Dear NDSU Colleague,

NDSU accreditation is currently underway and I need your assistance by **February 15, 2012**. In June 2011, NDSU was invited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to become one of twenty institutions in Cohort Three of the Pioneer Institutions of the Pathways Demonstration Project for a new accreditation model. This new accreditation model requires a Quality Initiative or Improvement Process. NDSU and other Cohort Three institutions will be testing the *Degree Qualifications Profile (DP)* [http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf](http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf) as their Quality Initiative. I am sending a copy of the *DP* for each member of your department separately. Please note that Paul Gaston, one of the *DP* co-authors, will be at NDSU on **Thursday, January 12** to answer your questions about this process. NDSU will be comparing student learning outcomes in our undergraduate capstone courses in each major with *DP* benchmarks for **applied learning**.

This process of examining what “graduates can do with what they know,” fits the land-grant culture of NDSU. Because NDSU has been asked to “kick the tires” of the *DP*, the following template (which will be sent to you electronically) uses the exact language of the *DP*. If you find it unclear or imprecise, please help NDSU provide feedback to Lumina Foundation and the HLC by providing your comments in the grid at the end of the form.

I am asking you to engage in a four step process by **February 15, 2012**.

- First, evaluate the capstone experience or experiences you currently require for your major, using the form below. This form is taken directly from the description of “applied learning” from the *DP*. The form asks if your undergraduate capstone experience meets the elements of each outcome, and if it does, what student activities in the capstone provide evidence for this. Members of the Core Undergraduate Learning Experiences (CULE) have completed forms for the capstone courses in some departments and those are attached as examples.

- Second, as you evaluate your current capstone, I hope you will take this opportunity to reflect on how well your capstone serves your students as an experience in which they synthesize and apply the knowledge and skills they have gained by studying your field.

- Third, HLC has specifically charged NDSU to test the *DP* and provide feedback on two questions. First, “to what extent does the *DP* provide a means to know what and how well students are learning?” Does it help your department establish benchmarks for your major? If so, does it allow you to apply “reverse engineering” to establish
expectations at previous milestones for your majors (such as after accumulation of 30, 60, or 90 credits that approximate completion of the first, sophomore, and junior years). Second, “is it the right learning for our students?” Does your capstone have student learning outcomes that are not captured in the DP outcomes? If so, please provide feedback on these questions in the grid at the end of the form.

- Fourth, if your program is accredited, please use the grid at the end of the form to explain how well the DP applied learning outcomes match those of your accreditor.

CULE (http://www.ndsu.edu/cule/) will be using the information you provide in three ways.

- First, they will analyze and aggregate department reports as the basis for NDSU’s Quality Initiative Report to the Higher Learning Commission.

- Second, some of your reports will be shared across campus as best practices.

- Third, CULE will use your reports in the process of revising NDSU’s general education program, since the capstone experience will almost certainly be retained in any revision of our program.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Larry Peterson at 231-8824 or Larry.R.Peterson@ndsu.edu,

Sincerely,

R. Bruce Rafert, Provost