in a world as diverse and as rapidly changing as today’s.

The General Studies program is integral to Concordia’s mission of preparing servant leaders for the church and world. It is the one area of the curriculum specifically to teach students about their communities and how they can interact with their communities as responsible citizens to make the world a better place through their work in it.

“This experience has been wonderful. I wasn’t really excited about it at the beginning but after I found something I was interested in I was able to really enjoy my time working with my peers and the city revenue committee. I really enjoy being in the business environment. It was also really nice to know that what I was doing could affect the entire Seward population. Having the capacity to impact 6,000 people is something I have never had the opportunity to be a part of. Over all, I enjoyed the experience of being able to be in the world and have more of a hands on approach to leadership. It was a nice change of
pace compared to your typical classroom setting. I also really like the flexibility to do what you are interested in and not a preset agenda. I believe as future classes continue this tradition we will see a direct correlation between the types of servant leaders that Concordia University is preparing for life after graduation.”

Josh Allison ~ Spring 05 (summary paper excerpt)

Because students learn and grow outside the classroom as well as inside, Concordia provides study and service opportunities to assure that students are prepared to work in a diverse, global society. These opportunities begin the moment students step on campus. Each fall, all new students participate in the Weekend Of Welcome (WOW) events. Together with returning students who serve as event leaders, all new students work on service projects in the community, from helping at a Habitat for Humanity site, to visiting and working with residents at retirement homes, to helping to clean up after local tornados. The WOW experience ensures that all students understand that service to the community is a part of what Concordia is about, and that such service is integral to their education.

Service Projects for new students during Weekend of Welcome . . . 2001-2005
Anna Sundermann Homes East & West - one on one interaction, conversation, games, craft projects with residents
Heartland Park Retirement Community - visit with residents, play cards, puzzles, read, etc.
Plum Creek Park - work on playground and bridge staining and cleanup
Plum Creek Trail - walk along trail and pick up trash along trail and mowed area
Seward County Historical Society Museum, Goehner - clean inside museum and outbuildings, scrape & paint, yard work
The Greene House - visit with residents, play cards, puzzles, read to residents, play piano, etc.
Our Redeemer Lutheran School, Staplehurst - paint inside, work on playground cleanup and spreading woodchips
Faith Lutheran Church - clean rugs and windows, move items, yard work, etc.
Seward County Headstart - cleaning, painting, organizing for the year, yard work, cleaning playground
Et Cetera Thrift Shop - sort donations and cut up jeans for making rugs
Blue Valley Community Action Thrift Shop - sort donations of food and clothing
Seward Memorial Library - clean books and shelves, label, move items – outside work
St. John’s Child Development Center - scraping and painting shed and fence, clean vans, weed, etc.
Memorial Hospital - spread out mulch in garden and landscaping areas
Seward Youth Center - paint, clean, organize center, etc.
Seward County Fairgrounds – scraping and painting fair grounds buildings
Habitat for Humanity - painting and general clean up at building site
St. John’s Lutheran Church - outdoor landscaping, grounds, clean up tasks
Seward Senior Center - clean stainless steel, yard work, windows, mowing
Concordia University – weed and landscape outdoor chapel, rebuild fire pit, build additional bench seating
**Christmas Lights** - fix and fill light displays for annual Seward Christmas Light display
**Cleaning Bricks** - cleaning & stacking bricks for Seward downtown renovation project
**Moving Books** - moving books from old library to new Seward library (this was the project for the entire group in 2003)
**Tornado Clean up** – picking up glass and trash from two Seward home areas

(Service Summary)

Phyliss Beckler, former manager of Et Cetera Thrift Shop, returned to the shop especially to guide Saturday's service projects. "I am here because Concordia is near and dear to my heart," said Beckler. "I think this is so good, what they do."

The most carefully designed curriculum can always be improved, so Concordia has extensive assessment in place to ensure that its programs are working as they are designed, and are producing the desired outcomes. Each program has an assessment plan designed to examine its outcomes. Each year faculty in the program assess the programs by a variety of means, usually involving students in the program and alumni of the program. These assessments are designed to inquire not only whether students acquired specific skills in the program, but whether the skills and abilities stressed in the program are applicable to the workplace that former students find themselves in. Individual faculty then use the results of the assessments to update or re-work individual courses as needed.

Student activities are also evaluated for their effectiveness at fostering appropriate student development. The Director of Student Activities and Student Life Education is responsible for assessing these activities, as designated in the job description: “Plan, implement, evaluate, and update as appropriate, assessment tools that effectively define the needs of the student population for Student Life Education Programs.” (Director of Student Activities and Student Life Education Job Description)

At the department level, each year the faculty within each department develop planning documents which assess the programs within the department in terms of viability, resources and staffing, and which also set the focus of the programs for the next year.

The College of Graduate Studies surveys recent graduates of their respective graduate programs based on the overall goals of college as well as the specific goals pertaining to each program. The Graduate Council and program directors review the surveys each year, taking note of the strengths of the programs as well as areas of improvements. [Reference the graduate data in the file.]

At the institutional level, the Assessment Coordinator regularly initiates student assessments (such as the National Survey of Student Engagement, NSSE) designed to determine whether the broad mission of the institution is being served.

The NSSE data show generally fairly strong results for Concordia in terms of educating students to live and work in a global, diverse and technical society, with some notable exceptions. For most specific learning outcomes (such as using computers, information technology, working
effectively with people and solving complex real world problems) the NSSE results show Concordia students evaluating their education near the average (slightly above or below) the results expressed by all groups. In the areas of Concordia’s historic strengths, those of spiritual and ethical development, and of community service, Concordia students evaluate their experience very strongly; in the areas of Concordia’s historic challenges – especially that of diversity of experience, thought and background – students report significant weakness in their education. There is an unusual point in the data here. Concordia has tried to strengthen its lack of on-campus diversity by having students have more off-campus experiences, and by their senior year students report very strong scores for practicum, internship or field experiences and for community service and volunteer work. However, even though Concordia students are much more likely to have these off-campus experiences than other students, these experiences either do not challenge Concordia students to have interactions with others of diverse backgrounds, or students do not consider these experiences when evaluating their interactions with others of different backgrounds. It is also interesting to note that despite the high level of practicum, internship or field experiences, Concordia seniors report a significantly low ability to learn effectively on their own. The institution may want to look at its off-campus field experience opportunities and make sure that they stretch students’ experiences, expose them to a diversity of experience outside their comfort zone, and challenge them to work independently.

Core Component 4d: *The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students and staff acquire, discover and apply knowledge responsibly.*

Concordia’s commitment to the responsible acquisition and use of knowledge flows from its mission to be a Christ-centered learning community preparing servant leaders for the Church and world. A Christ-centered environment holds others to be more important than one’s self, and servant leaders feel a responsibility to serve those they lead, and to lead those they serve toward ends that benefit society.

Among Concordia’s core values are Excellence – striving for the highest levels of performance and integrity in all that we do and, in so doing, achieving a reputation of excellence – and Service – understanding and satisfying the needs of those we serve with integrity. (Mission-Vision-Values)

This commitment to both excellence and service is reflected in its commitment to student services. These services ensure that every student has the opportunity to fully develop academically and as a whole person while at Concordia.

Concordia’s Academic Support Services offers tutoring for around 30 individual courses. It also provides assistance with skills such as test-taking, time management, note-taking and writing. These services are provided to all students. Through focused activities within and outside the classroom, the General Studies Program helps students learn about themselves as learners, leaders, and members of a local and global community, and teaches students how to be responsible members of those communities to the benefit of all. Outside of the academic curriculum, Concordia’s Student Life Office offers Student Life Education Workshops dealing
with sexual, financial and mental health issues; alcohol education; stress, weight and nutrition Education. Also, faculty-advised student organizations help students learn how to develop their potential while working in ways that benefit the community. Finally, Concordia’s chaplain’s office provides chapel worship every weekday throughout the school year, as well as Wednesday evening worship services and individualized services such as Bible studies and pre-marital counseling.

However, simply preparing students to acquire knowledge is not enough. Concordia is committed to integrity in all things, particularly to the acquisition of knowledge. This commitment is expressed in the Undergraduate Catalog: “The Concordia community values high academic and ethical standards. Each faculty member is committed to model academic honesty and Christian ethics. Students are expected to respond with the same commitment. “ (Catalog p. 25; also in Student Handbook)

Concordia has policies in place to ensure the ethical acquisition and use of knowledge by faculty and students. The Academic Policy Handbook states:

Concordia University recognizes the difficult questions and ethical issues which surround contemporary academic research involving human participants. In any research project involving human participants, the potential for unintended harm exists at all times, and in all phases of the work. The university encourages both faculty and students who are engaged in these types of research projects to take reasonable precautions to protect the human participant’s:

1. privacy, and the individual right of potential participants to participate voluntarily without fear of recrimination, including the right to decline to participate, along with the right of participants to decide to disengage themselves from an ongoing project without repercussions;
2. legal rights, including the right of assent to provide information by providing release forms where they are appropriate;
3. mental and physical health, by ensuring that participants are not required to perform unhealthy or dangerous actions; and
4. right to gain access to the research products and any documents produced by the researcher.

Questions regarding the conduct of academic research involving human participants should be directed to the office of the Provost, or to the office of the Dean of Student Services, as appropriate.
(Academic Policy Handbook 4.350)

The Student Handbook’s policy states:

The Concordia community values high academic and ethical standards. Each faculty member is committed to model academic honesty and Christian ethics. Students are expected to respond with the same commitment.
Students are expected to be honest in all of their work submitted for courses. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, activities such as using unauthorized assistance on tests or quizzes; dependence on aid sources beyond those authorized by the instructor; the acquisition of test materials or other materials belonging to an instructor; possessing, obtaining, or giving unauthorized information prior to, or during an examination; the electronic theft of coursework; the unacknowledged use of sources; plagiarism; the purchase of term papers and other coursework. If you become guilty of academic dishonesty, you may lose part or all of the credit for the project or even the course. Additional sanctions may be applied by the Dean or University Provost.

(Student Policy Handbook Section 5.0)

Concordia’s library disseminates information to students and to faculty regarding copyright, plagiarism and other intellectual property issues. (REF) Individual instructors usually include statements regarding academic honesty in their course handouts, and discuss these issues with students.

As a reflection of Concordia’s commitment to the responsible acquisition and use of knowledge, Concordia’s students report a strong sense of personal responsibility, ethics and spirituality. In the NSSE, Concordia’s students’ assessment of the student support program shows that they consider the university to be doing a generally good job of supporting their development. Responses for whether the university provides adequate academic support are at the average for other institutions, but responses relating to Concordia’s mission of training servant leaders show the institution to be doing a very good job. Concordia students report very high scores for spiritual and ethical development, and high scores for participating in community service or a community-based project as part of a course.