

## IOWA COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION

### Southwest Minnesota State University Application for Postsecondary Registration Renewal August 15, 2016

***STAFF ACTION: Approve Southwest Minnesota State University's Iowa registration renewal application for a period of two years, beginning May 19, 2016 through May 19, 2018.***

***As a stipulation of registration, Southwest Minnesota State University must notify the Commission within 90 days of establishing a new Iowa instructional site.***

#### **Registration Purpose**

Revised Iowa Code Section 261B.3 (effective July 1, 2012) requires a school to register with the Commission if a person compensated by the school conducts any portion of a course of instruction, including by in-person, distance education, or correspondence method in this state or if the school otherwise has a presence in this state. Presence means a location in Iowa at which a student participates in any structured activity related to a school's distance education course of instruction with the exception of proctored examinations. Presence also means an address, location, telephone number, or internet protocol address in Iowa from which a school conducts any aspect of its operations. Staff required the University to renew its Iowa registration because it employs at least one faculty member to provide instruction for the University from an Iowa location(s).

#### **Institutional Information**

Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) is a public university that is part of the Minnesota State College and University System but is not governed by the University of Minnesota Board of Regents. SMSU's only campus is located at 1501 State St., Founders Hall 209, Marshall, Minnesota. The University's chief executive officer is Dr. Connie Gores, President, at the same address. Since the University is an instrumentality of a State, it is not registered with the Iowa Secretary of State as a corporation conducting business in Iowa.

*Physical Facilities:* Southwest Minnesota State University provides Iowa-based, face-to-face instruction in its Master of Science in Education program in its Learning Communities instructional model. The Learning Communities model, which it has successfully implemented in the States of Minnesota and South Dakota as well as in Iowa, maximizes the University's flexibility to provide instruction based on the interest of students without geographic limitation. The city location(s) for each Learning Community will be chosen every two years based on prospective student interest in a particular geographic location. Instructional sites are generally located in public facilities such as schools, community/technical colleges, state universities, or hotel conference centers, where parking is readily available on weekends and where accessibility issues related to the Americans with Disabilities Act are addressed by the facility in advance as required by law. Sites are located within reasonable driving distance of the registered students. Site facilities are selected based on the experience of previous Learning Communities. Feedback has shown that spaciousness is important for large group instruction, discussion, and active learning. Multiple semi-private areas are necessary for break-out sessions, small group discussions, and individual conferences. Access to wireless Internet is also considered. After a facility is selected and established, contracts are signed with the site and regular contact is maintained with designated staff and

administration from the facility to address issues such as heating, cooling, classroom access, parking, and safety.

Due to the fact that geographic flexibility is necessary to ensure the success of SMSU's Learning Communities, the University is permitted to operate in Iowa without a fixed physical facility. However, SMSU must notify staff per Iowa Code Section 261B.5 within 90 days of the establishment of each new instructional site in Iowa.

*Accreditation:* SMSU is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. The University is approved to participate in the Higher Learning Commission's notification program. Thus, the HLC does not require SMSU to seek advance approval to initiate instruction in more than 50% of a program at an Iowa location. The University has reported, and the HLC records, the University's intention to initiate instruction in its Master of Education program in Mason City, Iowa beginning in the fall of the 2016-2017 academic year.

*Federal Stafford Loan Cohort Default Rate (FFY 2012):* 6.6%

For comparison purposes, the FFY 2012 national average cohort default rate is 11.8%.

*Graduation Rate* (the percentage of first-time, full-time undergraduate students who completed their program within 150% of the normal program completion time, as reported to the federal Department of Education): 39%

The Master of Science in Education program offered via Learning Communities started in the spring of 1998. During this time, 82 Learning Communities have been offered and all have been completed. Within these Learning Communities, which includes students from the States of Minnesota and South Dakota, more than 2000 students enrolled with a 98% graduation rate.

*Average Loan Debt upon Graduation:* \$25,996

*Record Preservation:* Permanent records contain all information in the electronic student record system. These permanent records are located in the Registration and Records Office, which is under the direct supervision of the Registrar.

Policies on maintenance of University records are established by the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Each system school, which includes SMSU, must adopt record safeguarding policies, procedures, and guidelines that are consistent with Board policy, for example:

- Implementation of system security policies, procedures, and guidelines to protect the integrity of system information technology and user accounts.
- Operational procedures to ensure timely backup of critical data that needs to be preserved in support of the University's ability to recover from a disaster or to ensure business continuity.
- Notification about a data breach or the reporting of possible illegal activities to appropriate authorities.
- Establishment of reasonable use and access procedures consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and other applicable law or policy.

- Dissemination of information to and educational opportunities for users concerning applicable information technology policies, procedures, and guidelines.

Official records must be retained in accordance with the applicable approved records retention schedule that is appropriate for the type, nature, and content of the record. More information about Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board policies that are applicable to record security at SMSU can be found at <http://www.mnscu.edu/board/policy/523.html>.

*Transcript Requests:* Any current or former student may request a transcript by contacting:

Transcript Office

SMSU

1501 State Street

Marshall, MN 56258

(507) 537-6207

<http://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/registrationrecords/?id=2200>

*Instructional Methodology:* The Master of Science in Education program is offered in the University's Learning Communities instructional modality. Each student cohort studies together for two academic years, meeting in person an equivalent of 20 times, or 10 weekends (Saturday and Sunday) each year. Meeting dates are determined by the members of the learning community and can be scheduled August through June. The on-site instruction is supplementing by an online course room (Desire2Learn) as a repository of handouts, assignments, etc. In addition, communication is augmented with use of email. A facilitator, who is a member of the Education Department graduate faculty, and a co-facilitator, who is a current or former K-12 practitioner and a graduate of the program, guide the students through a curriculum designed to scaffold theory and practice. Each facilitator is required to deliver the approved curriculum and serve as the academic advisor for students enrolled in the Learning Community. The lead facilitator is the liaison between the Learning Community and the appropriate University services.

The Learning Community program provides educators in the region an opportunity to pursue graduate study while building valuable professional relationships with fellow educators. The curriculum provides educators an in-depth understanding of educational issues pertinent to quality instruction and school renewal. Collaborative study and research, reflective teaching, action-based research projects, and active leadership provide the foundation for professional growth. Each student becomes a member of a cohort group called an advisory team which stays together throughout the program to critique and review presentations, writing, portfolios, and action research projects. The University also groups students to work together according to their teaching level, such as secondary, middle-school, special education, upper elementary, primary, and pre-primary, or by some other common denominator. Students work in these groups when studying best practices or curriculum development, or for sharing ideas for the classroom. Students may also be mixed in groups for various activities. For example, special interest groups may conduct research on specific topics and present the findings to their peers.

*Student Learning Resources:* The Graduate Office Director serves as the weekday contact for administrative issues. A graduate faculty member of the Education Department and a co-facilitator guide the students through the curriculum and are the assigned advisors for students. Students have contact with advisors during weekend sessions and accessibility via e-mail and telephone throughout the week. The Graduate Program Director is also available to answer questions via e-mail and phone during weekdays. Once a student is admitted to the graduate program, he or she

is provided access codes for all University services, including an e-mail account and Library access codes.

The University's McFarland Library <https://www.smsu.edu/library/> provides online access to resources and services that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Five databases from which students may access research materials specifically on the topic of education.
- Database tutorials.
- Research guides on education, including one that is specific to distance learners.
- Full-text journals, magazines, and newspapers.
- Citation guides.
- Document or book delivery for distance learners.

The University Library website provides a tab specifically for Distance Learners students on its Ask A Librarian page <http://libguides.smsu.edu/askref>. At the Distance Learner tab, <http://libguides.smsu.edu/c.php?g=432886&p=2950819>, the University provides students with remote access information about SMSU Library databases, research guides, research help, and interlibrary loan request procedures with video tutorials to assist the visual learner. A SMSU reference librarian is on duty at posted times to answer questions <https://www.smsu.edu/library/?id=5193> via phone, e-mail, chat, or text. If a reference librarian is not available, students are referred to AskMN, an online service for information and research help available to all students, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The on-campus Writing Center (<http://www.smsu.edu/CampusLife/WritingCenter>) provides writing assistance for Learning Community students via online service. Graduate students, such as those attending the University's Learning Communities program in Iowa, are considered distance learners and therefore may take advantage of these services.

Research consultations are also available to students enrolled in distance learning programs at the University. Students may select the date, time, and library consultant that works best for them, and the Library will contact the requestor about available platforms, such as Skype, Adobe Connect, or Google Hangout, that the student may choose as the vehicle for discussion with a Librarian.

The University's Writing Center <http://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/writingcenter/> accommodates distance education students. A student may either schedule an online appointment where the student chats with a consultant, or a student may upload a paper and request that the University Writing Center staff return comments on the paper to the student via email.

Students are provided with a list of textbooks each year well in advance of the first scheduled class meeting. Most students purchase their textbooks online and are provided with the URL address for the SMSU bookstore as well as other options. Additional materials are either posted on Desire2Learn or handed out by the facilitator.

*Curriculum Evaluation and Development:* There are five, full-time graduate faculty members who are responsible for the design, development, and evaluation of all curricula in the Master of Science in Education: Teaching, Learning and Leadership program. SMSU also has two distinct committees that are involved with providing approval, oversight, and guidance with curricular initiatives and changes within the Master of Science in Education program:

- The SMSU Graduate Council consists of faculty members who are representatives from all of the departments that offer graduate-level courses. This committee meets on a regular basis throughout the academic year.
- The Graduate Curriculum Committee, which meets on a regular basis, is made up of graduate faculty members from across campus. The charge of the Graduate Curriculum Committee is to review and recommend graduate curricula and program changes.

*Student Complaints Process:* The procedures for resolution of complaints are available in the online Student Handbook at <https://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/?id=8217>, under the subheading “SMSU Grievance Procedure.”

Complaints about any aspect of academic and non-academic programs should be addressed to the Dean of Graduate Studies:

Dr. Raphael Onyeaghala, Dean  
 Southwest Minnesota State University, BA 1501 State Street, Marshall, MN 56258  
 (507) 537-6251  
[Raphael.Onyeaghala@SMSU.edu](mailto:Raphael.Onyeaghala@SMSU.edu)

### **Program Offered In Iowa**

SMSU applied for registration to offer via in-person instruction one two-year, graduate level program – a Master of Science in Education: Teaching, Learning, and Leadership. This program does not prepare students for initial licensure in any State as a teacher or school administrator and therefore SMSU was not required to seek the approval of the Iowa Board of Education.

Tuition, fees, books, supplies, and other associated costs of this two-year graduate program total \$14,089.94.

### **Registration Compliance**

As required by Iowa Code Section 261B.4, SMSU disclosed its policy on refunding tuition charges for withdrawn students. The policy is disclosed in the University’s academic catalog at Academic Bulletin at <http://www.smsu.edu/catalog/index.cfm?catalogYear=69&categoryId=393>, under the subheading “Withdrawal.” The school’s specific tuition refund policy is not a criterion for registration.

Administrative rules specifically require the school to comply with the requirements of Chapter 261.9(1) “e” through “h”.

- Iowa Code Section 261.9(1)(e) requires a school to maintain and disseminate a drug and alcohol abuse policy that includes sanctions for violation of the school’s policy and information about the availability of drug or alcohol counseling or rehabilitation. Iowa Code Section 261.9(1)(f) requires a school to maintain and disseminate a sexual abuse policy that includes information about counseling opportunities and reporting instances of sexual abuse to school officials and law enforcement. These requirements duplicate policies and disclosures required by the federal Department of Education for a school that participates in the federal student aid programs. SMSU maintains these policies and discloses them in a combination of locations as follows:
  - ✓ <http://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/?id=8185>
  - ✓ <https://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/publicsafety/?Id=9464>

- ✓ [http://www.smsu.edu/resources/webspaces/campuslife/publicsafety/September%2028,%202015AnnualSecurityReport%20%20\(1\)%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.smsu.edu/resources/webspaces/campuslife/publicsafety/September%2028,%202015AnnualSecurityReport%20%20(1)%20(1).pdf)
- ✓ <http://www.smsu.edu/resources/webspaces/nca/policies/P-013.pdf>. Notably, SMSU's Sexual Violence Policy states that sexual violence training is provided to all new incoming students through the University's online learning platform, D2L.
- Iowa Code Section 261.9(1)(g) requires a school to maintain a special policy concerning institutional charges for members of the Iowa National Guard or reserve members of the U.S. Armed Forces, or the spouse of such a member if the member has a dependent child, when the service member or spouse must withdraw from the school because the service member has been called to active (Iowa) state or federal military duty or service. The University has such a policy and discloses it to students attending its Iowa Learning Communities program at <http://www.smsu.edu/resources/webspaces/graduatestudies/iowa%20Info/GradWebsiteIowaStudentInformationFinal.pdf>. The University also provides Iowa Learning Communities students with a letter that explains course and tuition information that will also guide them to the link on the University's website that explains this benefit.
- Iowa Code Section 261.9(1)(h) requires a school to develop and implement a policy for employees who, in the course of their employment, attend, examine, counsel, or treat a child and who suspect the physical or sexual abuse of that child. By cross-reference from existing administrative rules for registration [283-21.2(261B), subsection 7], this new policy now applies to Iowa's registered schools who compensate one or more parties to conduct instruction or other operational activities on the school's behalf at an Iowa location. SMSU adheres to Minnesota Statutes Section 626.556 that requires such reporting on the part of an educational professional who has reason to believe a child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused.

*Consumer Information:* In its registration application, the University affirms its willingness to comply with the requirements of Iowa Code Chapter 261.9, as stipulated by Iowa Code Section 261B.4(8). Chapter 261.9 requires disclosure to students of information about the school's programs, charges, tuition refund policies, whether a certificate or diploma awarded by the school is applicable toward a degree program the school offers, and the identity of the school's accrediting agency. These disclosures are duplicative of the federal Department of Education's student consumer information disclosure requirements for a school that participates in the federal student aid programs. With the exception of tuition charges for graduate education program learning community students, these disclosures are provided in the SMSU Academic Catalog at <http://www.smsu.edu/catalog/>. The University's catalog states that tuition charges for off-campus learning community courses vary and refers the reader to the Education Department for additional information. Therefore, SMSU will disclose all of the information required by Iowa Code Chapter 261.9 to Iowa residents who enroll in the University's Iowa-based program through a letter sent to the student prior to enrollment in each semester's courses. A template of the letter was provided as an attachment to the registration application.

SMSU affirms on the application that it will comply with the provisions of Iowa Code Section 261B.7. The University must disclose to students that it is registered by the Commission and provide Commission contact information for students who have questions or complaints about the school. These disclosures are provided to Iowa resident Learning Communities students on the University's website at <http://www.smsu.edu/graduatestudies/?id=11892>. The University also

provides Iowa Learning Communities student with a letter that explains course and tuition information that will also guide them to the link to the Commission’s contact information on the University website.

*Financial Responsibility:* SMSU is audited as part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system. Independent audit reports are disclosed to the public on the MnSCU website at <http://www.finance.mnscu.edu/accounting/financialstatements/yearendstatements/docs/2015syswide.pdf>. The most recent audit was conducted by the independent auditing firm, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, for the MnSCU fiscal years ending June 30, 2015 and 2014. In the auditor’s report dated November 17, 2015, the auditing firm expressed its opinion that the system’s financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the business-type activities, the aggregate discretely presented component units, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the MnSCU. The audit report and accompanying financial statements are available on the MnSCU website at

*Instructional Staff Qualifications:* SMSU follows Minnesota administrative rules <https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/rules/?id=8705&format=pdf> that prescribe minimum qualifications for persons providing instruction in teacher preparation programs. These standards include the following:

- All faculty who are assigned to teach content-specific methods courses have advanced academic preparation, and have at least one academic year of prekindergarten through grade 12 teaching experience in that content area and scope;
- All faculty who supervise student teaching must have a minimum of a master's degree and have at least one academic year of prekindergarten through grade 12 teaching experience aligned to the scope of the licensure programs they supervise; and
- Faculty must demonstrate teaching that reflects knowledge and experience with diversity and student exceptionalities.

The University also provided its internal *Standards for Faculty Qualifications* in the School of Education, dated April 5, 2016:

<b>Full Graduate Faculty</b>	<b>Associate Graduate Faculty</b>	<b>Undergraduate Faculty</b>	<b>Clinical Faculty</b>
*Meet SMSU requirements for full member of graduate faculty; can teach or supervise in area(s) of specialty.	*Meet SMSU requirements for associate member of graduate faculty; can teach or supervise only in area(s) of specialty.	If no terminal degree, can teach or supervise only in area(s) of specialty.	If no terminal degree, can teach or supervise only at levels of licensure.
Earned terminal degree.	Earned master’s degree.	Doctorate preferred; terminal degree required at the time of tenure application.	Earned master’s degree.

Earned teaching license.	Earned teaching license.	Earned teaching license.	Earned teaching license.
Minimum of three years contemporary B-12 classroom teaching experience.	Minimum of three years contemporary B-12 classroom teaching experience.	Minimum of three years contemporary B-12 classroom teaching experience.	Minimum of three years contemporary B-12 classroom teaching experience.
Engaged in scholarship.	Engaged in scholarship.	Engaged in scholarship.	

\*Lead facilitators in Learning Communities must have full graduate faculty status as defined by the School of Education. It is understood that the degree of the person hired is the same as or is related to the academic discipline for which the faculty member is hired.

Engaged in scholarship: Has an established record of published and/or presented research, creative and scholarly projects, curriculum development, funded grant writing, projects, etc.

Contemporary experience: Depends on the type of discipline or field. SMSU's requirements are as follows:

- Full member of graduate faculty: A full member of the graduate faculty shall hold a doctoral degree, or another degree nationally recognized as the terminal degree in that discipline. In addition to academic preparation, a full member of the graduate faculty shall demonstrate a record of ongoing scholarly activity. A full member of the graduate faculty may teach any level of graduate courses, may be an advisor of graduate students, chair a student examining committee, and direct theses or alternate plan papers.
- Associate member of graduate faculty: An associate member of the graduate faculty shall have a masters/specialist degree and/or professional expertise in an area of specialization. However, a minimum of a master's degree is required for all instructors of record. Associate status may be established based on a special expertise. Such special expertise shall be documented and accompanied with a letter of support from the department chair. An associate member of the graduate faculty may include, but is not limited to fixed-term or adjunct. An associate member may also have other rights, privileges, and/or limits determined as appropriate by the department. An associate member of the graduate faculty may teach any level of graduate courses and serve on a student examining committee in their area of specialization by virtue of academic and professional training or experience.

*Full-Time Iowa Resident Faculty Member or Program Coordinator.* SMSU applied for registration in Iowa to offer a program through face-to-face instruction but in multiple and varying locations throughout northern Iowa, in a format that requires weekend attendance supplemented by online course support. Iowa administrative rules exempt schools that offer programs in such nontraditional formats from any requirement to employ a full-time Iowa resident faculty member or program coordinator devoted to Iowa students. There are a total of five faculty member who serve the Iowa Learning Communities Master of Education Program. Two are full professors: Dr. Kabes

and Dr. Lamb; and two are Associate Professors: Dr. Yerigan, and Dr. Engstrom. Dr. Hummel is an adjunct. The qualifications of these faculty members are summarized below:

- Dr. Kabes holds a doctoral degree in education administration. She is a licensed K-12 principal and superintendent. She has been a professor at the University since 2003, was the Director of Graduate Education at the University for 2015-2016, and facilitated the launch of the Educational Administration and Leadership Program for K-12 principals in 2015. She facilitated the University's Learning Communities Master of Education Program in various locations in South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa.
- Dr. Lamb holds a doctoral degree in adult and higher education, and an education specialist degree in elementary education. He has been a graduate program professor at the University since 1998. Previously, Dr. Lamb provided administrative and instructional programming in the University's elementary education program for five years. Dr. Lamb has experience as an elementary school principal and teacher.
- Dr. Engstrom holds a doctoral degree in education leadership and a certificate in organizational development. Dr. Engstrom has been an associate professor at the University since 1998, facilitating off-campus graduate level Learning Communities programs for adults. He has a current Minnesota teacher's license and is a student teacher supervisor. He has been a member of the University's Graduate Faculty Council for 12 years.
- Dr. Yerigan holds a doctoral degree in general education and a certification in teaching and training online. She is a licensed middle and secondary school teacher, a licensed school social worker, and a licensed social work and mental health practitioner, which includes a specialization in mental retardation. Dr. Yerigan has been an associate professor in the graduate Learning Communities program at the University since 1998. She also has prior experience in the public school system as a teacher and school social worker.
- Dr. Hummel has completed both doctoral and specialist programs in educational administration at the University of South Dakota. She was a licensed school administrator in Iowa until 2009, is a currently licensed educator in South Dakota, and is currently employed as a curriculum specialist and elementary school principal.

*Commitment to Iowa Students and Teach-Out:* SMSU's President, Connie Gores, attested to her commitment to the delivery of programs in Iowa and his agreement to provide alternatives for students to complete their programs at the same or at another institution by executing her electronic signature on the registration renewal application.

## **Compliance with Iowa Code Chapter 714**

### *Section 714.18 – Evidence of Financial Responsibility*

SMSU is exempt from Iowa's financial responsibility requirements for instructional schools because it is authorized by the laws of the State of Minnesota to grant degrees.

### *Section 714.23 – Iowa Tuition Refund Policy*

The Iowa tuition refund policy does not apply to SMSU because it is a public institution.