

Assurance Argument

Northwest College - WY

Review date: 7/25/2022

1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Argument

1. In Spring 2015, President Hicswa launched the process to revise Northwest College's (NWC) seven-year-old Mission Statement to have it more accurately reflect the institution's current purpose and character. The process resulted in the NWC Board of Trustees (BOT) approval of the following new [Mission Statement](#) at its [March 14, 2016](#), regular meeting:

In the context of our global society, the mission of Northwest College is to: be student-centered; be forward thinking; cultivate community; prepare students for transfer, career, and life; and retain and graduate students.

Dr. Hicswa chose a revision process that sought employee input in the form of core concepts, words, and phrases that employees used to reflect their sense of NWC's essential character. This process was suited to shared governance style and culture of the Institution. Conducted during a late Spring 2015 all-employee meeting, the exercise refreshed employees' earlier input about major challenges faced by the college, a question she first put to the campus community during the first month of her presidency in 2013. After receiving [employee submissions](#), Dr. Hicswa called upon Assistant Professor of English Rachel Hanan and Instructor of Sociology/Anthropology Aura Newlin to identify common themes and create an employee questionnaire. Dr. Hanan and Ms. Newlin developed an online Institutional Priorities Inventory (IPI) questionnaire. The IPI's purpose was to:

1. Help employees and stakeholders be aware of values identified during the input process,
2. Guide development of a new Mission Statement, and

3. Help the college develop techniques for assessing how well the campus community is achieving its priorities.

President Hicswa promoted the IPI during her August 2015 State of the College Address, providing employees with a link to the IPI and calling for responses by September 4. She sent all-employee email reminders regarding the response deadline. [Survey results](#) reflected a 50% employee response rate—46% of faculty, 63% of Classified Staff, and 50% of Professional Staff.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and the Institutional Researcher analyzed responses to determine the top-rated priorities for the new Mission Statement. Following this process, President Hicswa worked with Professors Hanan and Newlin and the 2015-16 Student Senate President to identify words and phrases that emerged as common themes. From that work, an innovative Mission Statement format, employing a “word cloud” to cluster the words and phrases on one page with the most highly valued elements appearing in larger type to denote prominence, was developed to represent the College’s essential character. Dr. Hicswa updated Trustees on the revision process at their [January 2016 meeting](#).

Public and student input were sought to ensure that revisions to Mission Statement and Vision 2020 were informed by area residents, students, and employees. The Vice President for College Relations sent personal invitation letters to 289 external stakeholders, including current and former Trustees; emeritus professors/administrators; current and former members of the Alumni Association and Foundation Boards of Directors; public school superintendents; media; city, county, chamber of commerce and economic development representatives; legislators; and banking, healthcare and University of Wyoming representatives. Approximately 25 area residents participated in an [October 1, 2015, public meeting](#); an additional 20 individuals who were unable to attend the evening meeting requested to participate in the survey via email. The 2015-16 Student Senate President sought input from student senators in an [October 6, 2015, meeting](#). Results of that input informed both documents.

The Institutional Researcher and VPAA conducted statistical analysis to determine employees’ top-rated themes, inter-question reliability within themes, and significant differences between constituency groups. The themes that rose to the top became the five mandates in the new Mission Statement, and the distinct IPI list items comprising those umbrella themes serve to operationalize how the campus lives out its mission.

The College Council considered and recommended approval of the new Mission Statement on [March 1, 2016](#), before Board of Trustees adoption on March 14, 2016. It was subsequently incorporated in multiple public documents and venues in Spring 2016, as addressed in 1.B.

The new Mission Statement is actionable, measurable, and meaningfully tied to campus identity and reflects and fuels employees' commitment to continuous quality improvement.

2. Mission documents, the Mission Statement and Vision 2020, are current and explain the extent of the institution’s emphasis on the various aspects of its mission. [Descriptive bullets](#) explain each of the Mission Statement's five overarching elements in depth.

3. Each of the three strategic priorities in Vision 2020, Experience, Connections, and Environment, are elaborated by specific, measurable [key performance indicators](#) that identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the programs and services NWC provides. Mission and Vision 2020 documents explain the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services.

4. The breadth of [instructional programming](#) is consistent with NWC's mission to prepare students for transfer, career, and life. NWC's commitment to general education in its curriculum provides its students with a foundation for lifelong learning. A faculty-based [Curriculum Committee](#) meets regularly to review proposals for new courses, certificates, and programs. NWC currently offers BAS, AA, AS or AAS degree programs and certificates.

Consistent with its student-centered mission, NWC provides student housing, with residential programming and activities intended to promote the social and psychological development of students. Student services include residence life programming, a bookstore, the Johnson Fitness Center, disability support services, short term counseling, peer tutor program, student employment positions, and financial aid services (see 3.D.).

NWC's enrollment profile reflects its mission to prepare students for transfer, career, and life in the context of a global society. According to [Fall 2021 Wyoming Community College Commission \(WCCC\)](#) data, 41% of students are enrolled in transfer programs only, 7% are in both transfer and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, 12% are in CTE programs only, 2% of students are in the BAS program, and 38% are non-degree-seeking. Eighty percent of students are from Wyoming, 17% from other states, and 3% from other countries.

5. Northwest College (NWC) articulates its [Mission Statement](#) through a variety of documents that are available to the public. The online Mission Statement publication includes a description of each of the five overarching elements of the mission. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) identified strategic priorities and key performance indicators for NWC's strategic vision, [Vision 2020](#). This vision was originally developed as a five-year vision; however, due to effects of the pandemic, Vision 2020 was extended and work on a new strategic vision is currently underway. Following adoption of the Mission Statement by the Board of Trustees (BOT) on [March 14, 2016](#), President Hicswa promoted the new document among employees and continued to make verbal and visual references to the statement during her twice-a-year State of the College Addresses, monthly all-employee meetings, and in various public presentations, e.g., service clubs, chambers of commerce.

The Mission Statement is presented publicly in both print and web-based venues and made available to the public through the following communication initiatives.

- [Institutional Profile](#) web page
- [Board of Trustees](#) linked from web page
- [Desk cubes](#) – Provided to all employees for display in their offices and other work spaces; the cubes display the Mission Statement, Vision 2020, and institutional logo
- [Wall presentation](#) – Presented in lettering on a prominent wall in the lobby of the Orendorff Building and framed documentation in campus buildings.
- [Board of Trustees](#) agendas – Printed at the bottom of every BOT meeting agenda

Sources

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

1. Northwest College's (NWC) [Mission Statement](#) charges the college to "cultivate community" to support its public service obligation. A [key performance indicator](#) (Connections within Service Area) used to measure the "Connections" strategic priority in Vision 2020 demonstrates NWC's focus on public service.

The following actions and decisions illustrate NWC's understanding of its role in serving its community:

- The public has access to and uses a variety of [campus facilities](#), e.g., Hinckley Library, Johnson Fitness Center, Yellowstone Building Conference Center, and Cabre Gymnasium at affordable rates or no cost.
- Technical program advisory committees include members of the public who possess background and expertise in various program areas.
- NWC brings more than 100 annual cultural events and activities to campus for faculty, staff, students, and area residents. The schedule is made available via a comprehensive online [calendar of events](#) on the NWC's web site. NWC engages with external audiences through a variety of summer camps, e.g., athletics, visual and performing arts, guest lecturers, speech tournaments, skills contests and clinics, Wyoming Academic Challenge, Writers Series, and Career Fair for high school sophomores.
- District residents 60 years of age or older are eligible for a Golden Age Card that qualifies them for tuition waivers for up to six credit hours per semester, admission to most campus social, cultural, and athletic events without charge, and admission to the Johnson Fitness Center and other events at reduced rates.
- United States military personnel—veterans, active duty and reservists—qualify for free admission to select NWC events with a Military Free-admission Card. In 2016, NWC constructed a veterans lounge that serves as a meeting space for groups and a gathering space for students with a military background.
- NWC maintains active involvement in Chambers of Commerce and economic development organizations in its district.
- Service learning components are part of many classes and instructional programs, e.g., Photo Theme Seminar, Art Department's Empty Bowls event, Student Senate, and athletics teams.
- Public forums help NWC better understand public attitudes, perceptions, and desired courses

and services, e.g., rebranding/renaming, strategic vision, future direction of the college, connections between local businesses and college.

- The President, Board of Trustees (BOT) members, and Vice Presidents maintain contact with and participate in statewide agencies, e.g., the Wyoming Community College Commission and its statewide consultation groups, Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees, Complete College Wyoming and WyDEC (statewide distance education consortium).
- [The Partnership Report](#) is a summary of educational, community, and regional development partnerships that demonstrate NWC's commitment to the public good.

NWC is governed by a seven-member, locally elected, unpaid Board of Trustees from within three sub-districts in its tax district of Park County, Wyoming. The following BOT practices and decisions provide evidence that NWC takes its public service role, public access, and public accountability seriously.

- An Open Forum is part of every regular monthly BOT meeting agenda, thereby providing access for members of the public who wish to address trustees.
- The BOT publishes and archives its meeting minutes on NWC's website.
- The BOT publishes the [Board Policy Manual](#) with College policies on the website.
- Public input/involvement is sought on major decisions, e.g., [Facilities Master Plan development](#), presidential searches, Mission Statement and strategic plan development, and is thoroughly considered in decision-making processes.
- While most regular BOT meetings are held on campus, trustees schedule regular meetings twice a year in the NWC tax district's communities Cody and Meeteetse, to provide more access to taxpayers outside Powell and to help BOT members become better acquainted with NWC's entire district.
- The BOT follows a practice of delaying consideration of major action items for one month until they are discussed as information items.
- Commitments to compliance with Wyoming Open Meetings and Public Records Acts are noted in Board Policy 2500 Board Meetings.

2. As a publicly funded college, NWC has no obligations to external financial interests. NWC's educational focus is evident in its mission documents.

3. NWC commits itself to engaging with its external constituencies in service district communities and responding to their needs. The President, Office of College Relations, and other college departments regularly communicate with the general public and to external stakeholders, e.g., public school officials, city and county officials, Chambers of Commerce, economic development organizations, financial institutions, donors, health care administrators, legislators. This communication occurs in the following ways:

- Nearly 300 news releases are annually disseminated to local, and occasionally regional, media outlets and published on the [NWC News Desk](#) to keep the public abreast of developments, activities, classes, workforce training offerings, and events. A comprehensive online calendar of events and social media are utilized to assist with event promotion.
- Program-specific (e.g., art gallery, athletics, and music) communications inform area residents of activities and events.
- The President conducts one-on-one meetings with service area legislators to help them understand the Wyoming system of colleges' annual legislative agenda and to maintain strong relationships with them.
- The President attends legislative sessions.

- Regular introductions of selected NWC employees and students are made to the general public via pre-arranged radio talk show programs.

NWC responds to the needs of its external constituencies through the following programs:

- Concurrent and dual enrollment programs (see 3.A.)
- [Workforce Development and Lifelong Learning](#)
- [Adult Education and High School Equivalency](#)
- Cultural events, e.g., Art, Music, Intercultural Programs

Sources

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- HLC_2022_Mission Statement 2022
- HLC_2022_NWC KPI 2022 FINAL
- HLC_2022_NWC KPI 2022 FINAL (page number 5)
- HLC_2022_NWC News Desk 2022
- HLC_2022_Partnership Report 2021
- HLC_2022_Workforce Development Website 2022

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Argument

1. To fulfill Northwest College's (NWC) mission within a global context, NWC addresses its role in a multicultural society in several ways. The Office of Intercultural Programs (OIP), with a staff of two full-time and one part-time employees, actively [recruits](#) diverse students both domestically and internationally, offers comprehensive international student and scholar services, and promotes cultural awareness through on campus and community programming.

The OIP actively recruits international students and has international recruitment contracts with agencies around the world including in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and in the U.S. The OIP advertises and markets globally to promote NWC. For the last two years, international enrollment has averaged 43 students each semester as demonstrated in the table below.

Enrollment Period	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022
Number of International Students	59	43	47	39	41
Number of Countries Represented	27	21	23	22	17
Countries with Highest Number	Japan, Brazil, South Korea,	Japan, Jamaica, Turkmenistan,	Japan, Russia, Turkmenistan,	Japan, Russia, Mexico	Japan, Mexico, Turkmenistan

The OIP offers comprehensive support services for international students and scholars including academic, cultural and social, and immigration advising. Student services across campus contribute

to the success of students including counseling, the library, disability support services, tutoring, the business office, and advising.

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have great impact on international education. For one, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly decreased international student mobility which has resulted in a much lower number of international students studying at U.S. institutions. In part, this is due to many countries implementing travel bans, embassies and consulates around the world remaining closed and/or operating with limited staff and schedules, and students and parents choosing health and safety over travelling. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic also severely impacted all study abroad programs due to increased health risks, travel restrictions, and travel bans.

1. NWC curricular and cocurricular activities reflect its mission to prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success. Preparation for informed citizenship includes a [general education requirement](#) for United States and Wyoming government, and the opportunity to participate in Student Senate and serve on college committees. [Student clubs](#) focus on a diversity of interests and allow students to plan and organize activities of interest to them. Preparation for workplace success includes opportunities for internships and practicums in appropriate settings for the students career goals.

2. and 3. NWC integrates multicultural and international students into the campus and community through academic and student life activities including resident life programs, programming at the [Intercultural House](#) (ICH), and various student clubs. For example, the Multicultural Club (MC), one of the largest student clubs, meets on a weekly basis. The club's activities include cooking, culture nights, movie nights, game nights, pumpkin carving, and campus and local sporting events. Meetings and activities are open to all NWC students. Additionally, the MC and OIP collaborate with the Native Ways Club, Japanese Club, Campus Ventures, Spanish Club, and the Gay Straight Alliance. The OIP also organizes trips to surrounding areas such as Billings, Cody, Thermopolis, Yellowstone National Park, Salt Lake City, Denver, Red Lodge, Heart Mountain, and Sleeping Giant.

The OIP manages and oversees the ICH which hosts weekly cultural activities including the MC meetings, Japanese Club meetings, heritage month programming, and numerous cultural programming. The mission of the ICH is to celebrate, “diversity in our community by promoting cultural awareness, inclusiveness, and student success. We welcome people of all backgrounds to participate in programs, events, and activities that transcend cultural barriers and build global understanding. The ICH also serves as a ‘home away from home’ for international students, minority students, all NWC students, and visiting scholars”.

The OIP coordinates [multicultural programs](#) that introduce diverse cultures to the campus and community. Programs include guest speakers and classroom presentations to introduce human diversity in educational settings. Student designed programs include culture nights such as Saudi Arabian Night, Japanese Night, and Russian Night. Other programs include guest speakers from traditionally underrepresented populations, Global Engagement Discussions by faculty and staff who have had intercultural experiences, and film screenings and discussions. International students cook and serve ethnic meals in the dining hall during lunch hours once a week. OIP organizes the annual [Multicultural Showcase](#) which usually attracts 300-500 people from around the area. NWC also celebrates International Education Week with weekly programming. Programs are open to the public and attract students, faculty and staff, and community members.

NWC promotes international learning opportunities for its students, faculty, and staff. In August of

2020, the Office of Intercultural Programs (OIP) at Northwest College and the Office of International Studies at Montana State University Billings (MSUB) in Billings, MT, were awarded a 3-year Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language (UISFL) grant through the International and Foreign Language program at the US Department of Education. The purpose of this grant is to provide funds to plan, develop and carry out programs that will help strengthen and improve undergraduate instruction in international studies and foreign languages. Grant funds will be used to revise and update curricula, develop faculty expertise and add language instruction at both institutions. Some funds will support student study abroad in East Asia. The NWC and MSU Billings UISFL project will greatly enhance faculty expertise in international studies and East Asia in Wyoming and Montana. Over the course of the 3-year grant period, 25 faculty will receive funds to revise curricula and to travel to MSUB partner universities around the world.

Furthermore, NWC offers several Field Study courses every year that allow students to travel abroad short-term through courses that are created and taught by NWC faculty. During 2016-2017, NWC offered field study courses to England, Japan, and Costa Rica. A total of 62 students enrolled in these study abroad courses. For students seeking to study abroad long term, NWC partners with the University of Wyoming (UW) and MSUB to offer students a variety of study abroad options.

OIP staff are members of the National Association of International Educators (NAFSA) and over the years have continued to hold various leadership positions with the NAFSA regional and national teams. NWC also works with EducationUSA, American Councils, the Year of Exchange in America for Russians program, Fulbright, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange program, and the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan.

The NWC community includes a rich mix of individuals who, through their distinctive viewpoints, personalities, and life experiences, contribute to an intellectually stimulating and supportive culture. NWC's commitment to diversity is central to understanding and learning through the promotion of free and open inquiry and discussion. We recognize that our success as an institution depends on an environment where all individuals are included in NWC's community regardless of, but not limited to race, age, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, nationality, citizenship, religious affiliation, or disability.

The [Diversity Awareness Committee](#) (DAC) promotes diversity to foster an environment of inclusiveness. The DAC guides employees and students concerning equity for, and acceptance of, differences in ability, age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, religion and spirituality in the college community. The DAC authored the Respect for Diversity Statement, which faculty members are required, through the [syllabus guidelines](#), to include for each of their classes.

The Native Ways Student Club works to retain and engage Native American students on campus with the use of scholarships and the Native Ways Center. Along with hosting the meetings for the club, the Native Ways Center is a study space with computers, snacks and couches. The goal of the space is to give Native American students a home away from home and their own personal room on campus. It is available for student to access throughout the week. NWC celebrates Native American Heritage Month on campus through a variety of programs including the annual [Buffalo Feast](#). The Buffalo Feast is a community outreach event that promotes Native American culture and history. The club has also co-hosted the purchase and screening of Home From School: The Children of Carlisle, a documentary of the 2017 delegation of Northern Arapaho tribal members who traveled from Wyoming to Pennsylvania to retrieve the remains of three children who died at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in the 1880s. The Native Ways Student Club hosts activities throughout the year such as Indian tacos sales, dream catcher and beading workshops, and movie nights.

These processes and activities reflect NWC's attention to human diversity to fulfill its mission in a global society.

Sources

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Summary

Northwest College (NWC) fulfills Criterion One through a clearly defined [Mission Statement](#) that is publicly articulated and guides NWC's operations.

Adopted in Spring 2016, the statement includes five commitments presented graphically in a word cloud enhanced by defining phrases linked to each commitment. The President's annual operational plan flows from NWC's Mission Statement and strategic [Vision 2020](#) and addresses key performance indicators. NWC's programs, services, and its enrollment profile are aligned with the Mission Statement.

NWC's budget-development process, which was refined in Spring 2016, has a twofold goal of greater involvement of budget managers and more consistent data-based decision making. During the budget development process, the constituent-based Budget Committee consistently referenced the mission. Early success with the new process helped foster more intentional linkage between planning and budgeting.

NWC's Mission Statement is articulated to the public in a variety of print and electronic venues and promoted among employees. Having been revised during the 2015-16 year, both the Mission Statement and Vision 2020 are current and benefited from the input of both internal and external constituencies.

NWC explicitly recognizes its role in a diverse society. Its Mission Statement is led by, "In the context of our global society, the mission of NWC is to...." NWC has the largest international student enrollment of any Wyoming community college. Cultural awareness programming is promoted among area residents. NWC maintains student clubs for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, Native Indian students, and multicultural students. NWC's Diversity Awareness Committee seeks to foster an environment of inclusiveness on campus.

Within the framework of its mission and statutory requirements, NWC takes seriously its obligation to serve the public good. Policies, actions, decisions, and practices of the Board of Trustees and of NWC's various units are consistent with its obligations as a public institution. One of the Mission Statement's five commitments—"Cultivate community"—is, in part, defined as "Upholding a culture of accountability, integrity, and respect." Extensive public use of NWC's facilities and robust external partnerships are centerpieces of NWC's commitment to the public.

NWC maintains a strong educational focus that takes primacy over other purposes, a focus evidenced in its Mission Statement and among key performance indicators that address each strategic priority in the strategic plan, Vision 2020.

Employee Feedback on Criterion One

The Assurance Argument Team held informational workshops on Criterion One on Oct. 10th and

12th, 2016. At those workshops, employees were asked to provide [evidence statements](#) pertaining to the sub-components of this criterion.

Future Plans

NWC will continue to base initiatives, decisions and growth on the Mission Statement and Vision 2020. The communication efforts initiated by President Hicswa in 2013 to engage employees and community, including all-employee meetings, constituent group leadership meetings, task forces, and regular electronic communication, have been sustained and enhanced through public forums on strategic planning and transformational discussion.

Sources

- HLC_2022_Criterion 1_Workshop Comments
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2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Argument

Northwest College (NWC) follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing Board, administration, faculty, and staff. NWC's policies outline requirements for fair and ethical behavior and the integrity of operations in all areas. The Board of Trustees (BOT), administration, faculty, and staff utilize the [NWC Board Policy Manual](#), completed in 2019, to guide their operation.

In 2015, President Hicswa initiated a review of existing policies and procedures to create a comprehensive policy manual. This process is ongoing and involves all constituencies of the College as defined by NWC's shared governance process. Administrators and constituent representatives regularly review policies and procedures and identify areas where policies are necessarily based on state law, accreditation guidelines, or best practices. [Policy 2140](#) of the Board Policy Manual defines the process by which new policies may be brought forward or existing policies revised by campus members or Trustees.

1. In Spring 2015, President Hicswa launched the process to revise Northwest College's (NWC) seven-year-old Mission Statement to have it more accurately reflect the institution's current purpose and character. The process resulted in the NWC Board of Trustees (BOT) approval of a new [Mission Statement](#) at its [March 14, 2016](#), regular meeting.

In the context of our global society, the mission of Northwest College is to: be student-centered; be forward-thinking; cultivate community; prepare students for transfer, career, and life; and retain and graduate students.

The process that was followed is explained in further detail in Component 1. A.1. The mission is included in the monthly Board of Trustees Board packet as a reminder to the campus and community.

2. The integrity of financial operations is ensured by adherence to the procedures found in the following documents. NWC contracts with McGee, Hearne & Paiz, LLC to complete its annual financial audit. They also conduct the A-133 federal compliance audit for all federal programs

operating on campus, including student financial aid. The annual third-party audit determines compliance with regulations, procedures, and standard financial practices. Recent audits have returned no major findings.

- [Audit](#)
- [Budget Process](#)
- [Cash Handling Procedure](#)

The annual audit is discussed at an all-employee meeting, and a presentation and discussion led by a managing partner of the audit firm occur at the BOT meeting usually held in November of each year. NWC works with the Wyoming Community College Commission under Wyoming Statute Article 1, Title 21; Chapter 18 cited as the "Wyoming Community College System Code" and Title 16, Chapter 4, as the "Uniform Municipal Fiscal Procedures." Wyoming Statute requires NWC to submit approved budgetary, enrollment, and other data that accurately represents the operations of NWC.

The integrity of academic operations is assured by adherence to the policies and procedures found in the following documents.

- [College Catalog](#)
- [NWC Board Policy Manual](#) – Section 3000 Faculty and Academics
- [NWC Board Policy Manual](#) – Section 4000 Students and Student Services
- [Student Handbook - Academic Code of Conduct](#)
- [Course Syllabus Guidelines](#)

The Office of Academic Affairs monitors adherence to these policies and procedures as it relates to; ongoing assessment of student learning and advising, student course evaluations, reviews for faculty teaching, adherence to the academic code of conduct, and compliance with federal privacy and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations.

NWC conducts ongoing assessments of student learning and faculty instruction (see Criteria 3, 5). The Student Handbook contains the academic code of conduct to prevent violations such as plagiarism. Compliance with federal privacy and FERPA regulations ensures the privacy of student academic records and is discussed later in this section. Appropriate action is followed to ensure compliance. Appeal and grievance policies are in place to assure fairness.

The integrity of personnel functions is assured by adherence to the policies and procedures found in the following sections:

- [NWC Board Policy Manual – Section 3000](#)
- [NWC Board Policy Manual – Section 5000](#)

The Office of Administrative Services monitors adherence to these policies and procedures and takes appropriate action to ensure compliance. The Vice President of Administrative Services and Finance serves as the Compliance Officer for all matters related to employment policies. [Dispute resolution process policy 5810](#) is in place to assure fairness.

Integrity in auxiliary operations is assured by adherence to the policies and procedures found in the following documents:

- [Residential life](#)
- [CLERY/Crime report \(Annual Security and Fire Update\)](#)

- [Disability support services](#)
- [FERPA policy](#)
- [Financial Aid policies, disclosures, and information](#)
- [Information Technology- policy 7310](#)
- [Student Handbook](#)
- [Student Policy 4500 Student Codes of Conduct](#)
- [Student-Athlete Code of Conduct](#)
- [Title IX – Board Policy 5700](#)

The Office of Student Services and the Office of Administrative Services oversee operations and monitor adherence to these policies and procedures. The bookstore and dining service are contracted with third-party vendors, and information is available on the NWC website or in campus publications. Appeal and grievance policies are in place to assure fairness.

On July 22, 2016, NWC received written notice of a [Title IX claim \(08-16-2101\)](#) relating to an incident involving two students. NWC provided all documentation to the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights as requested. The Office of Civil Rights closed the case on July 12, 2022, with NWC having met the resolution agreement.

On July 26, 2017, NWC received written notice of a [Title IX claim \(08-17-2248\)](#) involving a faculty member. This claim relates to the application of the Higher Learning Commission's faculty credential requirements. NWC provided all documentation to the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights as requested. The Office of Civil Rights closed the case on July 12, 2022, with NWC having met the resolution agreement.

In April 2021, the NWC Board of Trustees approved budget reductions which invoked a reduction in force resulting in faculty and staff members being laid off. A RIF faculty member requested a hearing under Board Policy 5510. A formal hearing was waived by the faculty member in favor of an informal hearing. The informal hearing was held at a BOT special meeting in executive session on [June 7, 2021](#), for the sole purpose of determining whether or not the procedures set forth in the RIF policy had been appropriately applied. The Board came out of the executive session and voted at the special meeting that the policy had been followed.

The processes described above are evidence that NWC establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior.

Sources

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- HLC_2022_2022 July Budgetbook Final Signed
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- HLC_2022_NWC SYLLABUS GUIDELINES
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- HLC_2022_Policy4500 Student codes of conduct
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- HLC_2022_Policy7310 Technology
- HLC_2022_Residential Campu Life __ Northwest College
- HLC_2022_The Mission of Northwest College __ Northwest College

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Argument

1. Northwest College (NWC) utilizes digital publication of key documents, including catalog, schedules, academic requirements, financial information and data deemed relevant to consumers. Examples include digital versions of the school's catalog, student handbook, Board Policy Manual, course offerings, course syllabi, and the academic calendar. Enhancements include a new signage marquee, intuitive student & employee information portal expansion, the adoption of the Moodle academic platform, numerous campus emergency notification modes and an extensive social media presence (i.e., Facebook, Twitter). A chat-bot for directing inquiries to specific information or contacts was recently added to the NWC home page. Accuracy of the various information provided on the college website is ensured by assigning [monitors](#) to update sections of the website.

To keep current with the increased use of mobile devices, in August of 2015, NWC's web site revision debuted with responsive design for mobile devices. NWC is currently in development of an NWC proprietary mobile application for digital devices aimed at mobile access to NWC website. Discussion regarding a total revision of the college website is underway, led by the Communications and Marketing office.

NWC's [catalog](#) is available on the college website. Accuracy of the catalog and the information therein is ensured by the Registrar, who is a member of the Curriculum Committee. Academic program pages detail program requirements. Accuracy of the academic program pages is the responsibility of program staff and faculty.

A searchable, up-to-date [course schedule](#) is available via the NWC website. All course syllabi are available on NWC's website, with this course schedule. Accuracy of the course schedule is ensured by Academic Affairs staff including the Dean of Student Learning.

The Advising Office communicates with the public in a variety of ways. The Advising Coordinator maintains a Twitter page, @NWCAdvising and posts information about jobs, transfer opportunities, and deadlines. The page was created in October 2020 and has posted 232 tweets through July 1, 2022. The Twitter page is averaging 1200-1300 impressions per month during the school year. The Advising Office organizes informational events for students, transfer advising sessions with transfer institutions, and a career prep workshop series. The Advising Office also utilizes text messaging through a program called Admithub to remind current students of registration deadlines.

The NWC [faculty and staff directory](#) is available on the NWC website.

The [cost of attendance](#) is published on the NWC website in the Admissions pages, accessible on the NWC website home page. Information presented includes tuition, general fees, housing, meals and other expenses. Financial Aid and net cost information are also published there. Accuracy of this information is ensured by the Financial Aid Director and financial aid staff.

Financial Aid staff offer comprehensive assistance to students & families by providing in-person custom counseling sessions (no appointment necessary), assisting students remotely with aid applications through electronic means, and by being actively engaged within its service area community through a variety of annual financial aid & higher education preparation/affordability presentations held both on campus and in local high schools.

NWC is controlled by an elected [Board of Trustees \(BOT\)](#) (see Criterion 1). Agendas, minutes, governing rules, and other information relevant to BOT control of NWC are published on NWC's website.

Notice of accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission is on the NWC website. NWC posts documents related to comprehensive reviews. The Art, Music, and Nursing programs are accredited by their respective accrediting bodies, and there are links to these agencies in the catalog and on the [NWC website](#).

2. Northwest College's (NWC) [Mission](#) is student-centered and forward thinking and commits to preparing students for transfer and life, cultivation of community, retention, and graduation of students. As a residential college with a high percentage of traditional age students, NWC provides diverse opportunities for participation in co-curricular programs and activities intended to contribute to the educational and developmental experiences of its students.

Co-curricular activities related directly to academic programming include intercollegiate competitive teams in speech and debate (10-20 participants), livestock judging (20-30 participants), and equine judging (5-10 participants). These teams provide students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in related academic programs. These activities are consistent with academic offerings and the interests of students from NWC's service area.

Welding students participate in Skills USA, a program that focuses on technical, skilled, and service occupations. Skills USA sponsored statewide welding competition is held each year. Four students from each of the Wyoming Colleges attend and compete in both Welding and job interview skills. NWC students have successfully competed at the state and national level. Note that Skills USA participation was limited by the pandemic.

As a member of the NJCAA Division I and the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association athletic programs, NWC teams compete in men's and women's basketball, soccer & rodeo, men's wrestling, and women's volleyball. More than 80 student-athletes participate. Intercollegiate athletics offers student-athletes the opportunity to follow their interests and talents and contributes to the sense of community on campus. Evidence of the success of student athletic programs includes the academic success and retention of participants illustrated in the following table.

<i>Academic Year 2021-2022</i>

	Team GPA	# of Potential Graduates	# of Graduates	% Graduated
Men's Basketball	3.3	6	5	83.33%
Women's Basketball	3.34	4	4	100.00%
Volleyball	3.63	9	9	100.00%
Wrestling	2.46	1	0	0.00%
Men's Rodeo	3.1	6	6	100.00%
Women's Rodeo	3.2	1	1	100.00%
Men's Soccer	2.79	6	5	83.33%
Women's Soccer	3.14	6	6	100.00%
Athletics Overall	3.12	39	36	92.31%

NWC student government affords students the opportunity to run for election to the [Student Senate](#), an activity that connects to NWC's mission to prepare students for life. Student Senate has the responsibility to advocate for student quality of campus life and to weigh in on campus issues relevant to the students. Student Senate is responsible for distributing student fees to benefit student programming. Senate includes 18 members - six executive officers and 12 representatives. They serve on many college committees: College Council, Curriculum, Student Publications, Library, Academic Computing, Student Appeals Board, Graduation and Diversity Committees. The Student Senate has committees which include: Budget Allocation, Club Oversight, Campus Improvements, and Elections.

As a residential college, NWC offers students the opportunity to serve as Resident Assistants, a paid position that provides organizational and supportive leadership in the residence halls, including informational programming for all their residents, bringing awareness of current student concerns, encouraging and building a healthy community – aligning with the college mission to cultivate community and prepare students for life.

Intercultural programs are committed to providing the NWC campus and community access to activities that promote awareness and understanding of the diverse cultures found within our region, and around the world. NWC's Multicultural Club is designed to build global awareness and to reach out to the campus to a broader community. This club has brought many co-curricular programming to the NWC's campus; these programs include Journey Through India, Chilean Night, Teepee raising and Hong Kong and Macau Night. The Multicultural Club engages students in community service projects to 'give back' to our local community. These projects include participation in

monthly culture nights, the intercultural Tuesday lunches, the annual Multicultural Showcase, Homesteader Days, Haunted Homesteader, International Education Week, the President's Gala, the 4th of July Parade in Cody, WY, the fair parade in Powell, WY, and visits to local schools. In 2016-2017, the Multicultural Club had an average of 68 members and all members are encouraged to participate in these community service projects.

While NWC does offer many opportunities for students outside of the formal curriculum, no claims are made regarding learning or outcomes from these activities other than enhancement of the college experience.

Sources

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- HLC_2022_Mission Statement 2022
- HLC_2022_Site Monitors by Section __ Web Management __ Communications _Marketing __ Northwest College

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

Statutorily-derived general powers of the Northwest College (NWC) Board of Trustees (BOT), ([WS 21-18-303](#)), referenced in the [Northwest College Board Policy Manual](#), guide the BOT in its preservation and enhancement of the institution.

The Board Policy Manual Section 2000- Board operationalizes its statutory obligation, as illustrated in the following statements in the document to which Trustees are bound.

- "The purpose of the Northwest College Board of Trustees shall be to govern the College within the parameters of State of Wyoming Statutes and to the benefit of the College District citizenry." (Policy 2100)
- "The objective of the Northwest College Board of Trustees shall be to assure that the College accomplishes its vision and mission." (Policy 2100)
- "The Board has full powers of organization and governance of Northwest College, subject to such control as provided for by Wyoming State Statute and the Wyoming Community College Commission." (Policy 2110)
- "No individual member of the Board may act on behalf of the Board unless specifically instructed by an action of the Board. Every member of the Board shall be obliged to honor the majority's decision." (Policy 2120)

Trustees are bound by NWC policies found in [Section 2000- Board](#), which specifies the following BOT responsibilities.

- "...assure that the College accomplishes its vision and mission" (Policy 2100)
- "...review and approve all new degree programs" (Policy 2110)
- "...shall have full authority to create, revise, adopt, or revoke policy"... (Policy 2140)

Each of the provisions mentioned above in the Board Policy Manual is reviewed annually and during new Trustee training sessions.

1. The Board of Trustees (BOT) is trained and knowledgeable about the institution. The Board Policy Manual Section 2000 – Board provides a framework for appropriate involvement through monthly meetings with [meeting agendas and supporting information](#). BOT agendas typically include study sessions for Trustees to learn about specific topics, e.g., academic programs, policy drafts, facilities and construction reports, budget development, financial audits, and other college issues. Trustees learn about college operations through monthly reports from the President, Vice Presidents, Foundation Executive Director, Institutional Researcher, employee constituent groups, and the Student Senate President. During BOT meetings, Trustees may ask questions about the reports to seek more information. Student groups and competitive teams are introduced and recognized during BOT meetings. Trustees engage in two or more planning retreats per year, and newly elected Trustees participate in a trustee orientation, monthly training sessions, and ACCT training opportunities.

The BOT fulfills its legal and fiduciary responsibilities to oversee financial and academic policies and practices. The BOT's statutory responsibilities include approving Northwest College's (NWC) annual budget and an additional one-mill levy in its district. Further evidence of the BOT's attention to NWC's financial health is an annual review of NWC's external financial audit, including the auditor's presentation during public meetings. Monthly expenditure lists are part of the BOT's monthly consent agenda. The BOT's Policy and Student Success Committee reviews policies presented by the President after review by NWC's shared governance structure. The BOT approves new degree and certificate programs before submission to the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) for approval. The BOT approves all student fees.

2. The following examples demonstrate the BOT's intentionality in selecting discussion and action items that relate to preserving and enhancing the institution; BOT meeting dates on which discussion and/or action occurred are noted along with each item (minutes are available on the campus web page).

- Building Construction: Providing approval to [support](#) the design development and submission to the state for funding of a new student center building that supports a top unmet need in the [Facilities Master Plan \(August 11, 2014\)](#).
- Major maintenance of campus facilities: Approve annual use of major maintenance funds to prioritize campus projects (Major maintenance projects [April 2019](#), [May 2020](#), [May 2021](#), [April 2022](#)).
- BOT policy revisions: Approved ongoing policy work and conversion of the old handbook to a new Board Policy Manual ([Board Policy Manual Organization Memo](#) and minutes [May 2019](#), Board policy updates [2019-2020](#), [2020-2021](#), [agenda](#) and minutes [July 12, 2021](#))
- Operational Plan: Reviewed the President's Annual Operational Plans ([FY22 on September 13, 2021](#), [FY21 on November 09, 2020](#))
- Student retention: Reviewed a Persistence and Graduation Rates/Performance Indicators Report ([March 14, 2022](#), [March 8, 2021](#))
- Employee satisfaction: Reviewed a report on results of NWC's participation in the PACE Campus Climate survey ([September 14, 2020](#), [September 10, 2018](#))
- Student survey: Reviewed a report on results of the NWC's participation in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement ([September 13, 2021](#), [September 09, 2019](#))
- Student enrollment: Reviewed reports on student enrollment ([October 11, 2021](#), and [October 12, 2020](#))
- Uncollected debt: Annual review of report and discussion related to student account write-offs ([June 13, 2022](#) and [June 14, 2021](#))

3. Evidence of the BOT's commitment to considering internal and external constituencies in its decision-making deliberations is seen in the BOT's support of the following ongoing initiatives.

- The BOT's support for shared governance principles is evident in its [March 11, 2013](#), approval of the [Shared Governance and Decision Making Guide](#), which is available to employees on the MyNWC portal.
- All agendas for regular BOT meetings include a "[Citizens' Open Forum](#)," allowing members of the public to address Trustees on topics of interest to them; guidelines for the forum are reviewed annually at BOT retreats.
- The BOT's evaluation of the President's performance includes input from both internal and external stakeholders.
- The BOT conducts an annual self-evaluation to help improve its performance.
- [Internal and external input](#) is sought via formal participation on [Presidential Search](#) Committees and in other major initiatives, e.g., invitations to public meetings regarding the [NWC Resident Life Master plan](#) and [Transformational change](#).
- Demonstrating a commitment to regular environmental scanning, trustees have reviewed results of [community input](#) relating to budget reductions and a panel on a college [rebranding/name change](#).
- Before BOT meetings, all [meeting materials](#) are electronically available to employees via email. Reviewers will have access to all "board books."
- BOT meeting agenda materials include reports from constituent group presidents.
- A member of the Board of Trustees participates as a liaison to [NWC Foundation Board meetings](#).

4. The Governing Board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties. Trustees avoid these conflicts of interest, a commitment supported by the Board Policy Manual and other documents, some of which require Trustee signatures.

- [Disclosure of interest statement](#): Pertains to NWC investments and complies with Wyoming Statute 6-5-118.
- [Conflict of interest statement](#): Trustees accept a pledge that "No member of the Board of Trustees shall receive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation with the Northwest College Board of Trustees.
- A [Board Code of Ethics](#) is distributed and completed annually by the Trustees.

The BOT comprises elected officials and holds autonomous governance duties for the College District. The BOT has statutorily-derived general powers, and the statutes provide a framework for its relationship with the Wyoming Community College Commission, a gubernatorial-appointed body. NWC's President manages the institution's communications with state legislators.

NWC and the BOT maintain a relationship with the NWC College Foundation, a private, nonprofit corporation incorporated in 1966. The [Foundation's](#) mission is to secure and manage gifts that support the educational mission of the college. While the Foundation plans and executes comprehensive fundraising and donor acquisition programs in support of NWC's Strategic Goals identified by the President and BOT, an [Agreement for Exchange of Services between NWC and the NWC Foundation](#) stipulates the Foundation's independence and allows NWC to refuse donations inconsistent with its mission. The NWC [Foundation Fund Raising Policy, Procedures, and Gift Acceptance Guidelines](#) specify gift solicitation and receipt guidelines, including when gift acceptance must be considered by the BOT.

5. BOT delegates the day-to-day management of the institution to the President, as illustrated in NWC's organizational structure and BOT-generated documents. [NWC's organizational chart](#) provides detail on reporting lines to the BOT, President, and Vice Presidents.

The BOT supports the President in day-to-day administration, as evidenced by the multi-year employment contract. President Watson and the BOT have moved towards a policy governance model of leadership. Examples include:

- The BOT established a Policy Committee that works with the President on policy matters and makes recommendations to the BOT.
- The BOT maintains a Finance Committee that works with the President on financial and budgetary matters and makes recommendations to the BOT.
- BOT agendas now include a "consent agenda" that allows trustees to focus on more major informational and action topics.
- The President and the President of the BOT develop and implement agendas for regular BOT retreats and training.
- Monthly reports by administrative units and employee constituent groups are now written to the President rather than to the BOT as had occurred for several years prior.

As noted in 5.B., NWC's faculty Curriculum Committee has maintained an educational focus free of external pressures for specific instructional programming. The Academic Advisory Council (AAC) meets regularly to advise the Vice President for Academic Affairs on instructional issues, including budget decisions, program review, and prioritization of open faculty positions.

Sources

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- HLC_2022_Board of Trustees Board Code of Ethics 2021
- HLC_2022_Board of Trustees Disclosure of Interest form 2022
- HLC_2022_Board of Trustees Minutes of 06.13.22
- HLC_2022_Board of Trustees_Special Meeting Oct 14 2021
- HLC_2022_Board Policy Manual Organization Memo_BOT 05.13.19
- HLC_2022_Board Policy Updates 2019-2020
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- HLC_2022_Board_of_Trustees_Packet_06_13_22
- HLC_2022_BOT_2014_08_11_minutes
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- HLC_2022_Shared_Governance_Decision-making_Guide
- HLC_2022_WY_Statutes_Title21_Chapter 18_Section 303 (2016)_BOT_powers

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Argument

Northwest College (NWC) affirms academic freedom as a core value. The [Board Policy Manual](#) addresses Rights and Privileges. In accordance with [3400 Academic Freedom](#), faculty members are entitled to freedom in research, publication, and pursuit of professional/vocational areas of expertise, subject to the adequate performance of the duties contained in the Faculty Employment Policies. NWC has endorsed the 1940 “Statement on Academic Freedom” adopted by the American Association of University Professors. This statement highlights that the faculty is free from institutional censorship or discipline concerning freedom in the classroom while discussing their subject without teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. This statement encourages faculty to be accurate in their communication, exercise appropriate restraint and show respect for the opinions of others.

Faculty members are granted freedom to include speakers and professionals in their course schedule. Outside speakers conform to the same expectations of academic freedom, in which discussions include opportunities for rebuttal and expression of diverse points of view.

[Board Policy Manual 3330](#) concerns Professional Ethics. Personal integrity is emphasized. NWC has adopted the “Statement on Professional Ethics” from the American Association of University Professors.

Freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth are supported by NWC through shared governance. Faculty Organization (FO) is the faculty constituent representation within NWC’s shared governance structure. Two standing committees represent the faculty body’s interest in expression and truth: the [Academic Freedom and Grievance Committee](#) and the [Committee for Faculty Development and Morale](#).

NWC is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth for students. As stated in the [Student Handbook Academic Code of Conduct](#), NWC expects each faculty member to foster respect for learning, treat students with individual attention and consideration, provide an environment of trust in the classroom and help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards. Students may initiate the Instructional Complaint Procedure when disagreements between faculty and students concerning instructional incidents surface. Points of concern may relate to a contested grade, harassment, intellectual bias or instructional design and delivery. This procedure provides students with a means of eliminating bias or clarifying intellectual viewpoints. The Dean of Student Learning serves as the advocate for the student throughout this process.

The [Student Senate](#) and student publications (student creative magazine *Visual, Verbalize, Vocalize*) provide students with avenues of student free expression.

Sources

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students.

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

1. Northwest College (NWC) core mission is teaching, and there is no ongoing or regular research involving human subjects. For the infrequent occasions when there are proposals to conduct human subject research involving students or staff, proposals are reviewed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs to determine whether proposals qualify for exempt status. If further review is necessary the proposal is reviewed by the Institutional Review Committee (IRC) chaired by the Dean of Student Learning with members recruited from the faculty and professional staff as appropriate for the proposed research. The IRC adheres to guidelines of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services best practices and ethical standards. If the project falls within human subjects research guidelines, the IRC determines if the research plan addresses issues such as risks to research subjects, informed consent, and collection and destruction of research data. Northwest College generally honors IRB approval from other institutions.

NWC does not have a formal Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Instead, faculty conducting research with vertebrate animals have their research proposals reviewed by the funding agency or sponsoring institution IACUC before beginning their research.

2 and 3. Undergraduate research and scholarship are fundamental aspects of an NWC education. All students take ENGL 1010, Introduction to Composition, where they learn the mechanics of college writing and documentation. In many 2000-level courses, students complete a review of the literature on a given topic and are expected to use accepted academic conventions of citation.

Depending on discipline or department preference, students learn to use MLA, APA, Chicago or a discipline-specific citation style (such as Agronomy Style). Librarians instruct students on copyright laws, the ethics of citation, and when to use citation generators in First Year Seminar, ENGL 1010 and other classes when invited by faculty. Library staff provides additional citation resources through a series of [library guides](#) and videos to assist students in understanding how information must be used ethically. Student tutors in Peer Tutoring Services and the Writing Center assist with these efforts when working with students on an individual basis. Faculty in individual disciplines provide further instruction and guidance in relevant citation formats.

[Previous general education outcomes](#) (before Fall 2017) expected students to 1) produce informative, analytical and critical prose to respond to a particular task or audience, 2) produce writing that

conforms to discipline-specific conventions, 3) use appropriate research skills in at least one substantial writing assignment, and 4) observe the conventions of standard written English. Beginning Fall of 2017, [new general education outcomes](#) expect students to 1) use the accepted conventions including spelling, grammar, organizational structure, punctuation, delivery and documentation in oral, written, and digital messages, 2) find, analyze, evaluate, and document information appropriately using a variety of sources, including library resources.

New General education outcomes emphasize using accepted conventions (spelling, grammar, organizational structure, punctuation, delivery, and documentation) in oral, written and digital messages. Students are expected to "find, analyze, evaluate, and document information appropriately, using a variety of resources, including library resources."

A 2021 [Library Instruction Assessment Report](#) examined the effect of some of the resources listed above on information literacy competency at NWC.

4. Policies ensuring honesty and integrity are published in the college catalog, the Student Handbook and on NWC's website. Faculty are required to outline the consequences for academic dishonesty or reference the Student Handbook policies and procedures in their course syllabi. The Academic Code of Conduct outlines both student rights and responsibilities. All students are responsible for reading the college catalog and Student Handbook and conforming to the General Code of Student Conduct. Administration of the Academic Code of Conduct falls under the purview of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). Any student, faculty or staff may initiate an Academic Dishonesty Hearing following the procedures. During the Spring 2017 semester, there were five reports of Academic Dishonesty reported to the Dean of Student Learning and zero of those reports were appealed by the students involved. In an attempt to assure complete reporting of Academic Dishonesty issues, the [Academic Code of Conduct](#) policy was revised in Spring 2017 (effective beginning Fall 2017).

Faculty members use Turnitin, a web-based plagiarism checker. There were 599 student submissions in 25 classes in the Fall 2021 semester and 335 submissions in 36 classes in the Spring 2022 semester. Students are notified in their syllabi when Turnitin will be used in a course, and they have the opportunity to submit rough drafts of written assignments during the course to self-check for plagiarism.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Summary

Northwest College (NWC) fulfills Criterion Two through its commitment to integrity and ethical and responsible operations. A shared governance structure, policies, fiscal controls, and support for academic freedom ensure the institution acts with integrity. Employees and students are expected to act with integrity, and these requirements are clearly communicated.

NWC operates within its shared governance structure that provides transparency through various existing committees, campuswide and Board meetings, written and verbal communication, and a multitude of data and fiscal reports. The College shares and distributes minutes, information, and reports through email, the employee portal, campus meetings, or the Board Book. These processes and transparency support the institution's expectation to act with integrity.

The College completed [the conversion](#) of its employee handbook into the [NWC Board Policy Manual](#) in 2019. The conversion utilized a consultant to identify policy gaps, and NWC has worked diligently to review, update or develop policy throughout the Manual. Board, Faculty and Academics, Students and Student Services, and Finance and Human Resources are just a [few areas](#) with [new policies](#) in place. The establishment of a formal policy manual, publicly available on the website, reflects an expectation for conduct and operations that are ethical and responsible.

Sources

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- HLC_2022_Board Policy Updates 2020-2021
- HLC_2022_Crosswalk_Final_BPM-EH

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

1. The currency of courses and programs are assured through regular review and evaluation. Academic departments review curriculum and degree requirements on an ongoing basis. If a program determines that maintaining currency requires a fundamental course or curricular updates, revisions are submitted to and reviewed by the Curriculum Committee.

Further indicators that content is current at Northwest College (NWC) and that students are held to appropriate levels of performance include:

- [Specialized accreditation](#). There are several programs at NWC with specialized accreditation including:
 - Art (accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design);
 - Music (accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music); and
 - Nursing (accredited by the Accreditation Committee for Education in Nursing).

Accreditation by these external agencies requires programs to demonstrate a commitment to and excellence in learning in their respective areas. This specialized accreditation can be taken as proxy evidence of both currency and the achievement level required of students in these programs.

- Articulation and [Transfer Agreements](#). As a result of annual articulation summits, NWC courses are [approved for transfer](#) to the University of Wyoming and other Wyoming community colleges. When a new course is approved by NWC's Curriculum Committee the Office of Academic Affairs submits the new course proposal to the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) for external confirmation that the course meets the standards of equivalent courses elsewhere in the state. Upon approval by the WCCC Coordinator for Articulation and Transfer, the course is added to either the Course Transfer Guide or the Vocational and Technical Course Listing Guide. Articulation agreements with related programs at the University of Wyoming chart a path for completion of an associate's degree at

NWC in two years, and a bachelor's degree at UW in two more years. The NWC Education Department has a similar agreement with Valley City State University. The 26 percent of our graduates who transfer to these and other institutions (most commonly Montana State University-Billings, Montana State University, and Black Hills State University) can carry their NWC credits with them, indicating that most of NWC's courses meet the standards for articulation.

2. NWC awards the Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree in Professional Studies along with four types of associate degrees: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate Degree in Nursing, and Associate of Applied Science. NWC also offers Skills Certificates and Comprehensive Skills Certificates. All degrees have program-level learning outcomes that align with [General Education outcomes](#) or with the [professional studies curriculum](#) in the case of the BAS degree. With guidance from the Central Assessment Team (CAT), programs review and [assess](#) one or two learning outcomes annually, with all program outcomes assessed on a [four-year rotating cycle](#).

3. NWC provides consistent quality of programming across a variety of delivery formats (each with the percentage of courses offered from 2017-18 through 2021-22 noted):

Delivery Format (and Description)	# of classes	% of overall classes
Face-to-face class sections (classes taught on our main campus and at our two outreach centers)	3897	70
Online class sections (delivered using the Moodle Learning Management System)	844	15
Hybrid class sections (structured around both face-to-face and online instruction)	611	11
Concurrent enrollment (classes taught at the high school by high school faculty approved as NWC adjuncts)	218	4
TOTAL Class Sections 2017-2022	5570	100

Learning Outcomes are standard across all modes of delivery.

Faculty teaching courses online are trained in the use of the technology and the pedagogy for quality online instruction in an online training course. NWC recently purchased the following equipment to update and upgrade technological capabilities in the classroom:

- 86" Newline RS+ Interactive Touch Display – Quantity – 60
- Meeting Owl Pro – Quantity – 91
- Zoom licenses– Quantity – 110
- IPEVO HD Document Cameras– Quantity – 25

All BAS courses are offered via face-to-face, synchronous Zoom video, and on-demand asynchronous video recordings. Online classes are reviewed by the Instructional Technology Coordinator (for proper use of the LMS) and Division Chair (for content) before the first delivery of the course. Students can evaluate every class every semester using a short form of the [IDEA course evaluation survey](#). Student evaluations are reviewed by the appropriate Division Chair, the Dean of Student Learning, and VPAA. Student ratings of faculty members and course quality average above 4 on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the most positive. A pattern of student evaluations below 4 prompts follow up.

Concurrent enrollment classes, those taught at the high school by high school faculty approved as adjuncts for NWC, must meet the same criteria as all classes. Because this is a special environment for college classes, we take extra measures to ensure program quality.

- Adjuncts attend an orientation, prior to their first time teaching, that covers NWC-specific expectations of instructors (e.g., syllabi, grade submission, student evaluation process), support services available to all students, and the structure of NWC degrees. Adjuncts are required to meet with their divisions at least annually to discuss content and rigor in the concurrent enrollment classroom.
- Students have the opportunity to evaluate every class every semester.
- Adjuncts are evaluated by the Division Chair or designee in a site visit at least once during the first semester the course is taught.
- The Academic Affairs Office and the Institutional Researcher monitor data to track [concurrent enrollment students' success](#) after graduation from high school.

Adjuncts and full-time faculty teaching at the NWC Cody Center follow the same criteria for program quality and learning goals as classes taught on campus.

Sources

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- HLC 2022 BAS_Handbook (page number 5)
- HLC 2022 Program Assessment Map Template
- HLC 2022 Program Learning Assessment Report Template
- HLC 2022 Transfer Agreements __ Academic Programs __ Academics __ Northwest College
- HLC 2022 UWY_Transfer Catalog_NWC Courses_2022
- HLC_2022_2020-21 BHB HS Report - BOT - August 2021
- HLC_2022_Assessment Process Timeline
- HLC_2022_General Education Outcomes
- HLC_2022_IDEA Student Survey
- HLC2022 Accreditation __ About Us __ Northwest College

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Argument

1. Northwest College (NWC) implemented new General Education requirements for [AA and AS programs](#) in Fall 2017 and for [AAS programs](#) in Fall 2018. Each required content area has associated General Education Outcomes for [approved general education courses](#) that support [NWC's mission](#). Required NWC general education curricula include the components "US & Wyoming Government," a requirement mandated by the State of Wyoming; a "First-Year Seminar" requirement, adopted because best practices literature shows that such seminars improve student retention and performance at college and beyond, consistent with our mission to be "student-centered" and "retain and graduate students"; "Communication" and "Creativity", both of which support NWC's mission to "prepare students for transfer, career, and life" as the literature demonstrates that these two qualities regularly appear on the top ten traits employers desire; a "Human Condition" requirement that speaks to the Mission Statement's desire to "Cultivate Community," given that participation in our increasingly global community requires attention to multiple and changing points of view; and "Physical and Natural World" and "Quantitative Reasoning" requirements that encourage critical thinking and prepare students to be forward-thinking and proactive in innovation. These General Education categories are broad in nature, including skills commonly associated with STEM, Humanities, and Social Science classes; current literature shows that a liberal-arts background best prepares students for the changing and unpredictable economy by helping them "develop skills adaptable to changing environments"; this is consistent with the mission's emphasis on being "forward thinking" so as "to prepare students for transfer, career, and life."

2. NWC clearly articulates all related areas of its general education requirements. General Education categories and outcomes are based on the [NWC Philosophy of General Education Statement](#) available publicly on the Office of Academic Affairs web page. These categories represent the broad knowledge, intellectual concepts, skills and attitudes that NWC believes every college-educated person should possess. The rationale for [general education content areas](#) and [learning outcomes](#) are

published online and are included in the college [catalog](#).

General Education distribution requirements stipulate that all students, regardless of program, complete coursework in the categories of Communication (COM), Creativity (CR), First Year Seminar (FYS), American & Wyoming Government (GOV), Human Condition (HC), Physical and Natural Sciences (PNS), and Quantitative Reasoning (QR).

Those categories, their rationale for use, and the criteria that students are expected to meet for any [approved course](#) in any category are available through the NWC website.

3. NWC's General Education requirements, adopted in 2017-18, require all students, regardless of program, to complete coursework in the Human Condition (HC) Category. Courses approved for this category examine the character and complexities of the human species, as well as its behaviors, whether as individuals or in their collectivities as a subject of importance to civil society and the world.

[Courses included in this category](#) are offered from diverse academic areas, including Agricultural Economics, Anthropology, Art, Business, Communication, Criminal Justice, Economics, English, Geography, History, Humanities, Japanese, Political Science, Sociology, Social Work, and Spanish.

4. Faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge. These contributions are included in Academic Affairs monthly reports to the President and the Board of Trustees. The following are excerpts from recent reports:

[October 2021](#)

- Despite the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Dr. Greg Smith, was able to take students on virtual field trips using VR headsets and the Wander app.

[November 2021](#)

- The NWC Ag Department hosted the Wyoming Farm Bureau Collegiate Discussion Meet on campus in early November.
- Students and faculty helped host the annual Livestock Judging Contest at the NILE in Billings.
- The Block and Bridal Club served meals at the annual Breiss Growers Appreciation Dinner.
- A NWC Range Club was organized and is planning lots of activities.
- NWC INBRE (IDeA Network for Biomedical Research Excellence: an NIH-funded scientific research program) students attended the recent virtual Fall retreat; undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty/staff/post-docs from around Wyoming participated.
- The Big Horn Basin middle and high school science fair is being planned for late January 2022. The annual event is hosted by NWC science faculty.
- NWC is developing an updated transfer agreement with Montana Technological University. Admissions representatives from Montana Tech visited Northwest College on October 28th to meet with students.

[December 2021](#)

- NWC Faculty continue to make use of technology in the classroom. Dr. Amy McKinney's

HIST 2389: History of Women and the American West class collaborated with peers from the University of Wyoming where Dr. Renee Laegreid teaches the same course. Classes were combined over Zoom and NWC students got to interact with their counterparts at UW.

[February 2022](#)

- NWC Forensics hosted the Trapper Rendezvous January 7-8 for area high schoolers.
- On January 28th, NWC hosted the Big Horn Basin Regional Science Fair. Big Horn Basin middle school students competed to showcase their scientific endeavors across 21 possible categories. This fair is a qualifier for the statewide Science Fair in Laramie each spring.
- Representatives from the University of Wyoming visited the Northwest College campus under Phase I of a grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to establish statewide learning communities under the Inclusive Excellence 3 initiative. This initiative “challenges U.S. colleges and universities to substantially and sustainably build their capacity for student belonging, especially for those who have been historically excluded from the sciences.”

[March 2022](#)

- Education majors under the direction of instructor of education, Jo-el Sauers, will work with local Park County School District #6 in Cody, WY wherein NWC students provide weekly art instruction for Cody elementary students throughout the remainder of the semester.
- The NWC Outdoor Education program, led by Assistant Professor Keith McCallister, entered into contract with Signature Research, a company that designs and builds Challenge Courses, to offer ACCT (Association for Challenge Course Technologies) Level I Practitioner certification in the course OEPR 1100: Introduction to Adventure Education. The ability to award ACCT certification directly to students represents a major milestone in NWC Outdoor Education for two reasons: 1) the certificate is the entry-level credential needed for aerial adventure programs and 2) Northwest College will be the first college in the nation to offer the certificate in-house via a for-credit course. Although other colleges offer Level I certifications, those certificates are awarded via third-party vendors and require an additional course and/or fee; in the case of NWC, students will be certified through coursework, as part of the class.

[April 2022](#)

- Professor Eric Atkinson, Biology Department Coordinator and INBRE Project Lead, was honored as the LAMP Fellow of the semester for the State. LAMP (learning actively mentoring program) is a “comprehensive, sustained mentoring and professional development program with an emphasis on how to best adopt active learning strategies.” Prof. Atkinson is a member of the statewide initiative aimed at improving student retention, success, and engagement in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) courses, and at supporting and improving professional development opportunities and collaboration amongst science instructors across Wyoming.

Sources

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- HLC 2022 AAS worksheet (page number 2)

- HLC 2022 ASSOCIATE OF ARTS _SCIENCE DEGREE WORKSHEET
- HLC 2022 General Education Courses 04.24.19
- HLC 2022 General Education Outcomes (Current)
- HLC 2022 Mission Statement 2022
- HLC 2022 Philosophy of General Education
- HLC 2022 Rationale for General Education Distribution Requirements (Current)
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- HLC_2022_BoT Book Dec 13 2021_pp58
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- HLC_2022_BoT Book Oct 11 2021_pp47
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3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

Argument

1. Northwest College strives to ensure the composition of faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate for its mission and constituencies. The current composition of the service area, faculty, and staff are reported in the following table:

Population Demographics	Service Area	Northwest College Students	Northwest College Faculty	Northwest College Faculty and Staff
	%	%	%	%
White, Not Hispanic/Latino	88.7%	82.8%	95.2%	94.1%
Black or African American	0.8%	1.7%	1.0%	1.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.2%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	0.7%	0.4%	1.9%	1.3%

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Hispanic or Latino	7.8%	7.8%	1.9%	3.4%
Two or More Races	1.7%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Unknown	--	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Nonresident Alien (International)	--	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

We strive for diversity by posting open staff positions throughout our service area and region and posting full-time faculty positions nationally. Northwest College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, or veteran status in its programs and activities. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer and Institution (EOE/EOI).

The [Diversity Awareness Committee](#) (DAC) promotes diversity to foster an environment of inclusiveness. The DAC guides employees and students concerning equity for, and acceptance of, differences in ability, age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, religion, and spirituality in the college community. The DAC authored the Respect for Diversity Statement, which faculty members are required, through the syllabus guidelines, to include for each of their classes.

The NWC community includes a rich mix of individuals who, through their distinctive viewpoints, personalities, and life experiences, contribute to an intellectually stimulating and supportive culture. NWC's commitment to diversity is central to understanding and learning by promoting free and open inquiry and discussion. We recognize that our success as an institution depends on an environment where all individuals are included in NWC's Community regardless of, but not limited to, race, age, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, nationality, citizenship, religious affiliation, or disability.

2. Northwest College (NWC) provides a sufficient number of faculty for classroom and non-classroom responsibilities. There are 12 Instructors, 19 Assistant Professors, 17 Associate Professors, and 3 Professors. Fifty-one out 91 (56%) faculty are full time whose primary responsibility is teaching, followed by support for student learning such as advising, office hours, and assessment. A 14:1 [student-to-faculty ratio](#) ensures the opportunity for direct and quality interaction between faculty and students. The average length of service of full-time faculty is 12 years, providing consistency and continuity in academic offerings.

Forty adjunct faculty and 18 concurrent instructors round out the total faculty numbers. Adjunct instructors, including instructors teaching concurrent courses, must meet the same credentialing requirements as full-time faculty. Adjunct faculty instructors are hired when the Division communicates a need to the Office of Academic Affairs, and an advertisement is placed on NWC's website.

Full-time, tenure-track faculty members are [hired through a process](#) that has significant faculty involvement.

Annual [Program Learning Assessment](#) reports, annual [General Education Outcomes](#) reports, the faculty position review process, and 5-year [Program Review](#) reports are methods used to review and assure that the number of faculty is sufficient to meet the institution's current instructional needs.

These reports require curriculum review, course enrollment data, and [faculty load analysis](#) to demonstrate faculty, assessment, and program needs. Reports are reviewed by the Central Assessment Team, the Academic Advisory Council, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, and the Vice-President of Academic Affairs (VPAA). [Recommendations for filling vacant positions](#) are made based on this information. Academic Affairs is currently considering how to [equalize faculty load](#).

NWC places primary importance on excellence in teaching and encourages faculty to design curriculum with individuality while maintaining approved educational outcomes. As a result, faculty are directly responsible and actively involved in curriculum development. Curriculum development typically begins with a faculty member and moves through the established curriculum review process respectively for discussion, review, and approval: Academic Division, Curriculum Committee, VPAA, and in significant programmatic changes, the President, Board of Trustees, and the Wyoming Community College Commission.

Along with teaching and student learning support, full-time faculty provide [additional services](#) to students: sponsoring student organizations, participating in student orientation events, and participating in programs organized by student groups. Other faculty responsibilities include service to the Division, Service to the College, and Service to the Community. All full-time faculty are expected to fulfill these duties.

Faculty are involved in the assessment of student learning through membership on the [Central Assessment Team](#) (CAT). For more on the role of the CAT, see Section 4.B.

3. Faculty members are [recruited](#) through a national search process designed to ensure that all faculty are appropriately qualified. The institution's hiring practice adheres to HLC's current standard for [minimum faculty qualifications](#) requirements. Even so, 44% of faculty hold doctorates or other terminal degrees.

[Adjunct instructors](#) including adjuncts teaching concurrent courses, must meet the same credentialing requirements as full-time faculty. The adjunct faculty approval process is as follows: divisions decide what other criteria beyond the HLC standard for minimum faculty qualifications must be met to qualify as an adjunct for the division's content area; the Division Chair and appropriate faculty in the content area review the applicant's transcripts and resume and references are checked. Once the division has approved the adjunct, the file is forwarded to the Academic Affairs Office for final approval.

4. NWC instructors are evaluated by the policies set out in the Board Policy Manual section 3600, [Faculty Evaluation](#). NWC predicates faculty evaluation on the premise that effective teaching is the paramount responsibility of faculty, and that no faculty member without a record of effective teaching will be retained, tenured, or promoted. NWC faculty members are [evaluated by students](#), their division chair, a self-evaluation process during the probationary faculty member's third and fifth year of employment, and in cases of promotion for eligible tenured faculty, by our Rank and Tenure Committee. The membership of the [Rank and Tenure Committee](#) is comprised of the VPAA (chair,

ex officio), four tenured faculty members appointed by the VPAA, and four tenured faculty members appointed by the President of the Faculty Organization. The term of service is four calendar years, with staggered terms. In the case of [nursing faculty](#), the Director of Nursing has primary responsibility for faculty development, performance review, retention, tenure, and promotion.

New full-time faculty hired in tenure track positions are classified as probationary for their first five years. Faculty hired in non-tenure track positions are classified as fixed-term contracts. Non-tenured faculty are evaluated yearly by their [Division Chair](#). [Probationary faculty](#) members are further evaluated by the Rank and Tenure Committee during the interim review in the fall semester of their third year and for the decision of tenure in the spring semester of their fifth year. Tenured faculty members are evaluated by their Division Chair and the Rank and Tenure Committee when they meet eligibility requirements for promotion. Adjunct instructors are evaluated by the appropriate division chair or an appointed tenured faculty member during the adjunct's first semester of teaching and once annually thenceforth.

NWC requires a written [self-evaluation](#) of teaching effectiveness, academic service, and professional development by each faculty member standing for an interim review, tenure, and/or promotion. "The College places primary importance on excellence in teaching and support of student learning, and this subject should provide the primary focus of the self-evaluation." This submitted self-evaluation is reviewed by the Rank and Tenure Committee for an interim review, tenure, and promotion and becomes part of the faculty member's permanent employment file.

All full-time faculty members are required to submit a [year-end report](#) summarizing their academic accomplishments and activities in the areas of teaching effectiveness, academic service, and professional development at the conclusion of each academic year. This report goes to the Division Chair and the Vice President of Academic Affairs for review and then is added to the faculty member's permanent employment file.

5. Faculty members are expected to stay current in their disciplines and to make efforts to improve their teaching, and the institution supports [professional growth opportunities](#). Evidence of faculty commitment comes from faculty self-evaluations submitted for interim, tenure, and promotion reviews, Year-End Reports, Division Chair evaluations, and student course evaluations. Professional development may include further education, research, participation in conferences or workshops, course design or redesign, and other opportunities. Professional development activities may occur while the faculty member maintains regular contract duties, or faculty may request a sabbatical leave, an in-house sabbatical, reassigned-time project, or faculty exchange. The institution's budget includes a [Professional Development and Travel Fund](#) allocated to divisions proportionately based on the number of full-time faculty in each division. Funding recipients submit a written report to the VPAA and Division Chair upon completion of professional development activity. Faculty may submit proposals to the [Committee on Faculty Development and Morale](#), also funded through the Office of Academic Affairs, for professional development funding, and professional development funding may be attained through program budgets and in the case of AAS programs, Perkins funding. Each year the NWC Foundation calls for [grant proposals](#) to fund faculty projects that support faculty and program initiatives.

6. Full-time faculty members are required to [hold regular office hours](#). Faculty members are encouraged to schedule office hours throughout the week for optimum student access. Faculty office hours are listed on each course syllabus, and most faculty members post their office hours on their office door. Some faculty members hold office hours in the library, given that assessment and feedback of library services indicate that students view the library as the best study space on campus.

Students are encouraged by both faculty and staff to contact faculty via email and phone. Adjunct faculty members are provided office space so that they can offer regular office hours to students.

7. NWC staff providing student support services are appropriately qualified, trained and supported. All staff in the positions of tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and co-curricular activities have credentials relevant to their position. In employee recruitment, certain positions such as counseling staff require specific credentials. Barring those positions that require specific credentials, professional experience is accepted in lieu of education allowing the equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to successfully perform the essential duties of the job.

Student support services staff are trained and supported in three primary ways. First, staff members have regular professional skills development courses available through NWC's Center for Training and Development. Second, staff members are presented with regular opportunities for webinars and in-state conferencing that concern best practices in their appropriate support areas. Third, most Coordinators and Managers who are directly involved with student support services have the opportunity to travel to professional conferences or training each year. Finally, the institution's [Professional Development Leave](#) policy is paid leave that allows for further study, training, and enrichment experience to better equip employees for their service to the institution. The Human Resources Department subscribes to professional development programming which is made available to all staff.

Sources

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

Argument

1. Northwest College (NWC) provides student services from pre-admission to completion/graduation. Services provided include the following:

- Pre-enrollment advising by Enrollment Services
- Financial Aid
- Residence Life
- Academic and Career Advising
- Disability Support Services
- Counseling Services
- Peer Tutoring Services through the Tutoring Center
- TRiO Student Support Services (SSS)
- Library
- Intercultural Program

2. Students entering NWC are assessed for college-level mathematics and English/writing preparation. NWC makes use of ACT scores (math and English), Accuplacer (math and English), and ALEKS PPL (math) to direct students to courses for which they are adequately prepared.

NWC provides developmental support in English and math through a co-requisite model for students who enter college without being prepared for college level courses. In Fall 2015, the Math department piloted a co-requisite math class that combined two classes, MATH 0920 – Elementary Algebra (the second of three levels of developmental, non-college level math) and MATH 1000 Problem Solving (the first level of college math course), to provide students the opportunity to develop their mathematics skills and complete a college level in the same semester. Since its inception, the Math department has developed a second co-requisite course blending MATH 0930 – Intermediate Algebra and MATH 1400 – College Algebra. The English department followed a similar path in developing co-requisite courses.

NWC's Adult Education program also provides developmental math skills to students who want to improve their preparation before beginning college-level course work.

Another class that provides support and preparation for a successful college career is [First Year Seminar](#) (FYS). NWC offers discipline-specific and general studies seminars. All of the various versions of the FYS course share the same [learning outcomes](#).

NWC Peer Tutoring Services, located on the second floor of the Hinckley Library, provides resources to students who need assistance in core subject areas offered at NWC. Peer Tutoring logged 1,345 hours of tutoring in 2021-2022.

NWC provides a [TRiO Student Support Services program](#) to support students who are low-income, first-generation, and/or students with disabilities.

Disability Support Services offers help to students with disabilities succeed in their academic work including providing alternative media, note takers, readers, taped lectures, assistive hearing devices, assistive computer software, assistive devices, equipment modification, testing accommodations, interpreters, and captioning.

3. Advising at NWC follows a split model consisting of an Academic and Career Advising Coordinator (ACAC) and faculty advisors from each program. The [ACAC](#) provides advising for general studies majors and undecided students and offers the following services:

- General academic advising: helps guide student through their journey at NWC
- Transfer advising: helps students prepare for their academic careers after NWC
- Career advising: helps students identify and follow the correct academic path to reach their career goals set at NWC
- Responding to the early alert system and referring students to appropriate resources e.g., the Success Center, Trio, Tutoring, Registrar's Office

Faculty advisors are disciplinary experts and help advisees make academic plans, select courses for each semester, register for courses, and sign off on course substitutions. Faculty supervise internships and are primarily responsible for the creation of major specific transfer agreements.

4. The NWC Instructional Technology Department ensures that all learning spaces (classrooms and labs) are equipped with appropriate classroom technology and that the faculty is trained on the use of the technology and how to incorporate it into their teaching.

The faculty is provided with training on our Learning Management System (LMS) for use both as a platform for online learning and a supplement to traditional courses. NWC has video capture capabilities that can be utilized in both specialized classrooms or from anywhere the faculty has access to a camera and internet access. This allows for student reinforcement on the course content that can be viewed at any time and from anywhere.

Instructional Technology oversees a wide [variety of resources](#) on campus including state of the art nursing labs, learning labs, computer classrooms, general classrooms, forensic labs, a criminal justice SIM lab and additional video capture classrooms.

The Computing Services Department oversees all other technology on campus and works closely with Instructional Technology. Computing services oversee the networking, database, and desktop needs for both Apple and a PC based Environment. They maintain all internet and WiFi services including firewalls and VoIP services. The Director of Computing Services manages all contract agreements outside of instructional technology. Computing Services has recently implemented a virtual machine

system that allows students to download a client onto their personal computer and run college software and lab computers anywhere in the world. Computing Services has two data centers on campus with redundant equipment in case of technology outages on campus to keep service disruptions minimal. Computing Services supports a wireless infrastructure. Every building on campus has wireless coverage to handle the 1200-1500 wireless devices connected to our wireless network at any given time.

Hinckley Library is located on the campus in Powell. This facility is open 78.25 hours per week (every day of the week) during the academic year. The library maintains a Late Night Study that is open for students until 11 p.m., Sunday through Thursday evenings. The building houses Peer Tutoring Services, an arrangement that has allowed the two units to collaborate easily when it most benefits students. Reference librarians are available whenever the building is open and are available to students via email, online chat, and telephone.

The library offers print, audiovisual, and online materials including books, eBooks, audiobooks, DVDs, streaming video and audio, magazines, newspapers, and academic journals. In cooperation with the other six community college libraries in Wyoming and with support from the Wyoming State Library, students, faculty, and staff have access to over 207 online databases and products wherever they are, provided they have an Internet connection. Users [generate](#) between 58,000 and 159,000 electronic resource searches each year.

Within the library building, students have access to over 60 computers, both Macs, and PCs. The library provides laptops, graphing calculators for semester check out, headphones, various chargers for handheld devices, DVD players/flat screen TVs, and seminar/presentation-equipped rooms.

The Cody Center has a library reference area. Upon request, librarians from the main campus provide research instruction for classes that are taught at the Cody Center.

Librarians provide individual assistance to students, faculty, and staff. They maintain a very active [research instruction program](#) throughout the academic year for face-to-face, hybrid, and online classes. Students in asynchronous online classes receive research instruction through library guides with video instruction, individualized help, and delivery of library materials based on faculty and student requests.

Library materials are selected based on the demands of the college's curriculum. Librarians and teaching faculty select most of the materials. Materials not available at the library can be requested through interlibrary loan for free. Students, faculty, and staff may borrow materials from any public, school, or college library in Wyoming that is a member of the WYLD system.

Programmatic Facilities and Resources

- Agriculture - Crop and soil sciences greenhouse
- Agriculture - Herbarium, pasture, and crop acreage
- Agriculture - Paul Stock Agriculture Pavilion
- Anthropology - Biological anthropology lab
- Anthropology - Bone replicas of various primates of the past and present
- Art - Four electric, one raku, two high fire reduction kilns
- Biology - Four specialized labs for Botany/Zoology, Anatomy & Physiology, Microbiology, and General Biology
- Biology - Microscopy room

- Chemistry - Instruments for liquid, thin layer, column, and gas chromatography
- Chemistry- Mass spectrometer, refractometer, reaction monitoring equipment, melting point determination apparatus
- Chemistry - Instruments for emission, Fourier transform infrared, and UV/visible absorption spectroscopy, picospin nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscope
- Criminal Justice - Virtual reality firearms simulator lab
- Criminal Justice - Forensics lab
- Criminal Justice - Multi-purpose flex-lab
- Criminal Justice - Mock jail cell
- Education - Dedicated iPads for My Virtual Life simulation
- Engineering - Digital meters, signal generators, oscilloscopes, survey equipment
- Equine Studies - Outdoor and indoor arenas
- Equine Studies - 60-stall barn
- Equine Studies - Farrier Science lab
- Graphic Design - Two Mac labs, one print production lab
- Music Technology - Mac lab, recording studio, live sound tools
- Nursing - Four main campus hospital simulation labs
- Nursing - Cody Center hospital simulation lab
- Outdoor Leadership - Climbing wall
- Outdoor Leadership - Indoor and outdoor high/low ropes course
- Outdoor Leadership - Recreation Coop
- Photographic Communications - Three Mac digital editing labs
- Photographic Communications - Five commercial grade lighting studios
- Physics - Digital meters, static generators, observatory
- Welding - Two labs for TIG, MIG, arc, and oxyfuel welding
- Welding - Testing lab, AWS-certified

5. NWC's [General Education Outcomes](#) include information literacy as essential for students to be successful. Within both the First Year Seminar (general studies and discipline-based) and ENGL 1010, students are introduced to effective research and information resources. NWC librarians provide this guided instruction as part of each course. Classes in each discipline provide students opportunities to practice research skills. Librarians provide higher level instruction to students in these classes, at the invitation of course faculty. Each class, which is team-taught by two librarians, is designed based on a discussion with the faculty member. [Librarians teach](#) approximately 100 class sessions to nearly 900 students per year. Librarians provide research instruction to in-person, hybrid, and online classes through the use of zoom, video, library guides, and forum discussions.

Sources

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- HLC_2022_FY21 Library Annual Report
- HLC_2022_FY21 Library Annual Report (page number 6)
- HLC_2022_Home __ TRiO Student Support Services __ Northwest College
- HLC_2022_Library Instruction Assessment Report FY2021
- HLC_2022_Library Instruction Assessment Report FY2021 (page number 3)

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Summary

Northwest College (NWC) fulfills Criterion 3 by providing high-quality education in all of its offerings. NWC offers degree programs appropriate to higher education and relevant to local transfer institutions and the local workforce. Learning goals are set at the course and programmatic levels for all undergraduate education. These goals are consistent across all means of delivery including online and concurrent (dual) enrollment. General education is clearly articulated and is assessed to ensure that students obtain the necessary skills in the following areas:

- Communication
- Creativity
- First Year Seminar
- Human Condition
- Physical and Natural Sciences
- Quantitative Reasoning
- US and Wyoming Constitution

NWC ensures that every content area degree has at least one full-time faculty member or equivalent with expertise in the content area. The institution maintains a sufficient level of faculty and staff to meet programmatic needs, provide student academic support, and maintain co-curricular programs suited to the institution's mission.

In 2020, NWC was approved to offer the Bachelor's of Applied Science (BAS) degree in professional studies. The college welcomed its first cohort in Fall 2021. The BAS program offers flexible 8-week course delivery options with modalities including face-to-face classroom instruction, live synchronous Zoom lectures, and online asynchronous recordings. A separate BAS degree in criminal justice has been developed and is in the approval process.

As NWC moves forward into the future, the college intends to continue to provide high-quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered. The Office of Academic Affairs and the Central Assessment Team will persist in evaluate programming at all degree levels to ensure quality control in all institutional offerings. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will continue to evaluate programming for resource allocation.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

Argument

1. Every five years, select program evaluation data is reported to the Wyoming Community College Commission. Data includes program [enrollment](#), number of [majors](#), number of [completions](#), and [faculty load information](#). The [rotation cycle](#) is staggered so that all programs are reviewed over a five year period. The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and the academic deans review quantitative data for all academic programs each year to evaluate academic programs in terms of enrollment, majors, completions, faculty to student ratios and faculty load summaries. After review by the Academic Affairs Office, Division Chairs and program faculty for programs that are identified for more in-depth review are engaged. Recommendations for action based on the reviews is identified. Beginning Spring 2017, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee evaluates submitted [Support Services Program Reviews](#) from non-academic programs.

Results of program reviews influence budget decisions, most often decisions on filling open positions or decisions to reduce or increase staffing. In the most recent budget reductions, due to decline in enrollment and state funding, quantitative data for academic programs informed decisions on staffing reductions.

A recent program review resulted in changes in course scheduling and curriculum reform in one of the college's technical programs. These changes are in progress. Another example of action taken as a result of program review is reorganization and realignment of the Center for Training and Development and other college programs. Program review results have informed course schedule decisions across the college.

2 and 3. Credit earned at other Regionally-Accredited Postsecondary Institutions will transfer to Northwest College (NWC) upon [evaluation](#) by the Registration and Records Office. Lower division college-level courses completed with a grade of C- or higher may be accepted. Upper division and graduate courses may be accepted to satisfy degree requirements with Division Chair approval. Credit earned at a non-Regionally-Accredited Postsecondary Institution is not accepted for credit, and the transcript is not accepted for admission purposes.

NWC may award credit for [Advanced Placement \(AP\) tests and Subject Examinations of the College Level Examination Program \(CLEP\)](#). The Registrar evaluates International Baccalaureate (IB) programs for credit transfer. NWC may award up to 15 credits of [Self-Acquired Competency Credit \(SACC\)](#) for experiential learning, either as equivalent NWC courses or general credit in an academic area. To obtain SACC credit, "a student petitions for credit in a particular course and submits a portfolio supporting the petition. A team of faculty reviews the portfolio interviews the student (if necessary) and assigns appropriate credit.

Students may petition for [challenge examinations](#) in any lower division course not carrying prerequisites, except for wellness education activity courses. Students may challenge foreign language courses by enrolling in a higher-level course, earning a "B" or above, and petitioning the college. A student may not earn more than 12 hours of petitioned credit in any foreign language.

4. The [Curriculum Committee \(CC\)](#) evaluates each new course proposal to ensure that the course outcomes, readings, and assignments match the appropriate number of credits. A course's prerequisites, co-requisites, expectations for student learning, and general level of rigor are established initially through the new course proposal process. The CC evaluates whether courses should count for general education credit. Revisions to these features are similarly vetted. Faculty members prepare proposals, and academic division faculty and the CC review them. The committee recommends approval, revision, or denial to the VPAA.

Oversight of rigor and expectations for student learning takes place at the level of the CC. NWC adheres to the federal definition of [one credit hour](#). To determine whether a course meets credit-hour standards, the CC reviews the course syllabus, which outlines course learning outcomes, out-of-class expectations, and a schedule of assignments. Courses meeting General Education Requirements require additional review through the CC.

NWC defines dual credit as that which a high school student earns when enrolled in a college course on the NWC campus or through distance education. Concurrent enrollment classes are those taught in the high schools by high school instructors. Credits are transcribed by both the high school and the college. Concurrent enrollment classes are NWC catalog courses, and their registrations are monitored by the Dean of Student Learning, who checks age levels of students and prerequisite completion. The Dean monitors data to track concurrent enrollment students' success after graduation from high school and provides these [figures annually](#). The syllabi for concurrent enrollment classes must include the same learning outcomes and evidence the same rigor as the courses taught at NWC. Division Chairs review concurrent enrollment classes annually including classroom visitation and analysis of student evaluations. The English department piloted an [ENGL](#)

[1010 assessment](#) which revealed that concurrent enrollment students achieved learning outcomes at similar levels as students taking the same class on campus. This serves as a model for future concurrent assessment efforts. NWC annually submits concurrent and dual enrollment [information](#) to the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC).

As per HLC policy on faculty qualifications, all faculty, including those instructing concurrent enrollment transfer courses must have a master's degree with 18 or more graduate credits in the field in which they are teaching. For AAS and other non-transfer courses evidence of relevant knowledge, skills and experience are considered in evaluating instructor credentials.

NWC maintains and exercises authority over access to learning resources including tutoring services, library services, the TRiO program, and disability support services. Learning resources staff are employed by NWC, and the services are managed by NWC.

5. Three programs at NWC have [specialized accreditation](#).

Music and Music Technology are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music.

Fine Art and Graphic Design are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

The Associate Degree Nursing Program, RN, is fully accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and approved by the Wyoming State Board of Nursing. Student who successfully complete the first two semester of the nursing program are awarded a Licensed Practical Nurse certificate as approved by the Wyoming State Board of Nursing which makes them eligible to take the NCLEX-PN. Regional or national accreditation is required for eligibility to take the NCLEX-RN or NCLEX-PN offered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing.

6. NWC evaluates the success of its graduates. To assure that students can transfer to four-year institutions, NWC [maintains articulation agreements](#) with thirty-six potential transfer institutions. The Office of Institutional Research tracks the number of student transfers to identify [most common transfer institutions](#).

The University of Wyoming (UW) provides a comprehensive report of NWC transfer students each year. The [most recent report](#) shows that NWC students transferring to UW with 30 or more credit hours have averaged similar graduation rates compared to transfer students from other community colleges back to the Fall 2011 cohort.

A summary report for the years 2017 through 2022 from [Valley City State University \(VCSU\) Collaborative Teacher Education](#) shows transfer students from NWC have higher mean scores for program standards than the Wyoming average and the VCSU program as a whole, further evidence of transfer student success:

	VCSU Program (N=850)	All Wyoming (N=87)	NWC (N=11)
Standards 1-3 Learner and Learning	3.43	3.37	3.64
Standards 4-5 Content Knowledge	3.34	3.27	3.49

Standards 6-8 Instructional Strategies	3.44	3.36	3.66
Standards 9-10 Professional Responsibility	3.62	3.46	3.76

NWC's Office of Institutional Research conducts an [annual graduate exit survey](#). The response rate averaged 35% for the most recent three years.

The WCCC collects licensure data for its [annual performance report](#). The Commission's 2020-2021 report revealed the pass rate of NWC nursing graduates taking the exam for the first time was 72% for the NCLEX RN exam and 100% for the NCLEX PN exam. These rates indicate that NWC graduates are well prepared to enter their chosen career.

NWC records enrollment in internships scheduled as courses; see course names that start with "internship" in ["Course Enrollment by Course and Term."](#)

Sources

- HLC_2022_2020-21 BHB HS Report - BOT - August 2021
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- HLC_2022_Course Enrollment by Course and Term - 2017-18 through 2021-22
- HLC_2022_ENGL_1010_Assessment Summary_2015-2016
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- HLC_2022_Look Up Transfer Credits _ Registration _ Records
- HLC_2022_Majors - 2017-18 through 2021-22
- HLC_2022_NWC Graduate Exit Survey - 2020-21 Summary
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- HLC_2022_PEOP-Report-2020-2021.-Final
- HLC_2022_PerformanceIndicatorReport.2020-2021 Final (Revised June 2022)
- HLC_2022_PerformanceIndicatorReport.2020-2021 Final (Revised June 2022) (page number 17)
- HLC_2022_Support Services Program Review Form - incorporating rubric expectations
- HLC_2022_Transfer Institutions List
- HLC_2022_UW Transfer Report for NWC 2020-21
- HLC_2022_UW Transfer Report for NWC 2020-21 (page number 15)
- HLC_2022_ValleyCityStateUnivReportOnNWC_2022
- HLC_2022_WCCC Academic Program Review Schedule
- HLC2022 Accreditation __ About Us __ Northwest College

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Argument

1 and 3. NWC has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals through two primary academic assessment processes that are performed routinely throughout the academic year. These two processes assess general education learning outcomes and program-specific learning outcomes through instructor-based and student-based reporting. These processes involve faculty from every program, as well as relevant staff members.

General Education Outcomes Assessment Process

From 2016-2018, Northwest College conducted a major revision of its general education core in two steps that align with the [philosophy of general education](#): 1) revision of [distribution requirements](#) (also called general education areas or categories) and [outcomes](#) and 2) development of the general education assessment process. Based on the 2017 comprehensive accreditation review, the college was asked to submit a report on assessment of general education outcomes. The [report](#) was reviewed and accepted by HLC staff. Excerpts from this report are included in this core component.

The Curriculum Committee revised the distribution requirements and general education outcomes in 2016-2017 (see 3.B). As a result of that process, seven general education areas were established: First Year Studies, Communication, Government, Quantitative Reasoning, Physical and Natural World, Human Condition, and Creativity. In addition to the creation of the categories, the development of the new general education core also included establishment of the outcomes for each of the categories, the general education requirements for degree programs, the process for having individual courses certified for the general education core, and a system of assessment for general education. The new general education assessment process was started in earnest in 2017-2018, but the first complete cycle was completed in the 2018-2019 academic year. There are two components to this plan: instructor-based reporting and student-based reporting.

- **Instructor-based reporting**

To make the instructor-based process manageable, outcomes for each general education area were divided into four groupings and placed into a [rotation](#) for campus-wide assessment. Since each of the general education categories have different numbers of outcomes, ranging from three to six, instructors teaching courses in some areas will report on one outcome per cycle while instructors in other areas will report on two.

Instructors completed a general education outcomes assessment [report](#) for each course certified for inclusion in the general education core every semester. The report form was available in both online and in paper form during the first semester of reporting and was subsequently moved exclusively to an online web form. Instructors were asked to report course information in addition to the following information:

1. Outcome being reported
2. Assessment method(s) used to examine student performance on the outcome
3. Number of students who completed the assessment
4. Of those who completed the assessment, number of students who did not satisfactorily meet the outcome
5. Description of future actions planned to increase student performance in meeting the outcome examined

- **Student-based reporting**

To gather students' perceptions on their achievement of general education outcomes, questions relating to general education outcomes were included on the Northwest College Graduate Exit Survey. The Graduate Exit Survey is completed by graduating students in the spring of each academic year and asks questions relating to areas of the student experience at Northwest College. The questions added were statements of the general education outcomes, worded as "I can" declarations (e.g. I can explain the principles of the scientific method) with which students were asked to rate their agreement (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree).

Course evaluations ask students to describe the amount of progress made on 13 learning objectives which are closely aligned with NWC general education outcomes.

Program Learning Assessment (PLA) Process

- **Instructor-based reporting**

NWC's institution-wide program learning outcome assessment process was modeled in 2013 on the approach outlined in Barbara E. Walvoord's book, *Assessment Clear and Simple*. Workshops by assessment experts Dr. Walvoord in 2013 and Dr. Virginia Anderson in 2014 further advanced campus conversations about assessment. The process for completion and submission of program learning outcomes assessment reports has evolved as a result of the ongoing observations of the Central Assessment Team (CAT) and feedback from academic departments.

The assessment process includes:

1. A [regular rotation of outcomes](#) on which to report each year to ensure that all outcomes are assessed over a four-year cycle.
2. [Program assessment maps](#) that list the outcomes for each program and align them with the rotation reporting year and program courses that address each outcome.
3. A [Program Learning Assessment reporting form](#) based on the rotations of outcomes.
4. A [timeline](#) for submission and review of Program Learning Assessment reports that reflects the processes of assessment undertaken by faculty and allows for timely feedback to be given to departments from the Central Assessment Team.

5. A [rubric](#) used by CAT to review Program Learning Assessment reports and provide feedback.
6. Review teams consisting of different subgroups of CAT to ensure diverse feedback.

The Program Learning Assessment report form has undergone minor revisions each year, as has CAT's scoring rubric to provide feedback to departments. Adjustments have been made in the spirit of continuous improvement, to model in administrative actions the same improvement-oriented assessment approach asked of faculty and departments.

- **Student-based reporting**

To gather students' perceptions on their achievement of program learning outcomes, questions relating to program learning outcomes are included on the Northwest College [Graduate Exit Survey](#). The Graduate Exit Survey is completed by graduating students in the spring of each academic year and asks questions about the student experience at Northwest College. The questions are statements of the specific program learning outcomes, worded as "I can" declarations (e.g. I can explain the principles of the scientific method) with which students were asked to rate their agreement (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree).

In the past 10 years, faculty and staff involvement in NWC's assessment processes has increased at multiple levels. One of the first steps that the Vice President for Academic Affairs took after being hired in Fall 2012 was to establish CAT, a [standing committee](#) comprised of faculty from all academic divisions and selected staff members. The committee meets regularly during the academic year to maintain assessment deadlines, provide guidance, and analyze assessment information.

Two faculty members from each academic division serve on the CAT committee. This enables each program to have faculty members from their area for guidance with program assessment. All program faculty are expected to contribute evidence to their program's Program Learning Assessment report. At the time of the 2017 assurance argument, five programs had developed [curriculum maps](#) to identify courses that address each program learning outcome. Curriculum mapping in all programs was a priority for 2017-2018, and now all programs have curriculum maps. These maps ensure that each program outcome is mapped to multiple courses within the program curriculum.

Examples of additional assessment projects that departments have undertaken include:

- Three program areas (Nursing, Art and Graphic Design, Music and Music Technology) maintain external, [discipline-specific accreditation](#) for which they conduct a variety of assessments.
- Librarians conduct an [assessment of library instruction](#) and report results to the Office of Academic Affairs and CAT.
- The English department has conducted a variety of studies of English enrollment and student performance to investigate patterns relating to [modality](#) (face-to-face, online, concurrent enrollment) and [college preparedness](#).

NWC has a robust and sustainable assessment process that has been in place for almost a decade.

2. Assessment data has been used to improve student learning.

Updated Evidence for 2022 Assurance Argument

It is important to note that the two-year curriculum focuses on aspects of the general education

outcomes in all programs, and therefore program outcomes reflect general education outcomes.

Assessment activities, both general education and program-related, have several vital uses. The most obvious usage is the ongoing adjustments instructors make to their teaching methods based on observations to enhance student learning. NWC's assessment process requires program faculty to regularly meet and discuss student learning regarding program learning outcomes. Faculty have expressed to CAT members that this reflection has been valuable in developing and incorporating teaching strategies.

Faculty assess student strengths and weaknesses in their courses and programs, using the [reporting form](#), which asks questions about:

- Changes made to improve student performance in program learning outcomes since last assessed
- Direct and indirect measures of student performance on outcomes
- Observations of student performance on outcomes, based on direct and indirect measures
- Planned changes to improve student performance, based on the observations

A three-step process for improving instruction and student learning is to 1) measure student performance on an outcome at key points throughout the curriculum, 2) analyze the measurements, and 3) make changes based on this analysis. NWC's Program Learning Assessment report form is designed to step program faculty through this process and gather evidence of this work, particularly with items 3 through 6. The CAT committee uses a [rubric](#) to measure the level at which programs are effective in working through this process.

[Analysis](#) of the rubric scores from the 2020-21 Program Learning Assessment reports, specifically for items 3 through 6, demonstrate that most programs are effectively using these steps to improve student learning. The rubric items are scored on a 0-to-3-point scale where 0 points means none of the rubric components are met and 3 points means all of the rubric components are met. The following items indicate a high level of implementation of assessment techniques across programs, resulting in instructional changes that enhance student learning.

- Item 3. Direct evidence - rubrics/test blueprints used to examine student performance on this outcome
 - 86% of programs had a score of 2 or 3.
- Item 4. Indirect evidence - other methods used to examine student performance on this outcome
 - 86% of programs had a score of 2 or 3.
- Item 5. Observations of student performance on this outcome
 - 79% of programs had a score of 2 or 3.
- Item 6. Changes planned to improve student performance on this outcome
 - 89% of programs had a score of 2 or 3.

Two examples of submitted Program Learning Assessment reports that demonstrate instructional change to enhance student learning on the reported outcome are [Equine Studies](#) and [Outdoor Education](#).

Further analysis shows significant improvements in evidence provided of student learning and

changes made or planned regarding student learning. Though the Program Learning Assessment report form and evaluation rubric have evolved from the 2013-14 to 2020-21 cycles, they have similar components that can be compared, such as the listing of the program learning outcome, measures used, evidence-based observations, and changes made or planned. Rubric scores from [2013-14 through 2015-16](#) showed major improvement over the initial three years in these components; the most recent [2020-21](#) cycle demonstrates sustained improvement:

- 2013-14
 - 32% of programs earned a score of 2 or 3 on all components (out of possible 3)
 - 6% of programs earned the top score of 3 on all components
- 2015-16:
 - 82% of programs earned a score of 2 or 3 on all components (out of possible 3)
 - 35% of programs earned the top score of 3 on all components
- 2020-21:
 - 84% of programs earned a score of 2 or 3 on all components (out of possible 3)
 - 63% of programs earned the top score of 3 on all components

These rubric score improvements provide additional evidence that NWC has a high level of implementation of assessment techniques.

In addition to using assessment information to improve student learning, such information is also used to make improvements in the assessment process. As part of CAT's goal to educate and guide programs towards more effective assessment practices, CAT made modifications to the Program Learning Assessment report such as rewording the measurement items to help faculty better understand the difference between direct and indirect measures and better align those measures with learning outcomes.

Additional uses of assessment results include:

Support for technology, equipment, and funding requests through the Academic Advisory Council – The Academic Advisory Committee uses program learning outcomes assessment reports, the feedback on those reports from CAT, and the connection those reports provide to improving student outcome achievement to award annual supplementary technology and equipment funding.

Measuring progress towards the college's Vision – Northwest College's Vision to provide innovation and distinction in experience, connections, and environment is largely based around the idea of providing a quality educational experience. As such, one of the Key Performance Indicators that the college uses in examining whether we are meeting the Vision is [assessment of student learning](#). As we craft our next vision, that same data has been presented as baseline information during community visioning sessions and is anticipated to remain an important part of our institutional direction.

Graduate exit surveys – Graduates indicate the extent to which they have [achieved both general education and program-specific learning outcomes](#):

- Graduates agree that they have proficiency in 78% of all general education outcomes.
- Across all programs, graduates agree that they have proficiency in 90% of all program-specific outcomes.

As noted above, program-specific learning outcome results are an indicator in the Vision 2020 Key

Performance Indicators to gauge progress on the educational experience. The Assessment Coordinator has used general education outcome results to monitor student progress and effectiveness of the outcomes.

Student course evaluation surveys – [Course evaluations](#) ask students to describe the amount of progress made on 13 learning objectives which are closely aligned with NWC general education outcomes. On a five point scale with 1 indicating no progress and 5 indicating exceptional progress, Spring 2022 mean responses across 13 learning objectives were between 3.3 and 4.15, indicating moderate to substantial progress. Mean scores for excellence of teacher and excellence of course were 4.46 and 4.36 respectively. These scores are typical of student evaluation of their learning and instruction across semesters. These data specific to programs and individual faculty are available to the Office of Academic Affairs, Division Chairs and faculty every semester. Results below 3 prompt further review of specific courses.

Evidence provided for the 2017 assurance argument is included below to demonstrate analysis of and improvements made through earlier assessment efforts.

a. Faculty created direct and indirect measures with alignment to learning outcomes.

The increase in reported number of direct measures from 2013-2016 indicates faculty acquired a better recognition of how to assess student learning. While faculty may have been using rubrics for years, they did not recognize that rubrics should be reported as direct measures. From 2013-2016, a stronger understanding grew among the faculty of the difference between direct and indirect measures, the difference between activities that help students achieve outcomes (lectures, discussions, papers, other assignments), and measures used to assess student attainment of outcomes (e.g., rubrics, test blueprints, scoring guides, feedback surveys).

Beyond improved reporting, data analysis indicated an increase in actual measurement. Program Learning Assessment reports demonstrated that faculty developed new and revised existing measures for alignment with course and program learning outcomes. [Mean scores](#) on the measures section of the CAT feedback rubric rose 120% from 2013-2016, supporting the above conclusions.

b. Faculty reported more [direct evidence](#) of student learning.

The reported amount of indirect evidence remained constant from 2013-2016, but the reported amount of direct evidence increased five-fold.

c. Faculty extracted higher quality [evidence](#) from both direct and indirect measures.

Evidence was weighted based on its usefulness for diagnostic and planning purposes (1=minimally useful; 2=moderately useful; 3=useful). Average weights for direct evidence increased from 1.3 to 2.4. Average weights for indirect evidence increased from 1.1 to 1.4. [Mean scores](#) on the evidence section of the CAT feedback rubric rose 105% from 2013-2016.

d. Program faculty reports tend to [focus on student weakness](#).

It is a positive development that faculty are comfortable reporting areas for improvement.

e. Faculty report more frequent and effective [actions taken](#) to improve student learning.

Faculty reporting of actions taken doubled from 2013-2016. Multiple types of actions were reported

(pedagogical, curricular, and logistical/technological). The majority were pedagogical changes. Actions taken were weighted according to the potential for improving student learning (1=minimal potential for effectiveness; 2=moderate potential; 3=high potential). Between 2013-2016, average weights increased from 1.7 to 2.4 for pedagogical actions; 2.3 to 2.7 for curricular actions; and 2.0 to 2.6 for changes made to logistics/technological. [Mean scores](#) from the actions taken section of the CAT feedback rubric rose 112% from 2014-2016.

f. Faculty reported planning [more frequent and effective actions](#) in response to assessment evidence.

Planned actions were weighted according to the potential for improving student learning (1=minimal; 2=moderate; 3=high). Between 2013-2016, average weights increased marginally across all types of actions. [Mean scores](#) on the actions planned section of the CAT feedback rubric rose 71% from 2013-2016.

g. Faculty report more evidence of change in student learning as a result of actions taken.

From 2013-2015, [changes in student learning](#) were reported at higher rates across all general education outcomes. CAT encourages faculty to take risks when trying new approaches and assures them that reporting results, whether positive or negative, is important and appropriate. SLO reports indicate that program faculty members are comfortable reporting negative or neutral outcomes, though most reporting indicates [improvements in student learning](#). [Examples](#) of faculty "closing the loop" from assessment evidence to action to positive change were presented to the Board of Trustees (BOT) in October 2016.

h. Assessment data has potential to inform budgeting decisions.

In 2014-2015, CAT developed a process for linking budget decisions with assessment. That process informed expenditure of a one-time windfall of state funds. CAT [evaluated](#) Academic Affairs budget requests based on alignment with student learning outcomes according to three criteria:

- i. Which of your learning outcomes presents the greatest or most urgent challenge for your students?
- ii. How will the requested funds help you address that challenge?
- iii. How will you assess your intervention's impact on student learning should funds be awarded?

When this process was implemented, CAT anticipated that this process could inform expenditure of future funding windfalls. Unfortunately, there have not been additional windfalls since then.

i. The quantity of [student learning evidence](#) reported varies between general education outcomes.

Evidence for the general education outcomes of analysis and multiple points of view is reported most frequently. Program faculty submitted less evidence on student performance in written and oral communication and information and technology literacy. In 2017-2018, realignment of course and program outcomes with the [new general education outcomes](#) resulted in a stronger emphasis on the across the curriculum paradigm. CAT established multi-year assessment cycles to ensure that all general education outcomes are assessed.

j. Students self-evaluation

[Student self-evaluation](#) as reported in the Graduate Exit Survey, shows that more than 90% of students agree or strongly agree that they are skilled at NWC's general education outcomes. This indirect evidence suggests that: 1) students who complete their course of study believe they achieved NWC's general education outcomes, and 2) NWC's learning outcomes are appropriate for NWC's mission, student population, and program offerings.

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- HLC_2022_General Education Outcomes (Current)
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- HLC_2022_General Education Outcomes _prior to 2016
- HLC_2022_Graduate Exit Survey_Outcomes_2015-2017
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- HLC_2022_NWC Graduate Exit Survey - 2020-21 Summary
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- HLC_2022_Philosophy of General Education
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- HLC_2022_Program Learning Assessment Report Form
- HLC_2022_Program Learning Assessment Rubric Scores 2020-21
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- HLC_2022_Students Learning Outcomes Report Rubric Scores - 2013-2016
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4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

1. Northwest College (NWC) has defined goals regarding student retention and completion in the [Vision 2020 Key Performance Indicators](#), which demonstrates progress toward the institution's most recent strategic plans.

NWC uses IPEDS definition of fall-to-fall retention rate as the percentage of first-time, degree-seeking students from a specified fall cohort who are still enrolled at NWC or completed their program by the following fall term. The state definition of persistence rate is the percentage of first-time, degree-seeking students from the fall cohort who enroll at any institution or complete a program of study by the following fall term.

NWC measures completion through 1) annual program completions, 2) unduplicated completers, and 3) completion rates (also called graduation rates), as reported on the [IPEDS Completions](#), [IPEDS Graduation Rate](#) surveys, and [National Community College Benchmark Project](#) reports. Completions are defined as the number of degrees or certificates awarded by the institution, regardless of the number of students earning these awards. Completers are the unduplicated number of students being awarded a degree or certificate. The completion rate is calculated for full-time, first-time, degree-seeking students who complete an award within 150% of the normal time to completion.

Vision 2020 focuses the institution on the priorities of Experience, Connections, and Environment. The Experience priority includes components that measure:

- Fall-to-fall retention rate of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students (Fall 2020 to Fall 2021 retention): 54% (N=281)
- Completion rate of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students (Fall 2018 cohort): 46% (N=314)
- Number of degrees and certificates awarded (2020-21): 277 degrees, 34 certificates

Student retention and completion tie to three of NWC's [mission](#) elements: be student-centered; prepare students for transfer, career, and life; and retain and graduate students. These mission elements are connected to Vision 2020's priority of Experience, which relates to students' collegiate experience, including both academics and student life.

NWC's ambitious but attainable goals aim to maintain or exceed the current institutional performance and meet or exceed state and national benchmarks. [NWC's retention rates](#) are typically comparable to the average rate for a national public, 2-year institutions and higher than the Wyoming community college average. NWC's completion rates are well above the national average and are typically above the Wyoming community college average. This demonstrates that goals are appropriate to student populations.

Historically, NWC's retention rates have ranged from upper-50% to low-60%, with two recent exceptions in the mid-50% range. Many of NWC's retention initiatives started in 2012-13, so these rates lend support to their effectiveness.

The majority of NWC students are pursuing a degree or certificate to prepare them for transfer to a four-year institution or to enter the workforce. NWC offers certificates that are primarily subsets of degree programs. Because a primary focus of NWC is successful transfer to four-year institutions, NWC monitors both completion and transfer rates. When combined, the rate of students who complete or transfer has been 59-60% for the past four cohorts. Recent efforts have focused on encouraging students to complete a degree program before transferring. Results show that when completion rates are higher, transfer rates of students without a degree are lower so that the combined rate has stayed relatively constant over the years. This demonstrates that goals are appropriate to educational offerings.

2 and 4. The Office of Institutional Research collects student retention, persistence, and completion data to be published or submitted to external data collectors each year, such as:

- Retention
 - Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) [Fall Enrollment Survey](#)
 - Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) [Annual Report: Performance Indicators](#)
 - Consumer Information Disclosures: [Retention Rates](#)
- Persistence
 - WCCC [Annual Report: Performance Indicators](#)
- Completion
 - [IPEDS Completion Survey](#)
 - [IPEDS Graduation Rates Survey](#)
 - [IPEDS Graduation Rates 200 Survey](#)
 - WCCC [Annual Report: Performance Indicators](#)

NWC uses information from these common reports to ensure internal consistency by utilizing the same collection methods each year and external consistency by using standard statewide and national definitions. When additional information is needed, the Office of Institutional Research collects and analyzes data and keeps a record of the process. This allows the process to be replicated the following year or as needed. This practice increases consistency of data collections, demonstrates accountability, and maintains the integrity of institutional research.

The Data Governance and Institutional Research Council (DGIRC) comprises institutional

researchers from Wyoming community colleges with liaisons from the Presidents Council, Chief Information Officer Council and Wyoming Community College staff. The DGIRC uses IPEDS definitions because they are the most common definitions and used across all federally funded institutions. When an indicator does not have a standard national definition, the DGIRC collaborates to create a statewide definition and a common measurement methodology.

NWC follows [best practices regarding analytical reporting](#) including: 1) establishing a regular reporting calendar for data collection, 2) developing key performance indicators to measure effectiveness, 3) monitoring historical trends, and 4) communicating key findings to decision-makers and the campus community. Examples include:

1. NWC's participation in national data collections, such as IPEDS and NCCBP, ensures that NWC collects retention and completion data on an annual basis. Data from these collections are used for internal data usage and analysis. This practice maintains consistency and upholds data integrity.
2. The Vision 2020 Key Performance Indicators include key measures such as retention and completion.
3. NWC's annual [Longitudinal Enrollment Report](#) and [Student Achievement Outcomes](#) on the Institutional Research website are examples of monitoring retention and completion. The Longitudinal Enrollment Report illustrates historical trends for a variety of indicators including retention rates. Key findings are provided in the report along with a chart depicting trends and findings. This document has been evolving each year since 2013 to become more relevant to the institution's needs. Student Achievement Outcomes of retention rates, completion rates, transfer rates, number of completions, and licensure pass rates are published on the Institutional Research website
4. The Longitudinal Enrollment Report is published on the Institutional Research website, emailed to college employees, and presented at the Board Meeting each October. The Institutional Researcher annually updates employees, including President's Staff, on retention, persistence, and completion and publishes related information on the Institutional Research website and NWC portal. Retention and completion information is shared with the Retention Committee and the Procedures Review and Revision Team, which determine actions to be taken using the information.

3. Retention and completion efforts are the specific focus of the Retention Committee. Retention Committee members research best practices and analyze NWC data regarding retention and completion.

The College President emphasizes the use of best practices in college operations, including student engagement and retention. NWC has refined existing programs and implemented new initiatives that line up with the practices found to increase student engagement (thus, retention) from the Center for Community College Student Engagement's (CCCSE) initiative on [A Matter of Degrees, Practices to Pathways: High-Impact Practices for Community College Student Success](#). Examples of high-impact practices implemented include:

First Year Seminar

Extensive research on student persistence conducted by the members of the Retention Committee uncovered common reasons why students choose not to complete college after starting. This research led to the development of NWC's First Year Experience Program in 2014. Since implementation, the name has changed to First Year Seminar (FYS).

Before implementing FYS, the Retention Committee examined retention rates of three Program Orientation courses in place, in Agriculture, Education, and Engineering. Retention rates were higher for program majors who took the orientation courses in their first year than for majors who did not.

Program	Retention Rate in Course	Retention Rate not enrolled in Course
Agriculture	80%	59%
Education	65%	33%
Engineering	67%	44%

This evidence supported CCCSE findings that FYS increases student retention. The [First-Year Experience Founding Document](#) elaborates on the rationale behind and details of first-year experience course implementation at NWC. [Curriculum Committee](#) voted to make FYS a requirement for earning a degree. NWC implemented First Year Seminars across all programs in Fall 2017.

Since Summer 2020, NWC has partnered with the NWC Foundation to offer summer first-year seminar courses at no charge to students as an enrollment and retention initiative. [Early tracking](#) shows a growing number of students under 18 years of age enrolling in this course and high retention of Summer 2021 students into the following fall and spring terms.

Academic and Career Advising

The Retention Committee began researching advising models in 2012, and [recommended a split model for academic advising](#) to the Faculty Organization for discussion. This resulted in the creation of what is now the Academic and Career Advising Coordinator (ACAC) position. Data analyzed at that time indicated that advising for General Studies majors was a particular need since 20% of students were majoring in General Studies and there was no dedicated advising for that program.

The ACAC provides:

1. General advising: helps to guide students through their academic journey here at NWC
2. Transfer advising: helps students on their way to their academic careers after NWC
3. Career advising: helps students identify and follow the correct path to reach the career goals that they set at NWC

During 2020-2021, the ACAC provided:

- Individual appointments or drop-in: 300 students
- Calls and email related to advising and registration: 500 students in approximately 2000 interactions
- Faculty advising assistance and training: 60
- Personal advising load of degree-seeking continuing students is approximately 250 in fall semester. The coordinator also served as advisor for an average of 125 non-degree students per semester (not including concurrent/dual).

HELP (Early Alert)

The Retention Committee examined student support services for struggling students and identified issues with a time delay between alert submission and actions taken. As a result, the Academic and Career Advising Coordinator was added to the alert notification, who began following up on alerts by contacting students to arrange an appointment.

HERO Grant

One of the barriers which often prohibits student success is unforeseen financial issues. In 2013, Retention Committee discussed using unclaimed scholarship money to assist students facing financial obstacles. As a result, the NWC administration and the NWC Foundation implemented the “[Hero Grant](#)” program, which provides emergency financial assistance to students encountering unforeseen personal circumstances which may prohibit them from succeeding academically or from continuing their education.

Co-Requisite Math and English Courses

Research shows that students are more likely to complete college if they enroll in co-requisite courses than if they follow the traditional pathway of taking multiple developmental courses before enrolling in college-level courses. Co-requisite remediation is encouraged by Complete College America.

In Fall 2015, the math department piloted a co-requisite math class that combined two classes, MATH-0920 Elementary Algebra and MATH-1000 Problem Solving, to provide students the opportunity to develop their mathematics skills and complete a college level math course in the same semester. In Fall 2019, the math department first offered a co-requisite model for MATH-0930 Intermediate Algebra/MATH-1400 College Algebra. Since inception, co-requisite courses have been offered each semester. Results show that students successfully complete a college level math course more quickly when taking a co-requisite course compared to a developmental course:

- Fall 2020 Cohort Percentages Passing a College-Level Course within One Year
 - Starting in Developmental Course: 18%
 - Starting in Co-requisite Course: 59%
- Fall 2019 Cohort Percentages Passing a College-Level Course within Five Terms
 - Starting in Developmental Course: 45%
 - Starting in Co-requisite Course: 70%
- Fall 2018 Cohort Percentages Passing a College-Level Course within Eight Terms
 - Starting in Developmental Course: 38%
 - Starting in Co-requisite Course: 60%

In Fall 2017, the English department began offering a co-requisite course combining ENGL-0610 Basic Writing II and ENGL-1010 Introduction to Composition.

Retention and completion initiatives since 2017 include the following:

1. Guided Pathways and Student Planner software establishes prescriptive semester course maps that inform students of their progress toward completion.
2. 15 to Finish - encourages students to complete at least 15 hours of coursework each semester.

Sources

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- HLC_2022_Student Achievement Outcomes

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Summary

Northwest College (NWC) fulfills Criterion Four by demonstrating responsibility for and evaluating the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services.

NWC systematically tracks the quality and effectiveness of its educational programs through the following methods:

- Academic program reviews
- Non-academic program reviews
- Program and general education learning outcomes reports
- Retention, persistence, and completion reports
- Transfer reports
- Student course evaluations
- Graduate exit surveys

Since the 2013 focused visit, NWC has made significant strides in improving assessment including creation of the Central Assessment Team, development of regular processes for collection and evaluation of evidence relating to student learning outcomes, ongoing professional development, and expansion of the role of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee to evaluate program reviews.

Employee Feedback on Criterion Four

The Assurance Argument Team held informational workshops on Criterion Four on March 24th and 30th, 2017. At those workshops, employees were asked to provide [evidence statements](#) about the sub-components of this criterion.

Since 2016-17, NWC has implemented evaluation of non-academic student support programs. The Central Assessment Team completed curriculum maps in all program areas. Faculty participated in professional development on assessment, online education, and pedagogy.

Sources

- HLC_2022_Criterion 4_Workshop Comments

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Argument

1. Internal constituencies engage in the governance of NWC. NWC's [Shared Governance and Decision Making Guide](#), approved by the BOT on March 11, 2013, formally defines "shared governance" and provides the following operational guidelines.

"Shared Governance is a means by which:

- all members have the opportunity to contribute to the success of their organization;
- all members have the opportunity to provide information, advice, and support to their organization's decision-makers;
- the relevant parties and constituent groups within the organization are brought together to provide for continuity, broad-based understanding, and ownership of decisions; and
- decisions are made based on the best information and most inclusive perspective."

An [extensive committee structure](#) fosters cross-campus involvement and collaboration by including representatives from constituency groups (Administrative Staff, Professional Staff, Classified Staff, Faculty, and Student Senate) and cross-campus departments. Representative groups provide consultation on various aspects of college operations. Major standing committees address matters related to instruction, curriculum, assessment, retention, administration, budget development, academic computing, institutional effectiveness, policy review, the library, marketing communications, website, and student appeals. Committee membership and meeting minutes are posted on NWC's portal.

The following bodies carry out NWC's shared governance functions.

- [College Council](#) is a consultative body composed of representatives from all constituent groups. Its bylaws and operations are based on the institution's Shared Governance and Decision Making Guide. The [Guide](#) provides parameters for how various topics should be considered by the College Council.
- Constituent group organizations for faculty, professional staff, classified staff, and students maintain elected officers. The Constituency Group Presidents have regular meetings with the President.
- The President appoints ad hoc committees with representation from constituency groups as necessary to address specific issues, such as grant opportunities, institutional planning, policy work, planning for new facilities, etc.
- Representative search committees ([Faculty](#), [Staff](#)) are integral to the hiring process. Students serve on search committees for select positions, e.g., President, Vice President for Student Services.
- Students have the opportunity to participate in shared governance in a variety of ways. Representatives are included on various committees, including Curriculum Committee, College Council, Budget Committee, facilities master plan development, and strategic planning groups. Students are also invited to contribute to input and listening sessions for campuswide initiatives such as the [strategic visioning](#) and the [transformational initiative](#), which included a [Summit](#) and advisory committees. The Student Senate President has regular meetings with the President.
- The [NWC Board Policy Manual](#) provides a framework for appropriate involvement through monthly meetings with [meeting agendas](#). Trustees learn about college operations through regular [reports](#) from the President, Vice Presidents, Foundation Executive Director, Institutional Researcher Manager, employee constituent groups, and the Student Senate President. During BOT meetings, Trustees may ask questions about the reports to seek more information. BOT agendas typically include study sessions for Trustees to learn about specific topics, e.g., academic programs, policy drafts, facilities and construction reports, budget development, financial audits, and other college issues. Student groups and competitive teams are introduced and recognized during BOT meetings. Trustees participate in shared governance activities as required or needed, such as ad hoc work groups (transformation work groups), public work groups, and the Presidential Search Committee.

Formal policies adopted by the BOT underpin its commitment to shared governance. The introduction to the BOT-adopted [Shared Governance and Decision Making Guide](#) states that “While the President and BOT have ultimate decision-making authority over most matters of the institution, NWC has had a rich history of strong committee activities and many channels of cross-program faculty and staff collaboration which funnel information to the President and Board.”

As the NWC's Shared Governance and Decision Making Guide state, “Good decisions that are developed collaboratively inevitably help create better policies that contribute to the effectiveness of the college.”

2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.

NWC has a history of using data to make informed decisions in the institution's best interest.

- The institution initiated a [Support Services Program Review](#) assessment process to provide data regarding non-academic departments' impact on the campus, which is reviewed by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC). This enables the IEC to make informed decisions

and provide recommendations to the President.

- Data from Academic Program reviews is used to inform the Office of Academic Affairs and aid in making decisions regarding program changes and improvements. (See 4.A.1)
- AAC has developed [criteria](#) regarding program elimination requirements data can support.
- The Board Policy Manual requires certain elements to be met for a [reduction in force](#).
- The Board of Trustees is provided with data regarding operations and competition when setting annual [housing rates](#), [meal plan rates](#), and [student fixed fees](#).
- Institutional Research regularly provides reports and data to the President's Staff, campus committees, institutional departments, and Board of Trustees to inform decision-making.

3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Several committees contribute to setting academic requirements, policies, and processes. These committees include membership and, thus, input from administration, faculty, staff, and students. [Committees](#) related to setting academic requirements, policies, and processes include:

- Academic Advisory Council (includes members from administration, faculty, and staff)
- Technology Advisory Committee (includes members from administration, faculty, staff, and students)
- Central Assessment Team (includes members of administration, faculty, and staff)
- Course Scheduling Committee (includes members from administration, faculty, and staff)
- Curriculum Committee (includes members from administration, faculty, staff, and students)
- Library Committee (includes members from administration, faculty, staff, and students)
- [Policy Review Committee](#) (includes members from administration, faculty, and staff)
- [Retention Committee](#) (includes members from administration, faculty, staff, and students)
- Writing in the Academic World (includes members of administration and faculty)

Sources

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Argument

1. Northwest College (NWC) has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered. Qualified and trained operational staff to support academic programming are detailed in 3.A., 3.C., and 3.D. Other operational staff and infrastructure are detailed below.

Operational Staff

NWC continuously reviews its operations to ensure adequate human resources for its operations. The [IPEDs Data Feedback Report](#) (see Figures 20, 21) demonstrates that NWC allocates its human resources in areas that support its mission. The College benchmarks against national data such as during the FY 2017 budget process, the Facilities Director compared custodial and grounds staffing levels to national APPA: Leadership in Educational Facilities standards. The results showed staffing levels were slightly below the recommended standards but adequate for campus needs.

NWC staff is appropriately qualified and trained. Staff positions have a wide range of educational and experience requirements. [Position descriptions](#) describe the characteristics and requirements of the employee's role, including the essential duties and responsibilities, type and degree of expertise or training needed, decision making required, physical requirements, the amount of time spent performing each function and the corresponding skills, abilities, and knowledge necessary to perform the role effectively. Access to staff job descriptions will be available to reviewers during the visit.

NWC hiring processes ensure that candidates are properly qualified. During [faculty](#) and [staff](#) candidate selection, search committees recommend candidates based on job-related criteria. Search committees develop job-related interview questions. Professional references are contacted to provide information, e.g., prior employment experience, quality of performance, interpersonal skills, and other job-related criteria. Criminal background checks are performed. Motor vehicle records are reviewed for candidates for positions that require the operation of a college vehicle. Official transcripts are required to verify education. Required professional certifications and licenses are verified upon hire and tracked to ensure that employees remain current with their conditions of employment.

If substantial changes in the duties or responsibilities are made to a role, a formal position

[reclassification review](#) is performed. The position reclassification review may result in an updated position description and a different compensation band placement.

If an employee needs additional education or training to enhance their skills or maintain various certifications relative to their role, there are many avenues through which staff at NWC can engage in professional development.

Funds are budgeted annually for [professional development](#). Employees may request funds through their supervisor or constituency groups. Funds may support specialized training, online courses, workshops, conferences, programs, and continuing education.

[Supervisory training](#) is provided by Human Resources (HR) to all managers and supervisors. Topics include supervisory skills, legal/compliance/regulatory training, performance management, employee engagement, coaching, effective selection processes/interviewing techniques, communication, and leader development. HR provides access to the [Employee Assistance Program](#) and [Academic Impressions \(AI\) Pro](#), an online training program for all employees.

Departments, committees, and work groups sponsor training events and provide learning opportunities for employees, including:

- Residence and Campus Life provides monthly training sessions to student residence life employees.
- Financial Aid and Scholarships staff utilizes webinars for training and policy adherence in areas such as federal student aid, veteran affairs, and state-sponsored programs.
- Computing Services provides access to training to enhance employee knowledge of technology, best practices, and cybersecurity.
- Library staff provide employee training on Internet use and finding quality information.
- Facilities staff provide programs on safety-related subjects and general cleaning best practices.
- Campus Security provides training to employees on emergency procedures, campus safety and security, and fire response training for building captains.
- [Human Resources](#) provides a variety of training opportunities for group sessions on an as-needed or initiative-based service for the campus. Individual training opportunities and a variety of books are also available.
- The Title IX Coordinator provides educational opportunities for students and the campus regarding sexual misconduct prevention and education.

All employees are required to [complete online training modules](#) on anti-harassment and discrimination and Title IX/Campus Save Act to ensure their understanding of important college policies and legal compliance.

All fully benefited employees enjoy tuition waivers for up to seven credit hours each semester through [Northwest College](#) and up to three credit hours per semester through the [University of Wyoming](#). From 2017-2022, 139 employees used NWC tuition waivers, and employee tuition was waived for 118 University of Wyoming courses.

The [Center for Training and Development](#) provides skills-based, leadership, and supervisory training courses that employees attend, often at free or reduced rates.

Infrastructure - Physical Resources

NWC's physical resources support operations. In 2014, a campus-wide steering committee and A&E Architects updated the 2008 Facilities Master Plan. The [final report](#) identified and organized campus projects into immediate, ongoing, major, and priority projects.

The 2014 Master Plan update included an analysis of space utilization and concluded that physical space is more than sufficient for instructional purposes. The update identified spaces that needed improvement. The Planning Committee, consisting of the President, VPASF, Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), Vice President for Student Services (VPSS), and the Foundation executive director, was created to address the items in the plan. The committee set project priorities and funding strategies to implement various phases of the Facilities Master Plan. The VPASF commissioned supplemental planning reports to guide the prioritization of residential halls, landscaping, hardscaping, and academic and support building projects. For planning and tracking purposes, the VPASF maintains a [Facilities Project Report](#), which documents projects currently in process and future projects. This report is provided to the Board of Trustees at their monthly meetings.

A special focus has been given to the Major Projects identified in the 2014 Facilities Master Plan. Beginning in the fiscal year 2022, greater attention has been given to the student center project as the Wyoming Legislature, Wyoming State Building Commission, and Wyoming Community College Commission have all approved the construction of a [new student center](#).

Several projects such as the electrical infrastructure, irrigation setbacks, Johnson Fitness Center Remodel, Moyer Building Remodel, and various educational building heating and air conditioning upgrades have been completed since 2017. Various projects continue to be scheduled as state maintenance funding and adequate reserves allow ([Major Maintenance memo](#)). A new updated Facilities Master Plan is scheduled for Fall 2022.

The previous evidence demonstrates that NWC has sufficient physical resources and engages in forward-thinking planning, as stated in the Mission Statement.

Infrastructure - Technology

NWC's technological infrastructure is sufficient to support its operations. [Staffing levels for technology](#) services are slightly higher than NWC's comparison group median (see Figure 21, Computer, engineering, and science occupational category). Network and database managers, programmers, analysts, and technicians provide coverage through on-site and help desk support.

The Computing Services Director completes staffing assessments and technological resource planning. The Computing Services Director works with the VPASF, the Technology Advising Committee, state agencies, campus staff, and students to assess and maintain adequate resources. Vision 2020 [Key Performance Indicators](#) serve as drivers for technological project prioritization.

The Dean of Student Learning oversees the instructional technology department, which provides faculty support and ensures the instructional technological infrastructure is sufficient to support satellite campuses and online courses. The Instructional Technology Coordinator works with the Technology Advising Committee on instructional technology needs, priorities, and budgets.

The preceding evidence demonstrates that NWC has sufficient technological resources.

2. The goals incorporated into NWC's [Mission Statement](#) and [Vision 2020](#) are realistic in light of

NWC's organization, resources, and opportunities. Because NWC's mission is educational and student-centered, academic performance measures indicate the sufficiency of fiscal, physical, technological, and human resources.

Statewide and national comparisons of NWC's [retention](#) and [completion](#) rates demonstrate that our goals are realistic and that NWC has sufficient resources to achieve them.

3. NWC has [well-developed processes](#) in place for budgeting. NWC has a resource allocation process to ensure that resources are adequately apportioned and that revenue is not dispersed to a superordinate entity inappropriately. Campus constituencies, budget managers, employee meetings, and a Budget Committee serves in various capacities to enhance transparency.

The Budget Committee comprises the vice presidents, Finance Director, Business Office Manager, a faculty member, a professional staff member, a classified staff member, and all college budget managers.

The Budget Committee [discusses reviews](#) and [disseminates](#) ongoing national, state, and local activities that affect college operations and budgets. [Revenue projections](#) are created, and other data are collected to assist with budgeting. The committee utilizes this information for budgeting. NWC's educational purposes, regulatory requirements, and the College's strategic priorities are given priority.

The budget development process strategically includes the budget managers, whose goal is to make recommendations within their budgets that align with NWC's priorities and available resources.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) reviews the [preliminary budget](#) and discusses budget assumptions at the May study session. The first reading of the total is reviewed by the BOT in June, with a budget hearing and [final budget](#) approval typically in July. The budget books are made available electronically to all employees as part of the emailed Board package. Once approved, the budget is posted on the [website](#). The annual audit report is published and made available there.

NWC has processes in place for monitoring expenditures. All employees designated with budget authority have access to up-to-date expenditures and balances available on the employee portal.

NWC Board policy requires the President to approve all college contracts. The President requires the supervisory Vice President and the Vice President for Administrative Services and Finance (VPASF) to review and [sign](#) before approval to ensure alignment with the mission. This change includes employment contracts, stipends, and service contracts. The President's authorization is required for out-of-the-ordinary expenditures.

College Administration implemented processes to improve expenditure review. The Business Office monitors budgets monthly to track revenue receipts and expenditure percentages, comparing budget to actual. Budget managers are consulted for further analysis if shortfalls and overages are identified. With the budget reduction in FY 2019 and FY2022, budget lines were closely reviewed, and further analysis was done to reduce operational costs before reducing faculty and staff.

The VPAFS creates financial reports for BOT meetings, including a monthly [check register](#) and the Budget to Actual report. BOT reviews these reports as part of its fiduciary duty.

Regarding the budgeting of federal and state funds received to support pandemic needs, Northwest College established an Adhoc committee based on its incident command structure. This committee

included Interim President/ VPASF (Incident Commander), Finance Director (Planning Section Administrative/Employee and Finance Section Backup), Facilities Director (Logistics Lead and Planning Backup), Computer Services Director (Subject Matter Expert), Dean of Student Learning (Planning Section Academics Lead) Residence Life Director (Incident Commander Backup), Enrollment Services Director (Planning Section Student Services), Vice President for Student Services (Planning Student Services) and Financial Aid Director (Planning Lead and Incident Commander Backup). This committee analyzed the campus operations and the needs of the campus. As campus funding became available (Federal, State, and Local), this group coordinated with others on campus to ensure funds were spent on items needed to minimize the impact on student learning and health. Purchases included computers, remote learning software, course material used at home, social distancing classroom furniture, employee training, and custodial equipment and supplies. The Business Office, Financial Aid, and Institutional Research worked together to submit the [required reports for the grant funding](#).

4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

NWC is [funded](#) from state appropriations, local mill levies, student tuition and fees, and auxiliary operations. NWC engages in an [annual audit](#) and reports to the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) as statutorily required. NWC analyzes various [financial ratios](#) in relation to its operations. The composite financial index score (Excluding GASB 68 and 75) for 2021 is 8.9. According to [BKD Advisors](#), this CFI indicates sufficient resources to support a robust mission.

As funding sources fluctuate or have recently declined, NWC has reallocated resources to minimize the effect on students and campus. If revenue resources decrease, the Vice President of Administrative Services and Finance (VPASF) work with campus constituent groups and the budget managers to find ways to adjust budgets.

Through work with the Financial Aid Scholarship Office and the Foundation Executive Director, college operating fund scholarships were reduced, and additional Foundation scholarship funding was increased. The net result was the same scholarship dollar amount available for students, but the funding source shifted to the Foundation instead of the operating fund. This same strategy was utilized in Fiscal Years (FY) 2017-2021 to reduce athletic, activity, and talent general fund scholarships and replace them with Foundation funded scholarships.

NWC maintains [reserve balances](#) which provide financial flexibility for operational stability during economic downturns and serve as resources for specific projects or one-time only needs. In FY 2017-2021, state and local funding was reduced due to the economic downturn in Wyoming. In Spring 2016 and Fall 2019, the President and the Vice Presidents implemented a broad-based participatory budget development process. The process maintained proportional funding levels while moving forward with overall campus reductions. Reserve use was budgeted to aid in the transition during FY 2017, 2020, and 2022 budget reductions.

Historically, NWC has not had significant long-term capital financing debt. Capital facility projects have been infrequent and primarily funded through a mix of state and local sources. NWC maintains a [capital lease](#) with the Northwest College Building Authority that finances a 2008 residence hall addition.

The NWC Foundation is an active and well-funded partner. NWC has \$26,281 in endowment assets per FTE compared to \$8,426 per FTE for NWC's IPEDS comparison group median (see [Figure 1](#)). In [FY2020](#), the Foundation provided \$1,287,518 in scholarship support. The NWC Foundation

provided \$317,338 in grants for strategic projects, professional development, and equipment. This endowed revenue stream helps ensure sufficient support for NWC's operations.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Argument

1. President Hicswa implemented a systematic and integrated planning process at Northwest College (NWC) that allocates resources to align with the Mission Statement and [Vision 2020 Key Performance Indicators](#). These processes continue today under President Watson and her administration.

The inclusion of the Budget Manager group (2016) expanded participation in the budgeting process to ensure recommendations for resource allocation align with the mission and Vision 2020. During the Fiscal years 2017, 2020, and 2022 budget process, NWC needed to reduce expenditures due to State, local, and enrollment revenue shortfalls. In line with NWC's primary student-centered focus, NWC honored all awarded scholarships and analyzed academic programs for discontinuation based on affecting the least number of students possible. To reduce expenditures and align resource allocations with NWC's focus on employees, NWC developed an Early Retirement Special Offer (2017) that allowed eligible employees to select retirement. In cases where [Reduction in Force](#) was implemented ([FY2017](#), [FY2019](#), [FY2022](#)), program and course enrollment data, operational expenditure reductions, support service program reviews, and the mission and Vision 2020 and KPIs served as supporting data or vision to guide those decisions.

2. In 2012, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) enlisted faculty and staff in an initiative to improve the assessment of student learning (see 4.B.). The resulting process for the assessment of student learning has set an example for systematic evaluation of operations and planning for improvement.

Evidence of links between the assessment of student learning, planning, and budgeting occurred in 2014 when NWC received an additional \$427,289 in one-time state funding. The President determined priorities for this funding using Central Assessment Team (CAT) recommendations based on the evaluation of funding requests. The CAT evaluated those funding requests based on linkages to the assessment of student learning outcomes.

NWC expanded processes linking evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting across the entire campus. A [campus-wide facilities master planning](#) process was completed in 2014. Point Architects and A&E Architects led campus personnel in updating the 2008 [Facilities Master Plan](#). This is an example of "scaling up" planning to include all employees in evaluating campus operations and future planning needs. In May 2015, a Planning Committee was implemented comprising the President, VPASF, the VPAA, the Vice President for Student Services (VPSS), and the NWC Foundation Executive Director. Following initial developmental meetings to prioritize major and minor facilities projects, attach timelines, and determine funding sources, the committee meets monthly to evaluate project progress, discuss fundraising strategies, and implement steps to seek state capital construction support. This is another example of scaling up efforts and commitment to working initiatives through to completion.

The VPASF led the continuing implementation of the campus facilities master plan, the development of a [landscaping master plan](#), and the [Student Housing Master Plan](#) to support learning and student services. A new [Student Center](#) building is slotted for construction to start in January 2023, and a new temporary dining building will be completed in December 2022, later becoming a new soccer facility. The Student Center and soccer facility are master plan projects designed to link student success to facilities that will support student services and activities.

The College contracted with CBT Consultants (2015) to review policies and make [recommendations](#) to the current employee handbook. Following those recommendations, the President worked with the College Council on a new NWC Board policy manual to replace various handbooks and policy statements. As part of this process, the [College Policy Task Force](#) was created. The task force included the President, a faculty representative, a professional staff representative, a classified staff representative, and the Human Resources Director. Task force members served to drive the policy development process forward as NWC evaluated operations and implemented changes. Existing policies and processes continued to be followed, with the Task Force providing committed manpower. The Task Force finished its work when the Board Policy Manual was adopted in 2019.

In [Spring 2017](#), the President charged the [Institutional Effectiveness Committee \(IEC\)](#) to initiate a process for evaluating operations across the College. The IEC developed a new evaluation tool for non-instructional services, referred to as the "support services" program review. This work included creating the evaluation instrument, beta testing cycle, and full implementation. This work was utilized as a part of the FY2020 budget reductions and has been ongoing as part of the operational review and FY2022 budget development.

3. NWC considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups in campus planning processes. All employees, as well as community members, were involved in the revision of the Mission Statement and creation of Vision 2020 (see 1.A.).

Similar processes involving internal and external stakeholders have been employed in emergency planning. Through ongoing efforts, emergency training and planning continue to be a commitment as seen in March 2018 with a functional exercise related to a ransom letter with a bomb threat and again in March 2020 with an exercise with Homeland Security on the threat of a pandemic. This work has resulted in an [Emergency Operations Plan](#), [Emergency Response Guide](#) (2014), and [Campus Safety and Security Brochure](#) (2014). These efforts provide a process, training, and stability to employees, potential students, and their parents regarding safety.

The College's Incident Command (IC) operational structure has been officially enacted twice since implementation, once in fall 2016 to respond to a statewide bomb threat warning (hoax) and again

beginning spring 2020 to respond to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. While spring 2016 IC utilization was brief in length, the College's response to COVID-19 kept the IC structure active for 18 months, during which the IC team effectively supported the health & safety needs of students & employees alike, delicately balanced federal and State directives/mandates against constituent & customer service needs, and successfully maintained operational efficiency and consistency, student engagement and satisfaction, and academic outcomes. The IC structure has been successful as it kept illness rates low and retention high during an unsettled period of national student enrollment. The IC structure was deactivated at the onset of fall 2021, as pandemic management returned to the College's traditional governance hierarchy.

Internal and external constituent groups were involved in developing the 2014 updated Facilities Master Plan. A steering committee of campus representatives guided the external planning team led by Point Architects and A&E Architects of Billings, MT. The planning team held focus group sessions with employees, students, and community members.

4. NWC plans from a sound understanding of its current capacity while anticipating the impact of revenue fluctuations.

Historically, fiscal planning utilized an incremental base model supplemented by projected enrollment increases and one-time state revenue. During times of economic downturn, the planning methodologies were ineffective. Current fiscal planning is driven using current enrollment levels and state and local revenue projections. If revenue exceeds projections, those funds are prioritized for strategic initiatives and long-term campus needs. This new approach anticipates long-term and short-term fluctuations with less drastic impacts on the budget. To aid in continuous planning for revenue fluctuations and resource allocations, Institutional Effectiveness Committee is charged with the comprehensive review of all programs and services (see 5.C.2). During this process, they look at the costs associated with these programs, regulatory requirements, and the revenue generated or services required when looking at expansion opportunities or budgetary reductions.

To plan strategically for enrollment fluctuations, NWC implemented a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) planning process. In 2014, NWC contracted with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [SEM consultant](#) service to make recommendations to inform the ongoing [SEM planning process](#).

The President's staff monitors the fluctuation of revenue sources related to facilities planning and projects. Significant reductions in state appropriations and local levy tax have resulted in decreased funding for major maintenance and capital projects. Lower enrollment, new vendor agreements, and a lack of inflationary increases for multiple years have left auxiliaries with small margins. The prioritization of projects using the facilities master plan, supplemental deferred plans, the planning committee, and operational priorities are critical to ensure resources are used in the wisest manner possible (see 5.A.).

5. NWC's planning anticipates emerging factors such as globalization, demographic, and technological shifts. NWC's mission strategically includes "global society" in anticipation of emerging priorities. This commitment is demonstrated by a focus on diversity in the current general education requirements, international student programs to engage students in cultural awareness, and the implementation of virtual machine technology that allows access to the campus network worldwide.

NWC considers enrollment trends annually to identify emerging factors and opportunities for

planning and enrollment. For example, with the loss of college-funded scholarships for athletics and the pandemic closing of international borders, NWC experienced a 70% loss in out-of-state enrollment. Before the pandemic, the College had noticed an increasing struggle to enroll international students due to rising costs. Domestic students who qualified as out-of-state students were not attending. The College identified these trends and implemented the "Welcome to Wyoming" Scholarship (discount). This scholarship closely aligns out-of-state tuition rates to regional WICHE rates. Within four months, the College has regained its pre-pandemic enrollment levels, with Athletics and the International Program serving as the beta group for Fall 2022. Further enrollment and marketing efforts are planned. These trends were also included in developing the strategic enrollment management plan (see 5.C.4).

As part of NWC's enrollment, admissions, and academic programming efforts, the College has seen a shift in the student demographics from traditional-aged students to adult learners. As part of its work on educational program development and the creation of the Bachelor of Applied Science in Professional Studies, the College sent out a survey to gauge potential interest. This [survey](#) showed a strong interest in a BAS program and other academic programs designed for adult learners with adult schedules. The College responded with several non-credit and credit programs in allied health, career and technical, and the BAS programs.

NWC is committed to adequate technology and reaffirmed that commitment during the 2017, 2020, and 2022 budget development cycles with no reductions made to technology budgets. This level of technology served the College well during the pandemic. All classes switched to online instruction seamlessly, and most faculty were already trained in online delivery. Instructional and campus technology staff are focused on planning and best practices by the Mission Statement and Vision 2020 (see 3.D.4. and 5.A.).

One of the emerging factors colleges faces is emergency response planning. As mentioned in 5.C.3, NWC developed an Emergency Operations Plan, distributed the Emergency Response Guide to all employees, and displayed it in all classrooms and meeting areas.

These efforts demonstrate that NWC anticipates and responds to various factors in institutional planning.

6. Throughout this Assurance Argument, reports and information are referenced that demonstrate that Northwest College develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations. Highlights are described below.

Strategic Plan and Key Performance Indicators

All strategic and operational goals are guided by NWC's strategic vision, Vision 2020 (see 1.A.). Following the development of Vision 2020, key performance indicators (KPIs) were developed for each element. The KPIs are measured, documented, reviewed, and published annually.

In 2019 the administration set out to develop Vision 2025 for the College. Input sessions were held with faculty, staff, students, and community members. A draft featuring four key focus areas was created. The College had just completed its second round of budget reductions, including service level changes and a reduction in force. Close to fifty positions had been lost due to budget reductions, as well as millions in operations over the past four years. The President and Vice Presidents discussed the need for a deeper investment in transformational work that could translate into stability and perhaps growth for the College. The College contracted CampusWorks to assist with this effort

in February 2020.

The start of the pandemic in March of 2020 saw the campus shift focus and resources to serve students, sustain health, and retain campus operations. Even with the pandemic in full motion, the College was able to kick off Phase 1 - Collective Visioning from July to October 2020. In October 2020, President Hicswa announced her departure, and VPASF Watson was named Interim President in November. The announcement of lost revenue at State and local levels by the Governor resulted in another budget reduction for fiscal 2022. In April 2021, the BOT approved its third round of budget reductions. During the winter and spring of 2020-2021, Interim Watson continued the transformational work with Phase 2 – External & Internal Scanning. The final Phase 3 – Transformational Planning was worked on from August 2021- March 2022. Throughout the process, data and evidence were collected to support the transformational effort's ideas.

On March 14, The Board of Trustees approved the Northwest College Transformation Change memo. In it, the Board moved to support the transformational vision of "Distinction and destination of place." A second motion supported the development of a ten-year strategic plan, with measurable goals to be completed in the fall of 2022.

President's Operational Plan

The Board of Trustees (BOT) develops and sets annual Board and President priorities ([2023](#)) relating to the Mission and Vision. Once the BOT has set the priorities, the President meets with President's Staff to develop operational goals for the year. The President's Operational Plan guides operations for all divisions. Throughout the year, the President and Vice President's conduct periodic reviews of the Operational Plan to monitor progress ([FY22](#), [FY21](#), [FY20](#), [FY19](#), [FY18](#)).

Facilities Master Plan

NWC updated the [Facilities Master Plan](#) in 2014, which guides improvements and new buildings across campus (see 2.C., 5.A.). The College provides a monthly [facilities worksheet](#) to the Board with updates relating to significant maintenance, master plan, or general plant repairs on campus. The Facilities Master Plan is scheduled to be updated in fall 2022.

Institutional Profile

Annually, the Office of Institutional Research compiles the Institutional Profile, which includes college information, including the mission, enrollment, student costs, scholarships, employee counts, library resources, budget, and endowment funds. The Institutional Profile is published on the NWC website.

Program Reports

Academic programs are in a 5-year rotation for a program review. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) reviews academic program reviews, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and Dean of Student Learning provide feedback on the educational programs. IEC began a process to regularly review non-academic program reports in 2017 (see 4.A.,3.C.).

Annually, each academic program submits a Student Learning Outcome Report to the Central Assessment Team (CAT), which reviews scores with a rubric, and provides feedback to the program (see 4.A., 4.B.).

In 2016, the VPAA and the Academic Advisory Council developed academic program discontinuation criteria to address budget shortfalls. Academic program discontinuation criteria have been for each budget reduction cycle in 2017, 2020, and 2022. Programs were considered for discontinuation based on the following criteria:

- Cost versus Revenue
- Number of program majors - trend
- Job prospects
- Other funding sources
- Community Keystone

Student and Employee Feedback

NWC participates in the [Community College Survey of Student Engagement](#) to document student perception of performance in operations. NWC administers the [PACE Climate Survey](#) for Community Colleges to gather employee feedback. NWC uses survey results to develop and document evidence of performance in operations.

NWC learns from its experiences and strives to improve all aspects of its operations continuously, as evidenced in the following examples:

- Revision of the Mission Statement (see 1.A.)
- Development of the strategic vision - Vision 2020 and Key Performance Indicators (see 1.A.)
- President's Operational Plan Status Report
- Facilities Project Report
- Emergency Plan Implementation
- Budget planning processes (see 5.A., 5.C.)
- Course Scheduling Committee
- Ongoing Retention Efforts (see 4.C.)
- Improvement based on Instructional Assessment (see 4.B.)
- Faculty hiring decisions based on Program Reports (see 3.C.)

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) is charged with ongoing efforts in institutional improvement. The IEC was [formed](#) in 2009 to:

- Assess the quality of currently available data and the need for additional data
- Provide data from across the campus for planning and decision making
- Capitalize on multiple college perspectives to analyze available data
- Provide institutional effectiveness information to NWC, community, and other constituencies.

The IEC's tasks have evolved to fit NWC's needs. Initial responsibilities included developing and monitoring the measurements for the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan Tracking Report. In 2014, IEC explored the ideal enrollment size for NWC. In 2016, IEC began reviewing and providing feedback on academic program reviews. In 2017, President Hicswa [charged](#) the IEC with overseeing the comprehensive review of all programs and services college-wide, and the IEC added a process for non-academic program reviews.

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- HLC_2022_Strategic_Enrollment_Management_consultant report_2015
- HLC_2022_Student_Center Level 3 Update_April 2022 Final
- HLC_2022_Support Services Program Review Form with rubric
- HLC_2022_vision_2020
- HLC_2022_Vision_2020_KPI_2016_Final

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Summary

Northwest College (NWC) fulfills Criterion Five by ensuring its resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to its future challenges and opportunities.

NWC has responded to enrollment and funding challenges in line with the [Mission Statement](#) and [Vision 2020](#). Those responses include improved planning in assessment, project development, and budgeting. A new President and many new faculty, staff, and administrators have created opportunities for fresh ideas and teamwork. Transformational work and an upcoming strategic plan will continue to align resources and people with the mission.

NWC is financially sound and has made budget adjustments in response to fluctuating resources. NWC has low debt obligations, access to state funding for deferred maintenance, and a Foundation with \$50 million in assets. These resources support efforts to improve the campus and move past Vision 2020 to a new Vision 2030. Participatory budget planning and expanded program reviews will assist with the future allocation of resources.

Future Plans

NWC will continue its oversight and management of resources, structures, processes, and planning to maintain its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

NWC will:

- Complete the development of Vision 2030
- Complete the construction of a new Student Center and Soccer facility
- Continue review and outcome assessment for academic and non-academic areas. Evaluate assessment documents for relevance to funding, enrollment, economic and career viability
- Expand Strategic Enrollment efforts and planning, which includes retention and completion
- Integrate marketing and communication efforts with the enrollment and admissions process
- Utilize building and grounds recommendation reports to prioritize major maintenance projects
- Sustain capital project development and funding efforts as guided by the campus master plan and mission. Projects may include the visual and performing arts, Orendorff capital renewal, residence hall renovations, and a career and technical center.
- Continue to monitor employee compensation and advocate for state funding for sustainable wages. Re-evaluate positions and banding structure as needed to address the marketability of positions within the higher education and private industry.

While there is always work to be accomplished, NWC has addressed opportunities and economic challenges to respond to the needs of its students in a global society.

Sources

- HLC_2022_Mission_Statement_Graphics
- HLC_2022_Vision 2020 KPI Memo and KPIs