

Assurance Argument
Northwest College - WY

8/14/2017

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 broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

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. 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. 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 67 AA, AS or AAS degree programs and 26 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. Based upon Fall 2016 enrollment data as noted in NWC's [Institutional Profile](#), of the 1,715 students enrolled, 615 chose to live on campus with 553 in residence halls and 62 in apartments. Student services include residence life programming, a full-service bookstore, the Johnson Fitness Center, Student Health Service, disability 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 2016 Wyoming Community College Commission \(WCCC\) data](#), 68% of NWC’s students were in transfer programs, the highest percentage in the state, and 21% were in occupational programs. Seventy-eight percent of students were from Wyoming, 18%

from other states, and 4% from other countries.

3. President Hicswa and the President's Advisory Council have aligned planning and budgeting with the Mission (see 5.C.1).

Sources

- Academic_Programs_List
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- BOT_Minutes_Jan112016 (page number 2)
- BOT_Minutes_March142016
- College Council_Minutes_March12016
- College Council_Minutes_March12016 (page number 2)
- Curriculum_Comm_Minutes_Feb232016
- Institutional Priorities Inventory questions_FINAL
- Institutional Priorities Inventory_Summary_statistics
- Institutional_Profile_2017
- Mission Statement_2016
- Mission Statement_Community Survey_Public Meeting_Results_Cloud
- Mission Statement_Employee Submissions_April 2015
- Mission Statement_Student Survey_Results_Feb32016
- WYCCC_Fall2016_enrollment_report

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of 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 document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

1. 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 five-year strategic vision, [Vision 2020](#). 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 Fact Card](#) – Mailed annually with a letter from the President to more than 1,200 external stakeholders and put in all employee and Student Senate campus mailboxes
- [Institutional Profile](#) – A component of the online Annual Report
- [Annual Report](#) – Promoted via paid newspaper ads in NWC's service area, news releases, and postcards to external stakeholders and employees; remains in place for a full fiscal year before the next version is published
- [BOT 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.
- [BOT agendas](#) – Printed at the bottom of every BOT meeting agenda

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.

Sources

- Annual_Report_Overview_Website_2016-2017
- Board of Trustees_Agenda_June 2017
- Board of Trustees_List_Website
- BOT_Minutes_March142016
- BOT_Minutes_March142016 (page number 3)
- Institutional_Fact_Card_2017
- Institutional_Profile_2017
- Mission Statement_2016
- Mission_Statement_Graphics
- Mission_wall_art_photo
- Vision_2020_KPI_2016_Final

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

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, actively [recruits](#) diverse students both domestically and internationally, offers education abroad opportunities, and promotes cultural awareness through on campus and community programming.

The OIP recruits international and multicultural students and has international recruitment contracts with agencies in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and in the US. The OIP advertises and markets globally to promote NWC. For the last two years, [international enrollment](#) has averaged 65 students each semester as demonstrated in the table below.

| Enrollment Period | Spring 2015 | Fall 2015 | Spring 2016 | Fall 2016 | Spring 2017 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of International Students | 68 | 58 | 56 | 74 | 70 |
| Number of Countries Represented | 34 | 23 | 23 | 26 | 25 |
| Countries with Highest Number | South Korea, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan | Japan, UK, Canada, Vietnam | Canada, Japan, UK, Vietnam | Japan, UK, Vietnam | Japan, UK, China, Canada |

The OIP offers support services for international and multicultural students including academic, cultural and social, and immigration advising. Student services across campus contribute to the success of students including counseling, library, disability support, tutoring, and advising.

2. The [diversity](#) of the NWC student population mirrors the diversity of the NWC service area.

NWC integrates multicultural and international students into the campus community through academic and student life activities including resident life programs and the Multicultural Club (MC). The MC, one of the largest student clubs, meets on a weekly basis. The club's activities include trips to surrounding areas such as Billings, Thermopolis, Yellowstone National Park, Salt Lake City,

Denver, Red Lodge, Heart Mountain, Sleeping Giant, and Gallagher's Corn Maze. Activities include swimming, bowling, movie nights, game nights, karaoke, and campus and local sporting events. The MC and OIP collaborate with the Native Ways Club, Campus Ventures, Spanish Club, and the Gay Straight Alliance. These clubs use the Intercultural House and the Intercultural Program office for meetings, programs, and events.

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 Chilean Night, Vietnamese Night, and Pakistani 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. Multicultural students cook and serve ethnic meals in the dining hall during lunch hours once a week. Lunches are accompanied by multimedia presentations. OIP organizes the [annual Multicultural Showcase](#) which usually attracts 300-500 people from around the area. NWC celebrates International Education Week, Hispanic Heritage Month, African-American History Month and Women's History Month with weekly programming. Programs are open to the public and attract students, faculty and staff, and community members.

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 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.

NWC promotes international learning opportunities for its students, faculty, and staff. NWC is a member of the College Consortium for International Studies, which grants access to more than 90 education abroad programs. NWC has formed international partnerships with institutions in Scotland and Nepal for study abroad and faculty exchange opportunities. Since the formation of these two partnerships, no students or faculty have engaged in a study abroad or faculty exchange. Regardless, NWC values these partnerships because they offer study abroad and faculty exchange opportunities. 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.

OIP staff are members of the National Association of International Educators. NWC works with EducationUSA, American Councils, the Year of Exchange in America for Russians program, BECAS Chile (a scholarship program through the Chilean Ministry of Education), the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange program, and the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan.

OIP staff work to recruit and retain Native American students and have attended several conferences and recruiting fairs, including the Wyoming Native American Education Conference and the 2016 College & Career Readiness Summit. The OIP collaborates with the curator of the Plains Indian Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West on Native American programming. NWC celebrates

Native American Heritage Month on campus through a variety of programs, including a tipi raising and a fry bread demonstration. The Native Ways Club plans activities such as taco and fry bread sales, dream catcher nights, beading/choker nights, arrowhead and arrow crafting events, and the annual [Buffalo Feast](#).

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

Sources

- Board of Trustees_Board Book_July 2017
- Board of Trustees_Board Book_July 2017 (page number 53)
- Course_syllabi_universal_guidelines_2017
- Diversity Awareness Committee_Website
- Intercultural Programs_Events Data_2014-2017
- Intercultural Programs_Strategic Plan_2012-2017
- Intercultural Programs_Strategic Plan_2012-2017 (page number 3)
- Multicultural Showcase_News_March 2017
- Native Ways_Buffalo Feast_2016
- Student Demographics_Service Area Comparison_2016

1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
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 identified external constituencies and communities of interest 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, [Mickelson Field Station](#), 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., First-year Seminar, Photo Theme Seminar, Art Department's Empty Bowls event, Student Senate, and athletics teams.
- [Community survey results](#) help NWC better understand public attitudes, perceptions, and

desired courses and services.

- 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 and archives its [Rules and Regulations](#) 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 district's other two larger 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 Chapter V of the BOT's [Rules and Regulations](#), a document that is reviewed annually by the BOT.
- A [Summer 2012 decision](#) to engage in a creative funding partnership to cover approximately 38% of a new \$13.1 million instructional building reflected the BOT's awareness of and sensitivity to the depressed economy's impact on district residents.

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:

- Institutional Fact Cards are mailed annually to hundreds of [external stakeholders](#).
- 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.
- [Annual Reports](#) are published online and promoted via newspaper advertisements in the service

area and direct-mailed postcards to hundreds of external stakeholders. Content is organized according to strategic priorities in Vision 2020.

- [Legislative Relations Plans](#) are specific to each session of the Wyoming State Legislature and include several initiatives.
- Monthly e-newsletters are sent by the President to service area legislators to emphasize major developments and campus accomplishments.
- The President and Vice President for College Relations (VPCR) conduct 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 and VPCR attend portions of legislative sessions.
- The President maintains a [From the President](#) blog to communicate and interact with members of the public and employees.
- Regular introductions of selected NWC employees and students are made to the general public via pre-arranged radio talk show programs.
- [Crisis communication](#), part of the [Emergency Operations Plan](#), is devoted to informing internal and external stakeholders about crises and other emergency situations.

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

- Concurrent and dual enrollment programs (see 3.A.)
- [Center for Training and Development](#)
- [Adult Education](#)
- Cultural events, e.g., [Art](#), [Music](#)

Sources

- [Adult Education_Website](#)
- [Annual_Report_Overview_Website_2016-2017](#)
- [Board of Trustees_Rules_revised_May 2017](#)
- [Board of Trustees_Rules_revised_May 2017 \(page number 9\)](#)
- [Board of Trustees_Minutes_Archive](#)
- [BOT_Minutes_Aug132012](#)
- [BOT_Minutes_Aug132012 \(page number 2\)](#)
- [BOT_news release_cody meeting_Mar2017](#)
- [BOT_news release_meeteetse meeting_Aug2016](#)
- [Calendar_of_Events_website](#)
- [Center for Training Development_Website](#)
- [Community Survey Summary_May 2014](#)
- [Emerg_Operations_Plan_Final_2015](#)
- [Emerg_Operations_Plan_Final_2015 \(page number 127\)](#)
- [External_stakeholders_list_2017](#)
- [Facilities_master_plan_Public meeting invitation](#)
- [Facilities_Public_Use_2015-2016](#)
- [Financial_Aid_Disclosures_Student_Consumer_Information_2017](#)
- [Financial_Aid_Disclosures_Student_Consumer_Information_2017 \(page number 13\)](#)
- [Gallery_Events_2016-2017](#)
- [Legislative_Relations_Plan_Session_2017](#)
- [Mickelson_Field_Station_use_2015-2016](#)
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- Mission Statement_2016
- Music_Events_Calendar
- News_desk
- Presidents_blog
- Vision_2020_KPI_2016_Final
- Vision_2020_KPI_2016_Final (page number 3)
- WYCCC_partnership_report.2016

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, will be sustained and enhanced.

Sources

- Criterion 1_Workshop Comments
- Mission Statement_2016
- Vision_2020_KPI_2016_Final

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 operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Argument

Northwest College (NWC) ensures integrity in its operations through established policies and procedures. NWC's policies outline requirements not only for fair and ethical behavior but also the integrity of operations in all areas. The Board of Trustees (BOT) utilizes their recently revised, [Rules and Regulations](#) to guide their operation.

In 2015, President Hicswa initiated a review of existing policies and procedures to create a comprehensive policy manual. This ongoing process 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. The Employment Handbook, Section [1.1.1](#). and [3.1.1](#)., define the process by which new policies may be brought forward or existing policies revised.

The integrity of financial operations is assured 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 complete the A-133 federal compliance audit for all federal programs operating on campus which includes 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 by a managing partner with 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" as well as Title 16, Chapter 4 cited 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](#)
- [Student Handbook - Academic Code of Conduct](#) (see 2.E.)
- Employment Handbook - [Statement of Ethics](#)
- [Course Syllabus Guidelines](#)

The Office of Academic Affairs monitors adherence to these policies and procedures as it relates to the ongoing assessment of student learning and advising, student course evaluations and 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, 4). The Student Handbook contains the academic code of conduct to prevent violations such as plagiarism. Compliance with federal privacy and FERPA regulations ensure 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 documents:

- Employment Handbook - [Faculty employment policies](#)
- Employment Handbook - [Staff employment policies](#)
- Employment Handbook - [All employee policies](#)

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. [Appeal and grievance policies](#) are in place to assure fairness.

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

- [Bookstore](#)
- [Residential Life](#)
- [CLERY/Crime report](#) (Annual Security and Fire Update)
- [Disability support services](#)
- [FERPA policy](#)
- [Financial Aid policies](#)
- [Information Technology](#)
- [Student Handbook - General Code of Conduct](#) (see 2.E.)
- [Student Athlete Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Handbook](#)
- [Title IX](#)
- [Children's Learning and Care Center](#)

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 a 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. No additional correspondence has been received from the Office of Civil Rights.

On July 26, 2017, NWC received written a 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 is in the process of collecting and submitting requested information to the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights.

In 2016-2017, two faculty members filed grievances against the Vice President for Academic Affairs in response to the requirement to complete graduate work to comply with Higher Learning Commission's expected practice for faculty credentials. One of the grievances became moot when a program was discontinued resulting in the elimination of the faculty position. The second grievance was adjudicated through [the formal grievance process](#) as described in the all employee policies. This grievance ended in Step C of the process when the Dispute Resolution Officer (DRO) determined that the requirement to complete graduate study was an action that did not qualify for grievance under NWC policy. The grievant appealed the decision of the DRO to the President, who concurred with the decision. Finally, the grievant appealed the decision of the DRO to the BOT's Policy Committee, who concurred with the decision of the DRO.

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

Sources

- Athlete_Code of Conduct
- Board of Trustees_Rules_revised_May 2017
- Bookstore_Website
- Budget_2017_final
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- Childcare Center_Inspection_License_2016
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- Course_syllabi_guidelines_2017
- Disability Support Services_compliance_website
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 10)
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 21)
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 106)
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 146)
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 187)
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 188)
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- Sexual Misconduct Policy_revised_Mar132017

- Student Handbook_Academic Code of Conduct_website
- Student Handbook_General Code of Conduct_website
- Title IX Claim_July222016
- Title IX Claim_July262017

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Argument

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/faculty/employee handbooks, 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).

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.

NWC's [catalog](#) is available on the college website. Academic program pages detail program requirements. [Assessment](#) information, including learning outcomes for general education and programs, is provided via the NWC website.

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.

The [Advising Center](#) (AC) communicates with the public in a variety of ways. The AC maintains several public Facebook pages. The main AC page is where Peer Mentors publish information about important college dates and deadlines (92 posts were made during the 2015-2016 academic year with 193 people following the page). The Area Jobs and Internship page is where local employment opportunities are published at the request of businesses and individuals looking to hire NWC students and graduates; this page is open for anyone in the area to use (67 posts were made during the 2015-2016 academic year with 194 people following the page). The Advising Coordinator organizes informational events for students, transfer advising sessions with transfer institutions, and a career prep workshop series.

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.

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](#).

Sources

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- Board of Trustees_List_Website
- Board of Trustees_Minutes_Archive
- Costs & Deadlines __ Admissions __ website
- Financial Aid_Annual Presentations

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

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

The BOT's Rules and Regulations operationalize 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." (Chapter I, Section 5)
- "The objective of the Northwest College Board of Trustees shall be to assure that the College accomplishes its vision and mission." (Chapter I, Section 6)
- "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." (Chapter I, Section 7)
- "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 under obligation to honor the decision of the majority." (Chapter II, Section 7)

Trustees are bound by a BOT [Code of Ethics](#) Chapter IV in its Rules and Regulations, which specifies the following BOT responsibilities.

- "...evaluate the educational program of the community college as it is to plan for the business of college operation...."
- "...establish the policies by which the community college is to be administered...."

Each of the provisions mentioned above in the BOT Rules and Regulations is reviewed annually and during new Trustee training sessions.

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 launching construction of an instructional building, which, at the time, was the number one unmet need in the prior Facilities Master Plan (August 13, 2012)
- BOT policy revisions: Approved Employment Handbook policy revisions (August 11, 2014; November 9, 2015; and December 14, 2015)
- Operational Plan: Reviewed the President's FY16 Operational Plan (October 5, 2015) and the previous year
- Credit transfer: Reviewed a Transfer Articulation Scorecard noting progress made on various program articulation agreements with the University of Wyoming (June 8, 2015)
- Student retention: Reviewed a Persistence and Graduation Rates/Performance Indicators Report (March 9, 2015)
- Controversial legislative bill: Took a position on a proposed legislative bill that would have allowed concealed carry of weapons on campus (February 6, 2015)
- Outcomes assessment: Received a briefing on how NWC is tying learning assessment to planning and using assessment data to improve instruction (November 9, 2015)
- Employee satisfaction: Reviewed a report on results of NWC's participation in The Great Colleges to Work For survey (November 10, 2014)
- Student survey: Reviewed a report on results of the NWC's participation in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (December 14, 2015)
- Student success: Reviewed a report on pass rates for development courses (June 2, 2014)
- Student completion: Approved a Resolution on Complete College America (December 9, 2013)
- Student enrollment: Reviewed reports on student enrollment (October 2014 and October 2015)
- Uncollected debt: Heard President's update on work of an Uncollected Debt Task Force impaneled the prior summer (November 11, 2013)

2. 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 [Facilities Master Plan](#) development and specific renovation projects.
- Demonstrating a commitment to regular environmental scanning, trustees have reviewed results of annual [community surveys](#).
- Before BOT meetings, all [meeting materials](#) are electronically available to employees via email. Reviewers will have access to all "board books" during the site visit.
- BOT meeting agenda materials include reports from constituent group presidents.
- The BOT participates in a liaison program with the Alumni Association Board of Directors in which individuals from each board attend each other's meetings to foster effective communications between the two boards.

3. Trustees avoid conflicts of interest, a commitment supported by the following series of statements

in the BOT's Rules and Regulations document, 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 compensation or remuneration or derive any profit or gain by reason of Board membership or by reason of services to the College District."
- The BOT's Rules and Regulations specify the following responsibilities for its members.
 - "...base my personal decision upon all available facts in each situation; vote my honest conviction in every case, unswayed by partisan bias of any kind...."
 - "...resist every temptation and outside pressure to use my position as a community college board member to benefit myself or any other individual or agency apart from the total interest of the community college district...."
 - Chapter 4 outlines [procedures and sanctions for violation](#).
- In 2014, the BOT President initiated BOT-approved protocols for how trustees respond to [internal and external input/concerns](#).

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 maintains 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.

4. BOT delegates the day-to-day management 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 her multi-year employment contract. President Hicswa and the BOT have moved toward implementation of 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

- Board of Trustees_Rules_revised_May 2017
- Board of Trustees_Rules_revised_May 2017 (page number 7)
- Board of Trustees_Rules_revised_May 2017 (page number 8)
- Board of Trustees_Rules_revised_May 2017 (page number 17)
- Board of Trustees_Board Book_June 2017
- Board of Trustees_Ethics_Responsibilities_Conflict of Interest_Forms
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- Facilities_master_plan_Public meeting invitation
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- Foundation_College_Agreement_Services_2016
- Foundation_Mission_website
- Foundation_Policies_Fundraising_Gifts_July2016
- Organizational Charts_2017-2018
- Shared_Governance_Decision-making_Guide
- WY_Statutes_Title21_Chapter 18_Section 303 (2016)_BOT_powers

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

Northwest College (NWC) affirms academic freedom as a core value. [Faculty Employment Policy \(FEP\) 1.6](#) addresses Rights and Privileges. In accordance with 1.6.1 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.

[FEP 1.5.1](#) 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 ([FEP App. E](#)) and the Committee for Faculty Development and Morale ([1.6.3](#)).

NWC is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth for students. As stated in the [Student Handbook](#), 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 news outlet online Northwest Trail - the status of which is uncertain following the recent elimination of the Journalism program - and student creative magazine [Visual, Verbalize, Vocalize](#)) provide students with avenues of student free expression.

Sources

- Employment Handbook 2016-2017
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 21)
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 22)
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 25)
- Employment Handbook 2016-2017 (page number 75)
- Student_Senate_Website
- Visualize_Verbalize_Description_Website

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and 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 review 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. The IRC reviews all research proposals involving human subjects from students, faculty, and staff and outside entities wishing to conduct research at NWC. 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.

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. 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. After approval in the Fall of 2016, 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 recent [Library Instruction Assessment Report](#) examined the effect of some of the resources listed above on information literacy competency at NWC from 2012-2017.

3. 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 reported 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 NWC Academic Dishonesty policy was [revised](#) in Spring 2017 (effective beginning Fall 2017).

Faculty members use Turnitin, a web-based plagiarism checker. 246 assignments were assigned through the Turnitin system by faculty during the 2016-2017 Academic Year. 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.

Sources

- Citation guides_library_Website
- Course_syllabi_guidelines_2017
- General Education Outcomes_prior to 2016
- General Education_Outcomes_Fall 2017
- Institutional Review Committee_documents
- Library Instruction Assessment Report_2012-2017_final
- Student Handbook_academic dishonesty hearing
- Student Handbook_Academic Code of Conduct_website
- Student Handbook_Academic Dishonesty Policy Changes
- Student Handbook_General Code of Conduct_website

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 integrity of conduct in its operations. Employees and students are expected to act with integrity, and these requirements are clearly communicated.

Employee Feedback on Criterion Two

The Assurance Argument Team held informational workshops on Criterion Two on Feb. 17th and 23rd, 2017. At those workshops, employees were asked to provide [evidence statements](#) about the sub-components of this criterion.

Future Plans

NWC will continue to operate within its shared governance structure to operate with integrity. NWC is developing a comprehensive policy manual. The process of creating the manual will facilitate a policy review to determine gaps, deficiencies, and areas for improvement, e.g. faculty qualifications, Title IX procedures, budget processes. The resulting manual will strengthen integrity in ethical operation.

Sources

- Criterion 2_Workshop Comments

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for 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 submit Program Review Self Studies to the Office of Academic Affairs on a [5-year rotation](#) cycle. Each [Program Review Self-Study](#) includes sections describing how the program determines currency in curriculum and course content. 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 (see 4.A.5.).

- Articulation and [Transfer Agreements](#). As a result of annual articulation summits, 93 percent of 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 (see 4.A.4.), 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. At the program level, 42 percent of transfer programs have completed “2+2” articulation agreements with related programs at the University of Wyoming. These agreements 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 27 percent of our graduates who transfer to these and other 4-year institutions (most commonly Montana State University, University of Montana, 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 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 associate degrees have program-level learning outcomes that align with General Education outcomes. With guidance from the Central Assessment Team (CAT), programs revised their learning outcomes between 2014 and 2016 (see 4.B.) to improve measurability and more accurately reflect faculty expectations for student learning.

3. NWC provides consistent quality of programming across a variety of delivery formats (each with the percentage of courses offered from Spring 2012 through Spring 2017 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) | 6813 | 82 |
| Online class sections (delivered using the Moodle Learning Management System) | 829 | 10 |
| Hybrid class sections (structured around both face-to-face and online instruction) | 204 | 2 |
| Concurrent enrollment (classes taught at the high school by high school faculty approved as NWC adjuncts) | 308 | 4 |
| Web/Video Conference (classes in which some or all students connect to a face-to-face class in real-time via web camera) | 121 | 1 |
| Dual enrollment (classes taught in any modality by NWC faculty, for which high school students may receive both high school and NWC credit) | N/A | N/A |
| TOTAL Class Sections 2012-2017 | 8275 | 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. Online classes are reviewed by the Instructional Technology Coordinator (proper use of the LMS), Division Chair (content) before the first delivery of the course, and by the Dean of Student Learning for all of the above. Students evaluate these classes every semester. NWC has recently purchased and plans to implement software for enhanced quality control of online instruction.

Concurrent enrollment classes, those taught at the high school by high school faculty approved as

adjuncts for NWC, 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](#), before the first time they teach, 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 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 it is taught.
- The Academic Affairs Office monitors 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

- Adjunct Faculty_Concurrent_Instructor Training_Course
- Art_Graphic Design_Nursing_Accreditation_website_2017
- Dual_Credit_Concurrent_Enrollment_Report_BOT_2017
- Program Review Template 2016-17
- Program_Review_Schedule_12-13 to 18-19
- Transfer Agreements_Advising Center_Website
- UWY_Transfer Catalog_NWC Courses

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. 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. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Argument

1. Based on a charge by the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), the Curriculum Committee (CC) began [revising the general education categories and outcomes](#) in Fall 2015 and [proposed those categories, presented them to the faculty for input](#) and [established credit hour requirements](#) for each category to standardize them across AA and AS degrees in Spring 2016. The final General Education Categories, Outcomes and requirements were [approved by the Curriculum Committee in Fall 2016](#). The new General Education requirements take effect for [AA and AS programs in Fall 2017 with implementation in AAS programs in Fall 2018](#).

The General Education Outcomes support Northwest College's (NWC) [mission](#). As the above website indicates, the "US & Wyoming Government" requirement is mandated by the State of Wyoming. The CC adopted the "First-Year Seminar" requirement 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." General Education requirements "Communication" and "Creativity" 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. The "Human Condition" requirement 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. The General Education categories are broad in nature, including skills commonly associated with STEM classes, Humanities classes, 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. Specifically, the

purpose of general education is laid out in the [NWC Philosophy of General Education Statement](#) available publicly on the Office of Academic Affairs web page. The rationale for [general education content areas](#) and learning outcomes are published at the same location and included in the college [catalog](#).

The General Education categories and outcomes are based on the NWC Philosophy of General Education Statement and represent the broad knowledge, intellectual concepts, and skills and attitudes that NWC believes every college-educated person should possess. In developing these categories, the [CC surveyed comparator institutions](#) to ensure that NWC is consistent with national priorities.

3. The recently adopted General Education will require all students, regardless of program, to complete coursework in the First Year Seminar (FYS), Communication (COM), Quantitative Reasoning (QR), Physical and Natural Sciences (PNS), and Creativity (CR).

The categories, what they examine, the criteria for the NWC Curriculum Committee to approve the course to meet that requirement, and the academic areas represented in those [approved courses](#) are detailed in the following table:

| Category | Area of Examination | Criteria |
|----------|--|--|
| FYS | First Year Seminar courses, as part of NWC's First Year Experience program, are dedicated to successful student transition to college. First Year Seminars pave the way for college success through connecting students to campus areas and programs, providing academic advising, and providing peer mentoring and/or success coaching. These courses empower students to succeed and help solve academic problems. | <p>Courses must meet all six outcomes listed below.</p> <p>(Prepare students to:)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take responsibility for their own education. 2. Access and utilize campus student resources. 3. Make use of a variety of computer programs and technology available to students for use. 4. Develop both an academic plan and a career plan. 5. Begin to develop a social connection with the |

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| | | <p>institution.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Access and utilize a variety of online databases and academic information resources for their research needs. |
| | | <p>Courses must meet all five outcomes listed below.</p> <p>(Prepare students to:)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describe the different purposes of written, oral, and digital messages and employ appropriate organizational strategies, including developing a thesis statement and main ideas to meet the needs of specific audiences.2. Produce informative, analytical, and critical prose to respond to a |

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| <p>COM</p> | <p>Effective communication is fundamental to academic success and pursuit of a career. Communication foregrounds the importance of creating messages in English and other languages that are appropriate for a given audience while considering purpose, context, and ethical implications. The emphasis is on written communication and oral communication (audience analysis, composition revision, editing, and documentation, delivery). Providing a foundation for effective communication is information literacy (locating, evaluating, and analyzing materials) to determine sources' accuracy and appropriateness for a given rhetorical situation.</p> | <p>particular task or audience.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Deliver prepared presentations in a natural, confident, and conversational manner, displaying nonverbal communication that is consistent with and supportive of the oral message. 4. Use the accepted conventions including spelling, grammar, organizational structure, punctuation, delivery, and documentation in oral, written, and digital messages. 5. Find, analyze, evaluate, and document information appropriately using a variety of sources, including library resources. |
| | | <p>Courses must meet all four outcomes listed below.</p> <p>(Prepare students to:)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Isolate a pertinent |

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| <p>QR</p> | <p>Important questions can often be answered through the analysis of quantitative information. The ability to understand, use, and interpret quantitative arguments improves the efficiency of such analysis. Northwest College strives to develop a mathematical skill set that aids in the problem-solving process and guides one to a solution.</p> | <p>question or problem.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Use algebraic, numeric, or graphical representations to model the problem. 3. Identify appropriate problem-solving techniques. 4. Present convincing evidence to support a logical conclusion. |
| <p>PNS</p> | <p>Northwest College strives to develop a scientific skill set that assists in analyzing data to guide decisions and facilitates problem-solving in the physical and natural realms of the universe. Scientific reasoning includes the practice of recognizing a pertinent question or problem, identifying essential information to solve the question or problem, and using logical and valid reasoning to come to a solution.</p> | <p>Courses must meet all five outcomes listed below.</p> <p>(Prepare students to:)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the principles of the scientific method. 2. Formulate and test ideas through analysis and interpretation of data. 3. Use scientific and quantitative logic to examine contemporary problems. 4. Use quantitative data analysis as the basis for making critical judgments and drawing a |

| | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| | | <p>conclusion.</p> <p>5. Examine the impact of technology on science and society</p> |
| <p>CR</p> | <p>Creativity is a core human attribute that plays an important role in adaptability, interpersonal communication, inquiry, and innovation. The benefit of creativity to all disciplines is increased knowledge through broader understanding and the generation of new methods and ideas. Creativity can be realized through the processes of conceptions, research, problem-solving, understanding abstract/symbolic representations, and the act of production.</p> | <p>Courses must meet three of the five outcomes listed below.</p> <p>(Prepare students to:)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize existing ideas, images, or works in original ways. 2. Produce individual or collaborative forms of expression (e.g. oral, written, musical, or artistic). 3. Recognize and discuss abstract and symbolic representation. 4. Demonstrate resourcefulness in the process of problem-solving. 5. Develop relevant skills in the pursuit of aesthetic goals. |

4. The recently adopted General Education will 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. The framework of that discussion now includes a range of tools, methods, and vocabularies across

many disciplines that are legitimate and expected aspects of the manner in which an educated person contemplates these issues as a basis for evaluating individual and sociocultural structures and perspectives within and beyond one's own community. More than ever, diverse worldviews inform the educated person as she or he re-examines those structures and perspectives to understand the individual as a component in that context.

To be approved by the NWC CC to meet the HC General Education requirement, courses must demonstrate that they meet at least three of the five outcomes listed below:

1. Describe the concept of the individual as a factor in society.
2. Examine and explain differing human ideas, experiences, and perspectives and how those influence local and global societies, human behavior, and human social interactions.
3. Examine the role of diversity in human societies and how diversity impacts individual and global change.
4. Compare historical complexities and how those influence societies, politics, economics, social issues, and communications between groups of people.
5. Discuss how one's own perspective can be altered by exposure to worldviews.

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

5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge. These contributions are regularly reported in Academic Affairs monthly reports to President and included in the Board of Trustees meeting documents. The following are excerpts from recent reports:

March 2017

Art Department:

- “Graphic Design Student Work Retrospective: A Decade of Design 2006-2016,” an exhibit featuring the artwork of former Northwest College students, opened with an artists’ reception in Sinclair Gallery in Powell on Tuesday, March 14. The exhibit includes the typography, advertising, logos, posters and illustrations of dozens of students and alumni who studied under Renée Tafoya, an associate professor of art and graphic design who retired from NWC in December 2016.
- John Giarrizzo’s, Associate Professor of Art “Red Dessert/Highway #2” is one of the featured works at the 2016 Governor’s Capitol Art Exhibition at the Wyoming State Museum.

Photography Program

- Northwest College's 2017 Juried Student Photo Show opened Tuesday, March 21, with an artists' reception in the Northwest Gallery. The show is an annual event featuring work by students enrolled in the NWC Photographic Communications Program. It contains representative samples of the photography career options offered at Northwest, including photojournalism, portraiture, fashion, product and advertising photography.

Biology Department:

- Matt Osborne, Instructor of Biology, Michael Cuddy, Assistant Professor Chemistry and Jay Dickerson, Assistant Professor of Biology met with two science teachers from Powell Middle

School to discuss the details of Northwest College hosting the regional Middle School Science Fair in January 2018.

Music Department:

- With the generous assistance of the Student Senate, the Music Technology Endowed Fund and donations to the NWC Foundation's Friends of Northwest Music, the music department took 21 students and three faculty members on a bus trip to Las Vegas and Los Angeles over Spring Break. Participating students included the Studio Singers and students from the Music Technology program. The singers performed a number of informal "shared" performances with high schools and colleges along the way receiving lots of useful performance experience and feedback from gifted directors and musicians. Music Technology students attended the Cirque du Soleil Love show in Las Vegas with its awarding winning audio features as well as a studio visit to Audiograph International in Santa Monica. Additionally, Music Technology students visited the Grammy Museum, had a customized visit to pro audio retailer Vintage King and observed a recording session at Mira Costa College in Oceanside, CA. The highlight of the trip for all was an opportunity to witness the high-level technical achievements and performers at Disneyland. We wish to recognize Dennis Quillen, Maintenance Manager and his crew of capable drivers for providing professional and safe transport throughout our journey.
- The NWC Concert Band and Jazz Band I, under the direction of Craig Olson, Visiting Instructor of Music; Director of Bands, performed in concert for band and choir students, plus many others, at Thermopolis High School on Friday, March 24.

Nursing Department:

- The NWC Practical Nursing program has 100% pass rate for 2016.

April 2017

Art Department:

- Elaine DeBuhr and John Giarrizzo and 4 Art majors attended the WY State Art Symposium in Casper to recruit Wyoming high school art students. In addition, the art faculty attended the annual articulation meeting with the University of Wyoming.
- A gallery opening and artists' reception for the 2017 Juried Student Art and Design Exhibit was held Tuesday, April 18, from 7-8:30 p.m. in Northwest Gallery. The annual exhibit features student works from the 2016-17 academic year. Montana artist Tracy Linder selected the works to be included in this year's exhibit. Works include fine art and graphic design in a wide range of medium from graphite to plaster. The reception included the announcement of the NWC Board of Trustees purchase awards. These works became part of the college's permanent collection.

Communication Department:

- We performed Stone Soup for over 1600 students and adults last week from communities in our service area including Red Lodge, Bridger, Fromberg, Belfry, Powell, Cody, Worland, Burlington, and Thermopolis.
- The Forensics Team competed at the Phi Rho Pi Community College National Tournament in Tysons Corner, Virginia. There were 59 schools in attendance, and over 400 students competing. NWC earned a bronze award in debate sweepstakes in the Wheeler division, which is for schools with mid-sized entries. NWC students earning awards include Clinton Cordova

earning a bronze award in Dramatic Interpretation, Isaabella Munoz earned a bronze award in Program Oral Interpretation, Emily Myers earned a bronze in International Public Debate, and Connor Hunt earned a gold award in International Public Debate.

- Coach Jeannie Hunt received the Collie Taylor Fellowship Award for Coaches. She was nominated by the coaches in our region, and the Phi Rho Pi Awards Committee selected her as one of several recipients nationally.

To give you a sense of what these awards mean, there were 84 competitors in Dramatic Interpretation, and 24 students advance to elimination rounds. 14 earned a bronze award, 4 earned silver, and 5 earned gold. So, out of 84 competitors, Clinton was in the top 30%. In their respective events, Isaabella was in the top 40%, Emily was in the top 40%, and Connor was in the top 10% of competitors. The percentages vary a bit because of the number of students in a given event varies. Ultimately, though, they did very well.

Photography Program

- Anthony Polvere, Associate Professor of Photography accompanied 10 students to the 2017 annual convention of the MPPA (Montana Professional Photographers of America) in Billings, MT. They were joined by a number of former students and alumni in a weekend of print competition, marketing classes, and photography demos by regional and national professional photographers. Both students and alumni won numerous awards for their entries. This year's award winners were Jordan Eidem (3rd), Travis Russell (2nd), and Vicki Olson (1st) in the student category; and alumni Heather Clarkson won 1st Place in the "Out-of-State" competition, and Renae Roesch-Gordon was named one of Montana's Top Ten Photographers. Kudos to all the students who entered and attended.
- The Photo Theme Seminar Class has a small exhibit over at the First Bank of Wyoming for the month of April. The show is titled "Out of the Classroom" and shows some of the techniques that the class has been exploring that go above and beyond our normal curriculum projects in our department. From infrared photos, splash photography, light painting, and night time extended exposures, these images are unique and show us a world where time is distorted and surrealism takes over one's visual expectations.

Music Department:

- The Music Department hosted the 2nd Annual Boots & Bowties Music Gala at the Holiday Inn of Cody. With over 120 people in attendance, the event featured a three-course dinner, silent auction, and two hours of live music performed by NWC Student Ensembles, Combos, and Soloists.
- The NWC Studio Singers and Jazz Band I attended the UNC/Greeley Jazz Festival. The festival is the largest educational festival of its kind. Both ensembles received superior ratings and four students were awarded "Outstanding Musician" awards for solos performed with the groups.
- 'Explorations in Music Technology' a community outreach project, created by NWC Music Technology students, opened on April 12 at Plaza Diane. This interactive exhibit remains on display through May 5.

May 2017

Art Department:

- John Giarrizzo, Associate Professor of Art was the guest artist for the annual "Lunch with an Artist from the Permanent Collection" at the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings on May 18.

Many of the members of the YAM “maintain their memberships solely for this annual opportunity to meet an artist and hear firsthand about their processes and thoughts.”

Access to all Board Books will be provided.

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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 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; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. 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.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Argument

1. Northwest College (NWC) provides a sufficient number of faculty for classroom and non-classroom responsibilities. There are 17 Instructors, 35 Assistant Professors, 16 Associate Professors, and 4 Professors. 72 out of 168 (43%) faculty are full time whose primary responsibility is teaching followed by support for student learning such as advising, office hours, and assessment. A 12:1 faculty to student ratio ensures the opportunity for direct and quality interaction between faculty and students. The average length of service of full-time faculty is ten years providing consistency and continuity in academic offerings.

73 adjunct faculty and 23 concurrent instructors round out the total faculty numbers. Adjunct instructors, including adjuncts teaching concurrent courses, must meet the same credentialing requirements as full time. 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 faculty members are [hired through a process](#) that has significant faculty involvement.

Annual [Student Learning Outcomes](#) reports, the faculty position review process, and 5-year [Program Review](#) reports are methods used to review and assure that numbers of faculty are sufficient to meet current instructional needs of the institution. These reports require curriculum review, course enrollment data, and [faculty load analyses](#) 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.

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, and adjunct faculty are encouraged to participate in some areas of service.

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.

2. 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, [36% of faculty hold terminal degrees](#), compared to the national average of 19% for community colleges. In 2016, in response to HLC's revised guidelines for determining faculty qualifications, the Faculty Organization created a task force to determine the need to revise FEP 1.9.2. The task force developed a [draft proposal](#) which has not yet been formally submitted to the shared governance process.

[Adjunct instructors](#), including adjuncts teaching concurrent courses, must meet the same credentialing requirements as full-time faculty. The adjunct faculty approval process begins at the division level.

Divisions decide what other criteria must be met to qualify as an adjunct for the division's content areas. The Division Chair and appropriate faculty in the content area review the applicant's transcripts and resume. References are checked. Once the division has approved the adjunct, the file is forwarded to the Academic Affairs Office for final approval.

3. NWC instructors are evaluated by the policies set out in the Faculty Employment Policies section of the NWC Employment Handbook (EHFEP). NWC predicates faculty evaluation on the following premises: 1) 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; seven additional premises are listed after that. 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 as visiting instructors 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. Students evaluate the [adjunct's teaching effectiveness](#) in her/his first semester of teaching and every third time the course is taught by the same instructor. More frequent student evaluations and Division Chair class observations can be scheduled at the request of the adjunct, the division chair, or the Academic Affairs Office.

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, so this subject is 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 [written summary of their academic accomplishments](#) and activities in the areas of teaching effectiveness, academic service, and professional development at the conclusion of each academic year. This [End-of-Year 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.

4. 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. Also, AAS program professional advisory boards guide and recommend current professional trends to faculty. 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](#).

5. 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.

6. 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.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and 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 programs 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, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Argument

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

TRiO

NWC provides a [TRiO SSS program](#) to support students who are low-income, first-generation, and/or students with disabilities. TRiO averaged 107 student visits per week in 2016-2017. Many TRiO participants are non-traditional students and specific support for them as they juggle many life responsibilities is effective. Services provided include [\(2015-2016\)](#):

- Assistance applying for financial aid (75 students)
- Assistance applying to a 4-year institution (81 students)
- Financial Literacy Assistance (96 students)
- Transfer visits trips to 4-year institutions (17 students)
- TRiO specific tutoring/advising (147 students)

The TRiO program at NWC has demonstrated effectiveness including [\(2015-2016\)](#):

- 76% persistence rate among TRiO students
- 91% of TRiO students in good academic standing
- 41% of TRiO students earned either an Associate Degree or Certificate

Tutoring

See 3.D.2.

Advising

See 3.D.3.

Intercultural Affairs

See 1.C.

Library

See 3.D.4.

Disability Services

NWC offers a number of services to help 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.

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

NWC provides developmental classes in English and Math 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, there have been four sections of the co-requisite model offered (one per semester) and students have had more success in those courses (63% pass rate) than students enrolled in either the separate MATH 0920 courses (41% pass rate) or MATH 1000 courses (58% pass rate) over the same time four semesters. As a result, the Math Department is finalizing plans to eliminate separate Math 0920 offerings in favor of the co-requisite model and developing a pilot program for combining MATH 0930 – Intermediate Algebra (the third of three levels of developmental math) with MATH 1400 College Algebra (the second level of college math course).

NWC's Adult Education program provides math skills development to students who want to improve their preparation before beginning courses.

Another class that provides support and preparation for a successful college career is [First Year Seminar](#) (FYS). NWC offers twelve discipline-specific seminars and seven 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 almost any subject offered at NWC. NWC Tutoring makes use of Peer Tutors (averaging around 30 tutors employed by the center in most years) who share their expertise in subjects with other students struggling in those areas. Peer Tutoring logged 2,270 visits and 1,821 tutoring sessions in 2015-2016.

3. Advising at NWC follows a split model consisting of a centralized advising center and faculty advisors from each program. NWC has 69 active advisors with an average of 25 advisees to each advisor.

The Advising Center (AC) provides academic advising for general studies majors and undecided

students. The AC 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;
- Coordinating internships: helps students identify and follow the correct path to reach the career goals that they 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. Over Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 299 students were contacted by the AC;
- Peer mentors connect with students who need help adjusting to college.

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.

In the 2016-17 academic year, the AC had 2166 visits.

- [Retention rates](#) for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students have improved since the AC was created from 59% in Fall 2011 to 62% in Fall 2015.
- [Persistence rates](#) for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students were the highest of the Wyoming community colleges at 71%.
- The percentage of students [transferring](#) from NWC increased from 23% in the 2011-12 academic year to 27% in the 2015-16 academic year.
- Of those students who transferred, the percentage that transferred to a 4-year institution increased from 75% in the 2011-12 academic year to 77% in the 2015-16 academic year.
- The frequency of use, satisfaction, and the importance of advising functions for all students has increased from 2011 to 2015 according to CCSSE results found in the table below.

| CCSSE Results Concerning Advising Center Services | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|------|--------------|------|------------|------|
| | Frequency of Use | | Satisfaction | | Importance | |
| | 2011 | 2015 | 2011 | 2015 | 2011 | 2015 |
| Academic Advising | 1.88 | 1.98 | 2.29 | 2.42 | 2.58 | 2.66 |
| Career Advising | 1.37 | 1.44 | 1.99 | 2.08 | 2.22 | 2.37 |
| Transfer Advising | 1.54 | 1.57 | 2.12 | 2.17 | 2.34 | 2.39 |
| Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale for Frequency of Use: 0=Don’t Know/NA; 1=Rarely/Never; 2=Sometimes; 3=Often • Scale for Satisfaction: 0=NA; 1=Not at All; 2=Somewhat; 3=Very • Scale for Importance: 1=Not at all; 2=Somewhat; 3=Very | | | | | | |

Currently, there is no way to determine faculty advisor usage accurately or if there is a difference in student satisfaction between faculty advisors and the AC. The AC is currently working to identify additional methods of assessment of advising.

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. A criminal justice SIM lab and additional classroom 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 85.25 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 2 a.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 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 close to 400 online databases and products wherever they are, provided they have an Internet connection. Users [generate](#) between 73,000 and 103,000 searches each year in these resources.

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, and a service to fast charge phones, tablets, and laptops.

The Cody Center has a small library. Librarians from the main campus provide reference service 3 hours per week at that facility, based on the class schedule and 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 classes. Students in online

classes receive research 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
- Athletic Training - Training rooms and equipment
- 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
- Physical Education - NWC Fitness Center
- Physical Education - Two Gyms with appropriate spaces and equipment
- 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. Each semester, librarians teach close to 80 different class sessions and reach nearly 1000 students through this instruction. Librarians provide research instruction in online classes through the use of video, library guides, and discussions in forums.

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3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Argument

1 and 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), [equine judging](#) (5-10 participants), [Model United Nations](#) (5-10 students). 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. Club activities related to academic programming includes business related [ENACTUS](#), and agriculture-related [Block and Bridle](#).

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.

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.

| Academic Year 2016-2017 | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Sport | Team GPA | # of Potential Graduates | # of Graduates | % Graduated |
| Men's Basketball | 3.15 | 10 | 8 | 80 |
| Women's Basketball | 3.50 | 5 | 5 | 100 |
| Volleyball | 3.63 | 10 | 9 | 90 |
| Wrestling | 3.01 | 13 | 11 | 85 |

| | | | | |
|----------------|------|----|----|----|
| Rodeo | 2.73 | 2 | 1 | 50 |
| Men's Soccer | 2.80 | 5 | 3 | 60 |
| Women's Soccer | 3.41 | 6 | 5 | 83 |
| TOTAL | 3.18 | 51 | 42 | 82 |

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.

NWC is aware of the need to comprehensively assess student experiences in co-curricular activities. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee and the Central Assessment Team will monitor progress in the development of assessment plans for these activities.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Northwest College (NWC) fulfills Criterion Three 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:

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

NWC 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 2016, the state of Wyoming significantly reduced its support for community colleges, which combined with a reduction in local mill levy, resulted in a 2.3 million dollar budget shortfall. To maintain the quality of our academic programming, NWC evaluated all operations and discontinued three academic programs (see 5.C., 5.D.), reduced program and department budgets, selectively suspended hiring, and offered early retirement to faculty and staff. The NWC Foundation assisted by assuming funding for scholarships that had previously been funded through NWC's general fund. These actions will allow NWC to continue providing high-quality education and better plan for future budget challenges and opportunities.

Employee Feedback on Criterion Three

The Assurance Argument Team held informational workshops on Criterion Three on Nov. 18th and 22nd, 2016. At those workshops, employees were asked to provide [evidence statements](#) about the sub-components of this criterion.

Future Plans

NWC will continue to provide high-quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered. The Office of Academic Affairs is developing procedures for the improvement of quality control in online education and concurrent enrollment. Academic Affairs and the Curriculum

Committee will complete the implementation of the revised general education requirements. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will codify the process to evaluate programming for resource allocation. The Course Scheduling Committee will complete establishment of a regular college-wide course rotation.

Sources

- Criterion 3_Workshop Comments

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 demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
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 assure 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 assures 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 assures that the degree or certificate programs 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, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

1. Each academic degree program submits an annual [Student Learning Outcomes \(SLO\) Assessment Report](#) (see 4.B). Every five years academic programs complete a [Program Review](#) self-study. The [rotation cycle](#) is staggered, with 5-8 programs submitting reviews each year. Submitted [program reviews](#) are available to reviewers on the college portal. The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), the program's Division Chair, and two external reviewers (rotating AAC members assigned by the VPAA) provide feedback to programs before the final report is submitted to the VPAA and President. Before Spring 2017, the VPAA met with program faculty to discuss issues arising in the review. Beginning Spring 2017, the [Institutional Effectiveness Committee](#) evaluates submitted Program Reviews and [annual reports](#) from non-academic programs.

[Program Reviews](#) include quantitative data compiled by the Office of Institutional Research and a narrative prepared by program faculty. Quantitative data includes course enrollments, [faculty load analysis](#), majors, graduates, and transfers. The narrative describes the program's offerings, faculty, administrative procedures, effectiveness, and evidence-based needs and recommendations.

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 will NOT be accepted for credit, and the transcript will not be accepted for admission purposes.

NWC will award credit for [Advanced Placement \(AP\) tests and Subject Examinations of the College Level Examination Program \(CLEP\)](#). The Registrar will evaluate International Baccalaureate (IB) programs for credit transfer. Finally, NWC awards 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](#) (see 3.B.). Because NWC recently updated its general education categories, outcomes, and requirements, many previously approved courses went through the CC again during the 2016-17 school year; such review helps to ensure that, among other things, courses continue to have the proper number of credits for the work assigned.

[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 (see 3.B.).

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. For more information on dual/concurrent courses (see 3.A.). Concurrent enrollment classes are NWC catalog courses, and their registrations are monitored by the Dean of Extended Campus, 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 must have a master's degree, with some exceptions for professional experience. In Fall 2016, the Faculty Organization instituted a committee to recommend credential standards for faculty. Those recommendations have been approved by their relevant divisions. The Ad Hoc Faculty Policy Task Force will take up these recommendations in Fall 2017 and forward its recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

NWC maintains and exercises authority over access to learning resources including tutoring services, library services, the TRiO program, and disabilities 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). Only seven community colleges in the US are NASAD-accredited.

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. The [Licensed Practical Nursing Certificate Program](#), LPN, is approved by the Wyoming State Board of Nursing. 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](#). Students can obtain information and support for transfer through the Advising Center (AC). The AC Coordinator works with the Dean of Student Learning to maintain NWC's articulation agreements.

The University of Wyoming (UW) provides a [comprehensive report](#) of NWC transfer students for each year; the most recent report shows students who transfer to UW have an average first semester GPA of 2.79 as compared with an all transfer student GPA of 2.80. This suggests that NWC transfer students do as well as others who enter programs at UW. A summary report for the years 2008 through 2012 from [Valley City State University Collaborative Teacher Education](#) shows transfer students from NWC have a 92.3% retention rate, further evidence of transfer student success.

NWC's Office of Institutional Research solicits an [annual graduate survey](#). The response rate for the most recent three-year period was 25%.

The WCCC collects licensure data for its annual performance report. The Commission's [2015-2016](#) report revealed the pass rate of NWC nursing graduates taking the exam for the first time was 96% 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 the "internship," "apprenticeship," and "interactive, cooperative education" (no longer offered) courses in the ["Summary Enrollment by Course, Designator, and Department."](#)

Sources

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

Following Northwest College's (NWC) last full re-accreditation visit, HLC reviewers directed NWC to provide evidence that:

1. Programs and general education have stated learning outcomes;
2. Processes of assessment of student learning are in effect, and that assessment provides evidence of student learning;
3. A recurring process is in place that includes reporting of assessment results and use of assessment data to improve instruction;
4. A clear mechanism is in place through which assessment results feed into planning, budgeting, and curricular change.

The March 2013 focused visit report acknowledged NWC's progress but noted the need to "demonstrate a clear mechanism for how assessment results and analyses are feeding into planning and budget development as well as into curricular change." Reviewers recommended that NWC adopt "a single set of general education/all-college goals and a unified process for assessing whether all graduates of the institutions are meeting those goals."

In response, Academic Affairs invited assessment expert Dr. Barbara Walvoord to lead [workshops](#) in August 2013. Dr. Walvoord recommended the appointment of an assessment coordinator and provided a framework for implementing assessment reform. The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) appointed a [full-time faculty member](#) to the role of [Assessment Coordinator](#). The role of Assessment Coordinator has increased from a three-hour to a nine-hour credit reassignment per semester. Since fall 2013, the Assessment Coordinator and the [Central Assessment Team](#) (CAT) have taken steps toward restructuring assessment.

The CAT has analyzed three years of data (2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016) from academic department assessment reports. The 2016-2017 reports will be submitted in August 2017. Year-to-year data trends are best understood within the context of a continuously evolving system: the student learning outcome forms have undergone minor revisions each year, as have the CAT's [rubric](#) scoring criteria used to provide feedback to programs. 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 programs.

1. NWC has clearly stated learning goals and effective assessment processes.

In response to HLC's directive to consolidate general education learning goals, NWC made the following adjustments to the existing outcomes in the interest of assessment:

1. The previously titled "All-College Outcomes" were renamed in [Fall 2013](#) as "[General Education Outcomes](#)" to which program- and course-level student learning outcomes would be aligned for assessment purposes.
2. The previously titled "General Education Outcomes" were renamed "General Education Distribution Requirements." This framework outlined the number of courses students must take in each category, fulfilling NWC's [philosophy of general education](#) and serving as a means for students to meet the "General Education Outcomes."

The Curriculum Committee revised the general education outcomes and distribution requirements in 2016-2017 (see 3.B).

Faculty members revised course and [program learning outcomes](#) to align with the new general education outcomes. The faculty continue to [revise course outcomes](#) as new courses are submitted for general education approval. Analysis of assessment reports demonstrates the quality of program learning outcomes (including measurability and alignment with general education learning outcomes) has steadily improved since 2013. [Mean scores](#) on the outcomes section of the CAT rubric rose by 51% from 2013-2016.

Modeled on the approach outlined in Walvoord's 2010 book, *Assessment Clear and Simple*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), NWC established an institution-wide assessment process. Stages of this system are:

1. Faculty conduct assessments of student learning outcomes within their courses and programs.
2. Program faculty meet annually to review their assessment data, decide on at least one action item, and assign internal responsibility for follow-up.
3. Each program [reports annually](#) on its learning assessment. Reports are uploaded to an [online repository](#) accessible by program faculty, CAT, and the Office of Academic Affairs.
4. Reports are reviewed by CAT members and scored using a [rubric](#) and written comments. Feedback is communicated to programs by the CAT Chair.
5. A [graduate exit survey](#) collects student feedback and perceptions about their achievement of program learning outcomes.
6. The Assessment Coordinator, CAT Chair, and Institutional Researcher analyze the data.
7. Results of the exit survey are reported to CAT, which makes recommendations to the Curriculum Committee, Academic Advisory Council, and President's Advisory Council as appropriate. Results are shared with program faculty by the Assessment Coordinator.

Implementation of this system has been steady with additional implementation ongoing.

2. The faculty continues to assess student strengths and weaknesses in their courses and programs. The program faculty has developed both direct and indirect measures for evaluating student work. Assessment data from the first three years reveals the following trends:

1. Faculty are creating [direct and indirect measures](#) with stronger alignment to learning outcomes.

The increase in reported number of direct measures from 2013-2016 indicates faculty have 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. There is now a stronger understanding among the faculty of the difference between direct and indirect measures and 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 indicates an increase in actual measurement. SLO reports demonstrate faculty continues to develop new and revise 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.

2. Faculty are reporting 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.

3. Faculty are now extracting [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.

4. 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](#) will involve a stronger emphasis on the across the curriculum paradigm. CAT will establish multi-year assessment cycles to ensure that all outcomes are measured. The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) will provide faculty development on this initiative.

5. Program faculty reports tend to [focus on student weaknesses](#).

It is a positive development that faculty are comfortable reporting areas for improvement. In 2017-2018, CAT and the TLC will work to improve collection of student achievement evidence.

6. [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.

Plans are in place to scale up assessment of the co-curriculum. Learning outcomes have not been formally identified for our co-curriculum. The academic assessment process will serve as a model for co-curricular assessment. The NWC accreditation team introduced this model to all staff during a Spring 2017 [accreditation prep session](#). The CAT chair developed a proposal for restructuring the Central Assessment Team to incorporate co-curricular assessment.

The Graduate Exit Survey data shows that the [majority of graduating students](#) are either satisfied or very satisfied with NWC's co-curricular offerings including cultural programs, intramural activities, student activities, student government, and student organizations.

3. Assessment data has been used to improve student learning. Evidence from 2013-2016 reveals the following trends:

1. 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.

2. Faculty report [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.

3. 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.

4. Increasingly, assessment data is informing budgeting decisions.

[Narrative analysis](#) of SLO reports demonstrates how faculty are using assessment information to inform purchases and budget requests. Examples include purchases of new equipment, technology, and software. [Professional development funds](#) are available to fund innovative classroom teaching.

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?

The CAT budget subcommittee [sent recommendations](#) to the Presidents Advisory Council and the Academic Advisory Council. The Presidents Advisory Council considered these recommendations in [making decisions](#) about the expenditure of available funds. This process will serve as a template for future distribution of non-standard funding. (See [template guidelines](#))

NWC has provided financial resources for the establishment of a [TLC](#) in response to evidence from the SLO reports and the [Graduate Exit Survey](#) that indicate: 1) students appreciate that NWC faculty are highly qualified, engaged, and approachable; 2) students value the hands-on learning experiences that are available to them; 3) students want even more opportunities for hands-on learning.

4. The institution's processes of assessing student learning involve the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

In the past five years, [faculty involvement](#) in NWC's assessment processes has increased at multiple levels. One of the first steps that the VPAA took after being hired in Fall 2012 was to [establish CAT](#) – a standing committee comprised primarily of faculty from all academic divisions. The committee [meets](#) at least once a month during the academic year.

In Spring 2013, twelve self-selected faculty and staff enrolled in a weekly assessment seminar led by the VPAA. The VPAA offered an all-faculty in-service presentation on assessment and organized a day-long Learning Outcomes Workshop for the Academic Advisory Council, CAT, and Curriculum Committee. NWC has had strong faculty and staff representation at the annual HLC conference each subsequent year.

Workshops by assessment experts ([Dr. Barbara Walvoord in 2013](#) and [Dr. Virginia Anderson in 2014](#)) further advanced campus conversations about assessment. Themes from those workshops have been sustained through [individual meetings](#) between faculty and the Assessment Coordinator, and several [presentations and workshops](#) led by the Assessment Coordinator and/or CAT Chair.

CAT uses the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) results to inform assessment analysis. The Institutional Researcher presents these results to the BOT, President's Advisory Council, Academic Advisory Council, College Council, and CAT and at an all-campus meeting.

NWC has administered CCSSE every other spring since 2007. The 2017 results demonstrate that NWC scored higher for all five benchmarks than the average Wyoming community college and the average CCSSE cohort institution. Four out of five benchmarks have been above the national CCSSE cohort average every implementation (Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Effort, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Support for Learners). The Academic Challenge benchmark has been below the national average for the 2007 through 2015 implementations. The 2017 results show that Academic Challenge is now several points higher than both the Wyoming and the national CCSSE cohorts. Most of the CCSSE questions that contribute to this benchmark have shown significant increases from the 2007 to the 2017 implementation. These increases could be attributed to retention efforts initiated by the Retention Committee (see 4.C.3.) and an increased awareness of and subsequent faculty focus on challenging students to do their best work and emphasizing certain mental activities.

| CCSSE 2017 Results | NWC | Wyoming | | 2017 Cohort | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Benchmark | Score | Score | Difference | Score | Difference |
| Active and Collaborative Learning | 56.2 | 52.1 | 4.1 | 50.0 | 6.2 |
| Student Effort | 54.5 | 49.7 | 4.8 | 50.0 | 4.5 |
| Academic Challenge | 53.3 | 50.2 | 3.0 | 50.0 | 3.3 |
| Student-Faculty Interaction | 57.2 | 53.7 | 3.5 | 50.0 | 7.2 |
| Support for Learners | 51.7 | 49.1 | 2.5 | 50.0 | 1.7 |

All faculty have access to the [NWC Assessment online repository](#) for assessment-related resources and reports, and all program faculty are [expected to contribute evidence to their program's SLO report](#). Faculty participation in program assessment has increased, with [mean scores](#) on the collective review section of the CAT feedback rubric rising 59% from 2013-2016. Five programs have developed [curriculum maps](#) to identify gaps in coverage and make changes that ensure repeated student exposure to learning outcomes. Curriculum mapping in all programs is a priority for 2017-2018.

A number of departments have undertaken additional assessment projects on their own:

- Three programs 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 assesses [ENGL 1010 sections](#) to investigate patterns relating to modality (face-to-face, online, concurrent enrollment).
- English Instructor Heidi Hansen conducted a [college-wide study](#) of writing instruction through the lens of Writing Across the Curriculum theory and practice. In 2017-2018, she will work with the TLC to share her results and present recommendations.
- The First-Year Seminar Coordinator, working with the Retention Committee, is developing a process to [assess learning outcomes in the First-Year Seminar](#).

NWC has made substantial progress in assessment. To sustain this effort, faculty need ongoing training on assessment measures, guidance on reporting evidence, and opportunities to collaborate on assessment-based action. By facilitating ongoing faculty development, the [TLC](#) will be instrumental in nurturing a more robust culture of assessment for the improvement of student learning.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to 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 but 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 both the [2012-13 to 2016-17 Strategic Plan Tracking Report](#) and the current [Vision 2020 Key Performance Indicators](#). These reports demonstrate 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. Before Fall 2016, NWC used the term persistence to describe retention, in accordance with the statewide terminology at that time. The current 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](#) and [Graduation Rate](#) surveys. 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.

In the 2012-13 to 2016-17 Strategic Plan, Institutional Imperative #1 stated, "Northwest College shall be the preeminent two-year educational institution in Wyoming." The first goal for this imperative was to have "the highest student completion rates (earned degrees and certificates) of any two-year educational institution in Wyoming." In the related Tracking Report, the indicators by which NWC measured its progress towards pre eminence included completion rates, fall-to-fall retention (then called persistence) rates, and numbers of completions. Information was compiled for a baseline year and updated annually.

The current strategic plan, 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 2015 to Fall 2016 retention): 62% (N=339)
- Completion rate of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students (Fall 2013 cohort): 37% (N=372)
- Number of degrees and certificates awarded (2015-16): 333 degrees, 36 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 current retention rates](#) are comparable to the average rate for a national public, 2-year institutions and are typically 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 low- to mid-50% range. Since 2013, NWC's retention rate has been consistently above 60%. Many of NWC's retention initiatives started in 2012-13, so these consistently high rates lend support to their effectiveness.

The majority of NWC students are degree-seeking. Approximately two-thirds of NWC degree programs prepare students for transferring to a four-year institution, and one-third prepare students for the workforce. NWC offers certificates that are primarily subsets of degree programs. Because successful student transfer to four-year institutions is a large institutional focus, NWC monitors both completion and transfer rates. When combined, the rate of students who complete or transfer has historically been in the mid-50% range. 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 Completions Survey](#)
 - [IPEDS Graduation Rates Survey](#)
 - [IPEDS Graduation Rates 200 Survey](#)
 - Consumer Information Disclosures: Graduation/Transfer Rates of Students Receiving [Federal Aid](#) and of [Athletes](#)

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 data analysis](#) include: 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 [Enrollment Report to the Board of Trustees](#) and the [NWC Dashboard](#) are examples of monitoring retention and completion. The 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. The NWC Dashboard depicts graduation rates, transfer rates, numbers of completions, programs with the largest numbers of completions, and top transfer institutions.
4. The Enrollment Report to the Board of Trustees is published on the Institutional Research website, emailed to college employees, and presented at the All-Employee Meeting and Board Meeting each October. The NWC Dashboard is published annually on the Institutional Research website. The Institutional Researcher annually updates the President's Advisory Council on retention, persistence, and completion. The President shares completion and retention information at All Employee Meetings, as information is available. Retention information, and retention of students enrolled in [first-year experience courses](#) is shared with the Retention Committee and First-Year Experience Coordinator. Completions are shared with employees and posted on the NWC portal.

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

President Hicswa 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 Identifying and Promoting High-Impact Educational Practices in Community Colleges. Examples of high-impact practices

implemented include:

First-Year Experience (FYE)

Extensive research on student persistence conducted by the members of the RC 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.

Before implementing FYE, the RC examined retention rates of three Program Orientation courses, 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 FYE 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 FYE a requirement for earning a degree. NWC implemented these courses across all programs in Fall 2015.

Advising Center

The RC began researching advising models in [2012](#), which resulted in the creation of the Advising Center (AC). 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 RC [recommended a split model for academic advising](#) to the Faculty Organization for discussion. The AC opened in Summer 2013 and is staffed by the Advising Coordinator, the First-Year Experience Coordinator, and peer mentors.

The AC 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;
4. Coordinating internships: conducts arrangement through the college to allow students to gain valuable work experience to further their respective aspirations.

The AC coordinates peer mentoring, which allows well-established, successful students to serve as guides to new and struggling students. During the most recent academic year, 2015-2016, the AC had 3328 visits serving over 800 individual students.

HELP (Early Alert)

The RC examined student support services for struggling students and identified issues with a time delay between alert submission and actions taken. As a result, the FYE Coordinator was added to the alert notification, who began following up on alerts by contacting students to arrange an appointment. [Results](#) of this revised HELP (Early Alert) process show that 48% of alert submissions have been resolved.

HERO Grant

One of the barriers which often prohibits student success is unforeseen financial issues. In 2013, RC 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.

Retention Predictors/At-Risk Students

The RC's 2012 top priority was to [identify at-risk students](#). Members used [at-risk variables](#) from the literature to analyze the most relevant variables affecting the [retention](#) of NWC students.

The committee developed a risk identification system and began monitoring students with three or more at-risk markers. At-risk markers include the following indicators and risk increases for each additional indicator:

- Attempted credits: enrolled part-time in 6 to 11.5 credits
- Developmental classes: enrolled in more than one developmental class
- Online classes: enrolled in more than one online class
- Current student standing: cumulative GPA is less than 2.0
- Incoming GPA: incoming GPA is less than 2.0
- Unmet financial need: has any unmet need

College staff contacted students who had three or more at-risk indicators to offer assistance and support. This proved to be impractical. At present, faculty members have access to students at-risk score and are encouraged to work with the advising center to support struggling at-risk students. At-risk status is used in Help Alert response actions.

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 completes a college level in the same semester. Since its inception, there have been four sections of the co-requisite model offered (one per semester) and students have had more success in those courses (63% pass rate) than students enrolled in either the separate MATH-0920 courses (41% pass rate) or MATH-1000 courses (58% pass rate) over the same four semesters. As a result of this success, the math department plans to replace MATH-0920 with the co-requisite model and develop a co-requisite model for MATH-0930 Intermediate Algebra/MATH-1400 College Algebra.

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

Future Initiatives

NWC is implementing new student success initiatives including:

1. Guided Pathways – establishes prescriptive semester course maps for students to complete their respective academic programs promptly.
2. 15 to Finish - encourages students to complete at least 15 hours of coursework each semester.
3. Gateway courses in the first 30 hours – identify courses which most often cause students to stumble and place those courses in strategic places in the first half (or first 30 hours) of our Guided Pathways.

Academic Affairs is launching a Teaching and Learning Center in Fall 2017, which will promote and provide support for the application of proven best practices in instruction.

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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
- Student learning outcome 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 (see 5.D.) 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.

Future Plans

Future continuous improvement efforts will focus on assessment and evaluation of co-curricular programs, non-academic departments, and general education outcomes. The Central Assessment Team will complete curriculum maps in all program areas. The Teaching and Learning Center will launch in 2017 and will develop training for faculty in assessment, online education, and pedagogy. The Retention Committee will implement automated student success monitoring software to increase persistence, retention, and completion.

Sources

- Criterion 4_Workshop Comments

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Argument

1. Northwest College (NWC) has sufficient infrastructure to support its operations. Infrastructure and human resources to support academic programming are detailed in 3.A., 3.C., and 3.D. Infrastructure for other areas is detailed below.

Fiscal Resources

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. Recently NWC has started to analyze various [financial ratios](#) in relation to its operations. The composite financial index score (Excluding GASB 68) for 2016 is 4.1643 which [BKD Advisors](#) suggests that NWC has resources for future planning.

As funding sources fluctuate or most recently decline, NWC has reallocated resources to minimize the effect to students and campus. When student enrollment decreased in 2013-2014, impacting tuition revenue, the Vice President of Administrative Services and Finance (VPASF) worked with campus constituent groups to find ways to adjust budgets.

Through work with the Financial Aid Scholarship Office and the Foundation Executive Director, 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 Year (FY) 2017 to reduce athletic, activity and talent general fund scholarships and replace 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, [state and local funding](#) was reduced due to the economic downturn in Wyoming. In Spring 2016, 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. [Reserves](#) were utilized to aid in the transition during FY 2017 and FY 2018.

Historically, NWC has not had significant long term capital financing debt. Capital facility projects have been infrequent and largely 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 \$12,902 in endowment assets per FTE compared to \$4,842 per FTE for NWC's IPEDS comparison group (see [Figure 25](#)). In FY 2016, the Foundation provided \$855,434 in [scholarship support](#). The NWC Foundation provided \$514,125 in [grants](#) for strategic projects, professional development, and equipment. This endowed revenue stream helps ensure sufficient support for NWC's operations.

Human Resources

NWC continuously reviews its operations to ensure adequate human resources for its operations. The [IPEDS Data Feedback Report](#) (see Figures 24, 26) demonstrates that NWC allocates its human resources in areas that support its mission, e.g. instruction, institutional support, and student services.

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 that staffing levels were slightly below the recommended standards but adequate for campus needs.

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 projects, ongoing projects, major projects, and remaining priority projects.

The 2014 Master Plan update included [analysis of space utilization](#) and concluded that physical space is more than sufficient for instructional purposes. The update identified spaces that were in need of 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 buildings 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. Level One reports for the [Visual and Performing Arts building](#) and the [Student Center](#) were commissioned and completed in Spring 2017 for submission to the WCCC and the Wyoming State Construction Department. This process included community and college input sessions, steering

committees, and architectural and engineering assessment. Both capital projects were [approved by the WCCC](#) and forwarded to the State legislature for Level Two approval and funding. Subsequent to Level Two approval, Level Three approval and funding would be required.

Several projects such as the Multi-Sports Court, Hardscape phase I and II, and the DeWitt Student Center Exterior Improvement Project, have been completed since 2013. Various projects continue to be scheduled as state maintenance funding and adequate reserves allow. A new updated Facilities Master Plan is scheduled for completion in Fall 2017.

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

Technological Infrastructure

NWC's technological infrastructure is sufficient to support its operations. [Staffing levels for technology](#) services are slightly higher than NWC's median peers (see Figure 26). Network and database managers, programmers, analysts, and technicians provide 24/7 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 Academic Computing Committee, state agencies, campus staff, and students to assess and maintain adequate resources. Prior to Vision 2020, the Computing Services Director maintained an [operational plan](#) and carried out projects according to priority level. Bring Your Own Device, campus-wide WiFi improvements, VMware conversion, and virtual servers are projects recently completed. Vision 2020 [Key Performance Indicators](#) now serve as drivers for technological project prioritization. Localized surveys were completed last fall for [wireless improvements](#) and serve as a resource for minor system adjustments to improve campus-wide functionality.

The Dean of Student Learning oversees the instructional technology department which provides support for faculty and ensures technological infrastructure is sufficient to support satellite campuses and online courses.

In FY 2017, the Budget Committee recommended that no reductions occur in technology. The preceding evidence demonstrates that NWC has sufficient technological resources.

2. As a publicly funded college, NWC has no financial obligations to superordinate entities. All resources are allocated to fulfill NWC's mission.

3. The goals incorporated into NWC's [Mission Statement](#) and [Vision 2020](#) Key Performance indicators are realistic in light of NWC's organization, resources, and opportunities. Because NWC's mission is educational and student-centered, academic performance measures indicate sufficiency of fiscal, physical, technological, and human resources.

NWC's ranking in statewide comparisons of [retention](#) and [completion](#) rates demonstrate that our goals are realistic and NWC has sufficient resources to achieve them as discussed in 5.A.

4. NWC staff are appropriately qualified and trained. Staff positions have a wide range of educational and experience requirements. [Position descriptions](#) describe 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 effectively perform the role. Access to staff job descriptions will be available to reviewers during the visit.

NWC hiring processes ensure that candidates are properly qualified. During [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 reports are performed. Motor vehicle records are reviewed for candidates for positions that require 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 for the position.

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 request funds through their supervisors and/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 [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.
- Library staff provide employee training on Internet use and finding quality information.
- Facilities staff provide programs on safety related subjects and general cleaning practices.
- Campus Security provides training to employees on emergency procedures, campus safety and security, and fire response training for building captains.
- The Title IX Coordinator provides educational opportunities for 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 2011-2015, 176 employees have utilized NWC tuition waivers, and 24 received University of Wyoming tuition waivers.

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

5. NWC has a [well-developed process](#) in place for budgeting. NWC has resource allocation processes in place to ensure that resources are apportioned properly 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 is composed of the President, VPASF, VPAA, Vice President for College Relations (VPCR), VPSS, the Finance Director, a faculty member, a professional staff member, and a classified staff member.

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 as needed to assist with the budgeting process. The committee utilizes this information for budgeting. NWC's educational purposes, regulatory requirements, and the strategic priorities of Vision 2020 are given priority.

In 2014, NWC received a one-time allocation from the state and used it to purchase educational equipment. Proposals for educational equipment were evaluated based on fit with the strategic plan and how the proposal met program outcomes assessment goals. In 2015, a similar state reallocation resulted in a bonus distribution to our employees. These actions aligned with Vision 2020.

In Spring 2016, the budget development process expanded to include 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 budget assumptions](#) in a study session in April. The BOT reviews [the preliminary budget](#) in May. The first reading of the [full budget](#) is reviewed by the BOT in June with a budget hearing and final budget approval 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 to the [web site](#). The annual audit report is posted 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.

In 2013, the BOT changed policy to require the President approve all college contracts. Following this change, the President requires the supervisory Vice President and the 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.

President Hicswa and VPASF Watson have implemented processes to improve expenditure review. VPASF Watson monitors budgets quarterly to track revenue receipts and expenditure percentages budget to actual. Large shortfalls and overages are identified; budget managers are consulted for further analysis. With the budget reduction in FY 2017, budget lines in need of closer monitoring

were identified, e.g., motor pool and print services.

The VPAFS creates financial reports for BOT meetings which include a monthly [check register](#). The BOT reviews the register transactions as part of its fiduciary duty.

At BOT's 2016 winter retreat, trustees reviewed [state statutes](#) related to the [community colleges](#) and the [fiduciary statutes](#) for municipalities. At the February 2016 [BOT meeting](#), the principal from NWC's auditor provided training. He emphasized the importance of the BOT's oversight and fiduciary responsibility.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Argument

1. The Board of Trustees (BOT) is knowledgeable about the institution. The BOT's [Rules and Regulations](#) provide a framework for appropriate involvement through regular monthly meetings with [meeting agendas](#). Trustees learn about college operations through regular [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. 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 engage in two planning retreats per year, and newly-elected Trustees participate in a six-hour orientation.

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. 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. Representative groups provide consultation on various aspects of college operations (see discussion in 5.B.3). Major standing committees address matters related to instruction, curriculum, assessment, retention, administration, budget development, academic computing, institutional effectiveness, policy review (one for all employees and one for faculty), the library, marketing communications, website, and student appeals. Meeting minutes or summaries are posted on NWC's portal, and links are emailed to employees.

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 President appoints task forces as necessary, e.g., the 2016-17 Futures Task Forces for Organizational Structure, Finances, Faculty Salaries, and Staff Salaries; and a Policy Development Task Force.
- [Representative search committees](#) are integral to the employee hiring process. Students serve on search committees for select positions, e.g. President, Vice-President of Student Services.
- Students have the opportunity to participate in shared governance in a variety of ways. Representatives are included on various committees, e.g. Budget Committee, facilities master plan development, and strategic planning groups. Students participated in the development of Vision 2020. The Student Senate President has regular meetings with the President.

Formal policies adopted by the BOT underpins 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.”

Opportunities for members of the campus community to help shape the workplace and learning environment remain a strength of the institution. As the NWC’s Shared Governance and Decision Making Guide states, “Good decisions that are developed collaboratively inevitably help create better policies that contribute to the effectiveness of the college.”

3. Several committees [contribute to the setting of academic requirements, policy, 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)
- [Academic Computing Committee](#) (includes members from administration, faculty, staff, and students)
- [Central Assessment Team](#) (includes members from 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)
- [Retention Committee](#) (includes members from administration, faculty, and staff. student

- representation planned for 2017-2018)
- [Writing in the Academic World](#) (includes members from administration and faculty)

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
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. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Argument

1. President Hicswa, along with her administration, has implemented a process of systematic and integrated planning at Northwest College (NWC) that allocates resources to align with the Mission Statement and Vision 2020 [Key Performance Indicators \(KPIs\)](#).

The hiring of a new Vice President for Administrative Services and Finance (VPASF) in 2014 and a new Finance Director in 2016 brought NWC expanded expertise in resource allocation and planning. These additions, along with the development of a new [Mission Statement](#) and [Vision 2020](#), further aligned NWC's resource allocation process with its mission and strategic priorities.

In Spring 2016, the Budget Manager group was created to expand shared governance and work with administrators and the Budget Committee to ensure recommendations for resource allocation align with the new mission and Vision 2020. During the Fiscal Year (FY) 17 budget process, NWC needed to reduce expenditures due to state revenue shortfalls. In line with NWC's primary focus of being student-centered, 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 that allowed eligible employees to select retirement rather than implementing Reduction in Force across all areas of campus. In cases where Reduction in Force was implemented, the mission and Vision 2020 guided those decisions.

2. NWC has expanded processes linking assessment, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting across the entire campus. The VPASF has led the continuing [implementation of the facilities master plan](#), development of a [landscaping master plan](#), and the [Student Housing Master Plan](#). Academic and support building plans are slotted for completion in Fall 2017.

In 2012, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) enlisted faculty and staff in an initiative to improve assessment of student learning (see 4.B.). The resulting process for 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 evaluation of funding requests. The CAT evaluated those funding requests based on linkages to the assessment of student learning outcomes. The President has communicated to the campus that this type of analysis is expected moving forward.

In Fall 2013, NWC began a [campus-wide](#) facilities master planning process. Point Architects and A&E Architects led campus personnel in updating the [Facilities Master Plan](#). This is an example of "scaling up" planning to include all employees in the evaluation of campus operations and future planning needs. In May 2015, a Planning Committee was created consisting of 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 continues to meet monthly to evaluate project progress, discuss fundraising strategies, and implement steps to seek state capital construction support.

In 2015, NWC contracted with CBT Consultants to review policies and make [recommendations](#). In 2016, the Board of Trustees (BOT) [prioritized policy reform](#) on campus. Initiatives to link processes for assessment, planning, and budgeting are ineffective without policies to support these expectations. Following those recommendations, the President worked with the College Council to reorganize and update the college policy manual. This process resulted in the creation of the [College Policy Task Force](#) in Fall 2016. The task force includes the President, a faculty representative, a professional staff representative, a classified staff representative, and the Human Resources Director. Task force members serve to drive policy updates as NWC evaluates operations and implements changes.

In response to a state revenue decline in FY 2017, the President and VPASF required an evaluation of operations and evidence-based information from budget managers for the purpose of making budget cut recommendations. An example of an evaluation-based decision was the [discontinuation of three academic programs](#) (see 5.D.)

The next step in enhancing the connection between budgeting to planning is to systematically assess all college operations and expand evidence-based funding priorities. In Spring 2017, the President has charged the Institutional Effectiveness Committee to initiate this process (see 5.D.).

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 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](#). In Fall 2011, employees participated in two table top exercises regarding an active shooter and tornado striking campus. As a result of these exercises, employees identified the need for training and guiding documents. In October 2012, a committee of campus stakeholders developed the [Emergency Operations Plan](#) with the assistance of Reliant Services consulting. In January 2014, the newly created [Emergency Response Guide](#) was disseminated to campus and a training on using the guide was held for campus employees. With input from campus, the Emergency Response Guide was updated in Spring. Evaluation of our ability to communicate emergencies to the campus revealed the need for a budget to support ongoing emergency preparedness. That budget was put into place the following year. The [Campus Safety and Security Brochure](#) was produced and delivered to potential students and their parents for the first time in Spring 2014. This document was used in the revision of the NWC Campus Security Website to create consistency within the information that was being produced and disseminated to the public. In March 2015, NWC began [involving external constituents](#) in our emergency planning process.

[Internal and external constituent groups](#) were involved in the development of 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.

Budget managers serve on the front line between operations and reporting. For FY 2017, the budgeting process expanded to include a campus wide Budget Managers group. This group encompasses the institution as a whole and provides robust input.

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

Historically, fiscal planning used an incremental base model supplemented by projected enrollment increases and one-time state revenue. During times of economic downturn, the planning methodologies were ineffective. Currently, fiscal planning is driven by current enrollment, state, and local revenue projections. If revenue exceeds projections, those funds are prioritized for strategic initiatives and long-term campus needs. This new approach better anticipates long-term and short-term fluctuations with less drastic impacts on budget. To aid in continuous planning for revenue fluctuations and resource allocations, President Hicswa has charged the [Institutional Effectiveness Committee](#) with analyzing enrollment capacity, areas of enrollment growth (i.e. international students, part-time and non-traditional students), student and administrative services program costs, and academic program development opportunities within the current and emerging economy.

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 services](#) to make recommendations to inform the ongoing [SEM planning process](#).

The President's Advisory Council monitors the fluctuation of revenue sources as it relates to facilities planning and projects. Significant reductions in state appropriations and local levy tax have resulted in decreased funding for deferred 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 new mission strategically includes "global society" in anticipation of emerging priorities. This commitment is demonstrated by a focus on diversity in the new 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.

[Enrollment trends](#) are examined annually to identify opportunities for planning. This information was included in the development of the strategic enrollment management plan (see 5.C.4).

NWC is committed to adequate technology and reaffirmed that commitment during the 2017 budget development when no reductions were made to technology budgets. 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.).

During 2015-2016, President Hicswa appointed task forces to anticipate emerging factors. The [Organizational Structure Task Force](#) evaluated NWC's future needs regarding appropriate staffing to accomplish the key performance indicators of Vision 2020. The [Faculty Salary Task Force](#) reviewed faculty salaries.

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

Institutional planning efforts are focused on sustainability beyond recycling with the implementation of the Vision 2020 institutional priority of Environment. Participation in NACUBO's [key facilities metrics](#) serves as a starting point for comparative work. VPASF Watson serves on NACUBO's National Sustainable Advisory Panel and meets monthly with vice presidents nationwide to discuss political, environmental, and operational activities related to sustainability. This knowledge is used to promote increased sustainability projects as returns on investment allow.

These efforts demonstrate that NWC anticipates and responds to a variety of factors in institutional planning.

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5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Argument

1. 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.

President's Operational Plan

The Board of Trustees (BOT) sets [institutional priorities](#) each year. Once the BOT has set the priorities, the Vice Presidents meet with President Hicswa to determine goals for the year. The President's Operational Plan guides operations for all areas. Throughout the year, the President and Vice President's conduct periodic reviews of the Operational Plan to monitor progress ([FY17](#), [FY16](#), [FY15](#), [FY14](#)).

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 Facilities Master Plan is scheduled to be updated in Fall 2017.

Annual Report

The Office of College Relations publishes an [Annual Report](#) each summer, which reports on progress towards [Vision 2020](#): innovation and distinction in [experience](#), [connections](#), and [environment](#). This online publication is promoted via a postcard mailed to external stakeholders, news release, and paid newspaper advertising in service area newspapers.

Institutional Fact Card

Annually, the Offices of College Relations and Institutional Research compile an [Institutional Fact Card](#), which includes information covering college information, including the mission, enrollment, student costs, scholarships, employee counts, library resources, budget, and endowment funds.

The Office of Institutional Research distributes hard copies of the Fact Card to internal and external constituents; an online version appears as the [Institutional Profile](#) 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 to the academic 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 Outcomes Report](#) to the Central Assessment Team (CAT), which reviews, scores with a rubric, and provides feedback to the program (see 4.A., 4.B.).

To address budget shortfalls in Spring 2016, the VPAA and the Academic Advisory Council developed [academic program discontinuation](#) criteria. 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 ([2015](#)). To gather employee feedback on the institutional climate, employees participated in The Chronicle of Higher Education's Great Colleges to Work For survey during [2012](#) and [2014](#). In 2016, NWC administered the Personal Assessment of the College Environment ([PACE](#)) survey to gather employee feedback. NWC uses survey results to develop and document evidence of performance in operations.

2. NWC learns from its experience and strives to continuously improve all aspects of its operations as evidence 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.)
- [Student support improvement](#) based on CCSSE results (see 3.D.)

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 needs 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 annually monitoring the measurements for the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan Tracking Report. In 2014, President Hicswa [charged](#) IEC with exploring 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.

Sources

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- Annual_Report_Overview_Website_2016-2017
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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

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.

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 \$38 million in assets. These resources support efforts to improve the campus and move forward with Vision 2020. Participatory budget planning and expanded program reviews will assist with future allocation of resources.

Employee Feedback on Criterion Five

The Assurance Argument Team held informational workshops on Criterion Five on January 4th and 13th, 2017. At those workshops, employees were asked to provide [evidence statements](#) pertaining to the sub-components of this criterion.

Future Plans

NWC will maintain and implement processes and planning to ensure that its resources and structures are sufficient to fulfill its mission and continuously improve the quality of its educational offerings.

NWC will:

- Expand program review and outcome assessment to non-academic areas
- Implement the Strategic Enrollment Plan
- Implement a comprehensive model of predictive scheduling
- Utilize building and grounds recommendation reports to prioritize deferred maintenance
- Seek funding for capital projects including a new visual and performing arts facility and student center
- Identify opportunities to address employee compensation

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

- Committee List 2016-2017
- Criterion 5_Workshop Comments