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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

August 1, 2014

Dear Higher Learning Commission Site Visit Team:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, students, faculty, staff, and alumni of Northwest Iowa Community College, I am pleased to provide you with NCC’s Self-study. It has been a pleasure to review the progress the college has made since the last comprehensive visit for reaccreditation by the HLC in 2004.

Numerous individuals, both internal and external, worked collaboratively to prepare this document. They dedicated countless hours to writing and reviewing the success of this incredible institution in achieving its mission of “rapidly responding to the global needs of our changing community.” I commend them for their analysis of data, trends, and processes which has sharpened our focus on students and defined our vision for the future. Our chosen theme of “Detect. Deduce. Disclose...DO” is very appropriate.

We are proud of our college. NCC serves students in our 4 ½-county area, as well as those from outside our area through unique programs. Our dedicated staff and faculty continue to deliver quality services and education that opens doors, changes lives, and enriches our communities, one life at a time. However, our impact extends beyond our local community, to the state, and region. Our partners rely on us to provide the skilled workforce that drives Iowa’s economy.

Our community college has been honored to receive national and state recognition. For the third time, NCC has been selected as one of the top 150 community colleges nationwide to be eligible to apply for the $1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence in 2015. We have been named the safest college in Iowa, and, according to College Measures, we have the highest graduation and transfer rates among all community colleges in the state. NCC is indeed a Great College to Work For® as recognized by the Chronicle of Higher Education for the third year in a row.

This self-study laid the groundwork for our new strategic plan “Vision 2020,” and we have begun our fourth capital campaign, “Everyone Knows Someone Who Chose NCC,” to raise capital for career and technical education facilities, scholarships, instructional equipment, and advanced technology. We continue to build and strengthen our institution as we recognize areas of growth and opportunity.

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring quality higher education. With enthusiasm we prepare to host your team in beautiful Northwest Iowa on October 6, 7, and 8, 2014, giving us the opportunity to personally tell our incredible story and express our passion for the future.

Sincerely,

Alethea F. Stubbe, Ph.D.
President
The NCC Board of Trustees members are publicly elected and represent the seven regions of the geographic area served by the college.
The Northwest Iowa Community College Self-study report summarizes and evaluates accomplishments to date and identifies the next steps to be taken for continuing improvement. The writing of the self-study was inclusive, involving all members of the campus community.

The process for compiling the document was begun in 2012 with the appointment of Dr. Jan Snyder, Vice President of Institutional Advancement & External Affairs, as coordinator. In coordination with the Executive Council, volunteers were sought to co-chair the five criterion writing teams.

At an all-college meeting in October 2012, all faculty and staff were invited to participate in the writing of the self-study. Taking on the theme of “Sherlock” the lively event included co-chairs explaining to everyone why people should join their writing team. Sherlock was chosen as a theme because Holmes and Watson embody the two major aspects of a self-study – investigation and reporting. The theme became Detect, Deduce, Disclose...Do!

Co-chairs met with writing teams periodically during 2012 and 2013. The teams submitted their research to the writing team in January of 2014. As portions of the self-study were written, the Executive Council reviewed first drafts before they were returned to faculty and staff for comment. The final document was made available publicly through the NCC website, and an executive summary of the document was provided to all stakeholders.

This report was written to be understood by all of the college’s stakeholders, from the trustees to the parents of potential students, as well as officers of the Higher Learning Commission. It serves both as an historical record and as a guide for future improvements.
Self-study Coordinator: Dr. Jan Snyder
Writers: Gretchen Bartelson & Mariah Oliver
Layout: Kristin Kollbaum & Lori Richards
Institutional Research Liaison: Kathi Knobloch
Proof: Sarah Breems-Diekevers & Nancy Filkins
President: Dr. Alethea F. Stubbe

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Team Members: Scott Abbott, Mark Bohnet, Brian Buren, Rick Cannoy, Jennifer Dokter, Aaron Dvorak, Brad Gill, Amy Jurrens, Kristin Kollbaum, Byron Krull, Pamela Lien, Eric Ortner, Lori Richards, Nicole Runia, Karri Spanjer, Mark Steinle, Lesa Stofferan, Lisa Story, Logan Van Den Berg, Cher Vollink, Denny Wallace, Steven Youngs

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Team Members: Natalie Cox, Holly DeGrote, Greta Giese, Doug Hoaglund, Robbi Hoekstra, Vicki Irwin, Chris Keahi, April Klein, Angela Klyn, Katelyn Kooiman, Dee Kreykes, Linda Kreykes, Philip Louters, Craig Mackoy, Gary Morris, Robert Mulder, Steve Pearce, Mark Pritts, Ryan Steffen, Twyla Vogel, Jessica Williams

Criterion III – Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
Team Leaders: Dr. John Hartog III, Dr. Rhonda Pennings, and Dr. Beth Frankenstein
Team Members: Norma Azpeitia, Kyle Baetsle, Jami Bailey, Amy Bomgaars, Rodney Crater, Mike Davis, Nancy Filkens, Tara Fjeld, Sarah Fykstra, Russ Gaalswyk, Stephanie Hanna, Tim Hanson, Karla Harris, Ruth Hobson, Karna Hofmeyer, Ona Johnson, Scott Meinecke, Paula Meyer, Laura Nachtigal, Stephanie Peterson, Dawn Recher, Doug Rodger, Kate Schlenger, Adam Thiner

Criterion IV – Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
Team Leaders: Steve Waldstein, Sheila Drenkow, and Sue Grapevine
Team Members: Brian Albrecht, Chuck Ball, Janet Boone, Sarah Breems-Diekevers, Brian Busch, Ryan Cannoy, Michelle Davis, Tim Floen, Jim Gaard, Jim Groote, Robert Hoting, Patrick Johnson, Steve Koel, MariBeth Lane, Alicia Pennings, Jeff Peterson, Susan Schmidt, Roger Solberg, Marilyn Stille, Ellie Studer, Cindy Talsma, Terry Tausz, Nate Voss, Melanie Wynja

Criterion V – Resources, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Team Leaders: Mark Brown and Molly Galm
Team Members: Jason Anderson, Donna Ascherl, Jerry Baas, Evan Bensley, Rod Borer, Mary Cowan, Laurie Edwards, Tatum Geerdes, Amanda Haverhals, Todd Huesman, Robbie Jungers, Gladys Kroese, Kristi Landis, Judy Nieuwenhuis, John Pennings, Lori Punt, Dan Reeves, Stephanie Sandwell, Marlys Schwbach, Brian Seligman, Pat Strouth, Lee Van Kley, Jennifer Van Regenmorter, Marv Winkel, Mindy Witham
INTRODUCTION

THE COLLEGE, THE COMMUNITY, ACCREDITATION HISTORY AND CHANGES SINCE 2004

The College
Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) is the only public, two-year community college in extreme northwest Iowa. It is dedicated to providing quality, accessible and affordable educational opportunities in the region. In addition to providing quality arts and science transfer and technical education opportunities, the college provides workforce training and continuing education programs.

Size is not always the measure of success. Although NCC is the most rural and the smallest community college, recent state and national honors confirm the quality education provided by Northwest Iowa Community College.

• Top 120 Best Community Colleges in the Nation (2011, 2013) and Top 150 Best Community Colleges in the Nation: Aspen Institute (2015)

• 11th Best Community College in the Nation: TheBestSchools.com (2013)

• 15th in the Nation: Create a Career (2013)

• Highest Graduation/Transfer Rate: CollegeMeasures.com (2013)


• Safest College in Iowa: StateUniversity.com (2013)

• Top 4 in the Nation, Automotive Program: Tomorrow’s Tech 2013 School of the Year Contest

• Seventh in the Nation for Graduate Success: CNN Money (2012)

• Top 20 Fastest Growing Community Colleges in the Nation: Community College Week (2010)
College History
Northwest Iowa Community College began as a pilot program sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education and conducted by the Sheldon Community School District in January 1964 under the name of Northwest Iowa Vocational School. During the period 1964–66, three vocational programs were offered to students from 19 high schools in Lyon, O’Brien, Osceola, and Sioux counties. The first classes met in rented facilities in downtown Sheldon.

In July 1965 the Iowa State Legislature enacted Senate File 550, a statute which permitted formation of area schools. In January 1966 the State Board of Public Instruction approved an application for Merged Area IV, composed of the same area which had been served in the pilot project. A board of seven directors was elected on April 20, 1966, representing seven districts throughout the region. On April 27, 1966, the Northwest Iowa Vocational School was officially organized.

NCC was originally organized as a vocational school. When needs in the communities served changed, the college applied for approval to provide a limited arts and science program in 1973 and began offering the program in 1975. This limited program, which offered courses in an evening college format, served the needs of area residents, specifically to veterans returning from Vietnam. After peak veteran enrollment passed, overall enrollment fell to a modest level, and the arts and sciences program was discontinued in 1980.

In 1975 the college changed its name to Northwest Iowa Technical College (NITC). In 1988 the college received permission from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and the Department of Education to again offer programs leading to the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. On July 1, 1993, the name of the college was changed to Northwest Iowa Community College to reflect its status as a comprehensive community college.

In 1999 the college, along with six other Iowa community colleges, formed a partnership to organize the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC) to provide quality online educational opportunities. NCC’s partnership with the ICCOC has played a significant role in increasing the enrollments in the past decade, particularly in concurrent enrollment courses.
College Instruction
Northwest Iowa Community College delivers career and technical education, college transfer education, and non-credit programs. The portion of the Iowa Code that established the community college system tasks each community college with several responsibilities including providing the first two years of college work, vocational and technical training, workforce training, high school equivalency diplomas, and educational opportunities for high school students.

Programs are delivered on campus, off campus, and online. The diversity of programs is one of the strengths of the college. There are two academic divisions and a division responsible for non-credit instruction. They are the Division of Applied Technology, the Division of Arts and Science/Business and Health, and the Division of Workforce and Continuing Education.

Division of Applied Technology: The roots of NCC are deep in applied technology, and the college is respected for the career and technical education provided to students. Students may enroll in programs that lead to certificates, diplomas and degrees in construction, electrical, manufacturing, and transportation. Students may enroll in quality technical programs that are exclusive, including powerline and heavy equipment.

Division of Arts and Science/Business and Health: NCC is also known for the quality college transfer and business programs, as well as the exceptional health care programs available at the campus and at a distance. Students may take courses that lead to an Associate of Arts degree that is widely accepted by four-year colleges in the area. The college transfer courses are the ones most often taken online, and the college delivers extensive opportunities for students to learn at a distance. The online opportunities are contributing to the significant enrollment of concurrent enrollment students.

Health programs have expanded from one small practical nursing program to associate degree nursing. The nursing program is one of the largest on campus, and it continually strives to be innovative in their instruction. Health information technology, radiologic technology, pharmacy technician, medical coding, and health management degrees and diplomas are available. Business programs in accounting, administrative secretarial, and management are the third leg of this division.

The Center for Teaching and Learning: The rapid growth of online learning, and the desire to continue the activities of the Title III grant, led the college to form the Center for Teaching and Learning in 2013. This division is responsible for the delivery of online instruction, as well as curriculum development, assessment, faculty training, and grant development.
Division of Workforce and Continuing Education: Each year nearly one in three people in the NCC service area take the opportunity to participate in non-credit workforce and continuing education courses. Individuals have the opportunity to improve their technical and professional skills or to participate in lifelong learning activities that are more recreational in focus. Area business and industry capitalize on education and training for their employees through workforce development programs.

College Facilities
The NCC campus is located on 263 acres in extreme northwest Iowa. Campus buildings cover 264,036 square feet of space. In addition to buildings, the campus includes a powerline practice field and a truck driving range. The college has expanded the facilities significantly in the past decade. Building H, which houses the college’s healthcare programs, was completed in 2004. An addition to this building was completed in 2008 to accommodate the new Radiologic Technology program. The most recent classroom expansion was completed on Building D in 2009, adding several classrooms and offices. Student housing offerings expanded with the completion of Lyon and O’Brien Halls in 2007 and 2009. Unimproved acres of campus are leased to the Sheldon Community School District and the high school agriculture classes for crop production [N122].

The college, the City of Sheldon, and the local hospital established a partnership to construct a wellness facility on campus. The 37,500-square-foot Northwest Iowa Lifelong Learning and Recreation Center (LLRC) opened in 2011. This partnership provides recreation facilities and activities for NCC students, staff, and the public. The LLRC serves as a location for city recreation leagues, and many other public activities. In 2013 the partnership expanded to include the facility that is now called LLRC East. Managed by the staff of the LLRC, this facility is located next to the Sheldon hospital and adjacent to hospital ancillary services.

In the fall of 2013 the college started a College and Career Academy in Orange City, Iowa. This partnership of the community, businesses, K–12 partners, other area colleges, and NCC is delivering instruction in a rented facility nearer to the students being served. The college also rents a computer lab in the library in Sioux Center that is used for community and college programming.

College Enrollments
In the decade since the last self-study for the Higher Learning Commission, NCC has experienced significant growth in enrollments due to new programs, economic reversals, and increased recruiting. The extraordinary growth seen in 2010 has leveled off and may be decreasing slightly. As you can see on the next page, enrollments in Applied Technology programs remain strong, while college transfer enrollments have grown more significantly. More information is available on enrollments in the 2012 Fact Book (the 2014 is not yet published) [N1].
Generally the college has experienced 32.25 percent increase in enrollments comparing total enrollments from 2005 through 2012. Demographically, students at NCC are generally considered ‘traditional’ age. More than 80 percent of all NCC students are age 25 or younger. There are slightly more female students (56.3%) than male students (43.7%). Approximately 70% of students are part-time, not including the enrollments by high school students in concurrent enrollment classes.

Due to the significant number of part-time students it is important to understand what the full-time equivalency would be. Since 2009 the college has experienced a 24% increase in enrollments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NCC Total Program Headcount by Major by Fiscal Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Technology</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Transfer</td>
<td>1,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Credit count may be the clearer way to understand college enrollments, and it helps to clarify the confusion about the differences between full-time and part-time enrollments. Since 2005 NCC has seen a significant increase in total credit count.

Headcount has increased at a faster rate in Applied Technology programs, but credit count has increased at a faster rate in Arts and Science courses.

### NCC Total Credit Count by Major by Fiscal Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25,636</td>
<td>24,757</td>
<td>26,690</td>
<td>28,512</td>
<td>29,668</td>
<td>29,557</td>
<td>35,260</td>
<td>35,842</td>
<td>34,342</td>
<td>34,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Science</td>
<td>9,125</td>
<td>10,414</td>
<td>10,568</td>
<td>10,868</td>
<td>14,804</td>
<td>14,930</td>
<td>14,350</td>
<td>14,707</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Health</td>
<td>6,888</td>
<td>7,263</td>
<td>7,104</td>
<td>6,143</td>
<td>7,352</td>
<td>7,953</td>
<td>7,853</td>
<td>8,172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Technology</td>
<td>10,230</td>
<td>10,504</td>
<td>11,633</td>
<td>12,313</td>
<td>12,261</td>
<td>12,858</td>
<td>12,382</td>
<td>11,728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also since 2005, there has been a significant increase in online credits earned by students. In the fall of 2013, more than a quarter of all credits taken were online. High school students taking concurrent enrollment credits make up a portion of this increase.
The percentage of concurrent enrollment students has also grown, making NCC one of the leaders in the state of Iowa.

Graduation rates have exceeded enrollment growth. There has been a 43 percent increase in the number of graduates from the 2005 academic year to the 2013 academic year. NCC’s placement survey indicates nearly all graduates are employed and the vast majority continue to work in Iowa.

Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes (based on LIVE data)—Academic Year (8-1-05 thru 7-31-13)
Graduates—Report Manager / Registration / NCC Graduates List

Non-credit enrollments have decreased slightly over the same period of time. However, this is still a strong program at NCC. A contributing factor to the decrease is changes in the reporting requirements of non-credit hours by the state of Iowa. Even with the decrease, more than 1 in 3 people in the region enroll in one of these courses each year.

NCC Total Non-Credit Duplicated Headcount—Fiscal Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26,596</td>
<td>24,032</td>
<td>24,417</td>
<td>21,312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2012 Fact Book, p. 71
College Employees
College staff has expanded since 2005 to meet the demands of increased enrollments and expanded programs and services, although full-time instructional staff has not changed significantly during this time. However, the number of adjuncts employed by the college has increased 48 percent. The vast majority of online courses are taught by adjuncts. Adjuncts teach primarily in the Arts and Science/Business and Health Division. In all but two years (2005 and 2009) the majority of credits taught in this division were taught by adjunct faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit Hours Taught—Fiscal Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Technology Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Technology Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time/Adjunct Instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Science/Business and Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Science/Business and Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time/Adjunct Instructors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Community
NCC is located in the geographical center of its four and one-half county service area which is comprised of Lyon, O’Brien, Osceola, Sioux and half of Cherokee counties. This area is collectively known as Merged Area IV. According to the 2010 Census, NCC serves the 68,590 people who live in the region. Sheldon, population 5,188, is home to NCC’s campus and one of the three largest communities in the service area. The region is extremely rural, which is demonstrated by the population density.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census*
In general residents of Area IV have less education and earn less than the rest of the state and nation as a whole. In addition, there seems to be a larger proportion of people under 18 years old and those over 65 in the region than in the rest of the state and across the country.

### 2010 U.S. Census Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Area IV</th>
<th>Iowa</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population change, 2000 to 2010</td>
<td>-1.02%</td>
<td>3.94%</td>
<td>8.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population with a bachelor’s degree or higher</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population under 18 years old</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population 65 and older</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2010 Census and American Community Survey

### The College’s Response to the Challenges in the 2004 Self-study

During the process of writing the 2004 Self-study, Northwest Iowa Community College identified ways that the institution needed to **Challenge Ourselves**. It is gratifying to know that the 2004 Self-study did not get put on the shelf for a decade but became a goal-setting guide for the college.

Comments were sought from the Executive Council to help assess our progress on the challenges, and here is a brief explanation of the ways in which NCC has worked to meet these challenges since the 2004 Comprehensive Visit [N2]. By clustering the challenges in all five criteria, the following focus areas emerged:

1. Assessment and Instruction
2. Data Collection and Usage
3. Collaboration, Communication, and Planning
4. Partnerships
5. Policies and Procedures
6. Resources
7. Student Life

The process of writing the 2004 Self-study made it clear to the college that much work still needed to be done on **Assessment and Instruction**, particularly in data collection and closing the loop. At that time there was a plan to move the process forward, but it became very clear in the next two years that more time, effort, and resources would be needed. In 2008 the college developed and wrote a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant which was funded in the fall of 2008. A major part of this grant was devoted to faculty development in assessment, the rewriting of curriculum to be outcome based, and to purchase software to track outcomes. One more challenge was to rewrite the five-year program evaluation tool to be more data informed and to streamline the process so that it was useful to the program being reviewed.
By the time the grant was completed in the fall of 2013, significant changes had taken place at NCC. First, assessment is systematic and well documented. Second, the faculty and staff have better understanding and now see assessment as something useful, not just another regulation to meet. Finally, data are being used to make informed decisions about changing and improving instruction. The college has come very far in the assessment process, and planning to improve assessment strategies is ongoing. The grant truly did strengthen the institution.

The second major need identified in the last self-study was for improved **Data Collection and Usage**. At the time of the last HLC visit the institution was deeply involved in implementing a new student information system (SIS) – Colleague (Ellucian/Datatel). At that time it was evident that data were needed, but it was hard to imagine the world of data usage now being practiced at NCC. The college has managed to navigate this decade of digital transformation with equanimity, although not without frustration. Colleague went ‘live’ in 2005 and the process of moving towards using one data source for all reportable information began. Reporting out of Colleague is difficult, and in 2009 the SQL database server was launched to assist in reporting. Today this is a primary source of information for decision makers across the campus. The IT staff has a dedicated person to assist with data collection and reporting. Now the work is moving from reports to dashboards, so that decisions can be made in a timely manner.

Besides the data from Colleague, online courses are also using more data, from improved reporting processes from the Learning Management System (LMS) and through the use of instructor dashboards. In 2011 the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC) was awarded a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to build instructor dashboards to increase student success in key gatekeeper courses. NCC was a lead partner in the grant, and today all online instructors have access to the dashboard which allows them to quickly see who is not succeeding and intervene in a timely manner [N3].

**Collaboration, Communication, and Planning** are the challenges that target the desire of the talented staff and faculty at NCC to be involved in decision making. To further meet these challenges, the college has implemented new planning processes, new committees, and improved communication through the website, portal, shared computer space, and the President’s Weekly Updates [N192].

The college has a long history of strong **Partnerships**, but there is always room for improvement and expansion. During the past decade the added work on articulation with four-year partners, the implementation of common course numbering among the Iowa community colleges, the work to obtain NACEP accreditation, improved tracking of partner data, and expanded grant opportunities has added to the strong partnerships that NCC has with K–12s and area business and industry.
Improving and reviewing **Policies and Procedures** may not be the most interesting part of daily life, but this has been instituted as part of the monthly work of the administration and the Board of Trustees.

Having enough **Resources** is a challenge for most colleges, and Northwest Iowa Community College is no exception. In the past decade the college has completed one capital fund drive and started another. Grant opportunities have been sought, although this is increasingly difficult. The college did successfully pass the existing Plant Fund Levy but failed three General Obligation Bond attempts. The expansion of Foundation work and the development of an Alumni Association is part of the strategy to seek additional resources to support instruction at NCC.

Finally, the desire to improve **Student Life** at NCC has been the topic of many planning sessions and has seen some fruition. First, the Lifelong Learning and Recreation Center (LLRC) opened three years ago for students, staff, and the community. Expanded campus living quarters, the remodeled Campus Store, enhanced staff oversight and programming, and expanded off-campus learning opportunities have all improved the life of students at NCC.

In 2005 the students and staff collaborated to choose school colors (red and silver), and then in 2011 a college mascot was selected. NCC’s mascot is a mountain lion named Thunder.
Accreditation History
February 18, 1976 – NCC Board of Trustees passed a motion to proceed with candidacy status with the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

June 1980 – NCC received initial accreditation from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

June 1985 – Following a Comprehensive Visit, NCC received a continuation of its accreditation status for a ten-year period.

1987 – NCC formally requested a change in the status of education programs to include the granting of Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees.

December 1987 – NCC was granted authorization to provide programs leading to certificates, diplomas, the Associate of Applied Science, the Associate of Arts, and the Associate of Science degrees, thus providing NCC with community college status.

October 1994 – NCC received a continuation of its accreditation status for a ten-year period with the recommendation of a Focus Visit on general education.

November 1997 – A Focus Visit concentrating on general education occurred and it was recommended NCC have the next Comprehensive Visit in 2004–05.

April 2002 – NCA reviewed online offerings through the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC) and initially approved NCC to grant associate degrees online.

Fall 2002 – Received Readers’ Panel comments that stated a need for a Focus Visit within two years to review the ICCOC strategic assessment plans. ICCOC challenged the need for this Focus Visit because the ICCOC does not grant degrees; the individual colleges do.

February 2003 – Members of ICCOC attended a review committee meeting to question the HLC Readers’ Panel decision to call for a Focus Visit in two years. The Review Committee upheld the original April 2002 Focus Visit decision that approved NCC to grant associate degrees online without a focus visit.

October 2004 – NCC received a continuation of its accreditation status for a ten-year period with no Focus Visits.

April 2012 – NCC submitted a Distance Delivery Confirmation form with the HLC.

Response to Concerns
No concerns were identified as part of the 2004 Comprehensive Visit.
CRITERION ONE—MISSION

Northwest Iowa Community College’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides NCC’s operations.
Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) has served the region with distinction for 50 years, growing from a small technical school into a nationally-recognized successful community college. NCC is the smallest community college in Iowa and is a vital, community-minded organization that focuses on the needs of students and residents it serves. The college is strong because of the integrity with which it seeks to fulfill its mission. The Board, administration, faculty, staff and students are all part of an organization dedicated to meeting the challenges of the 21st Century.

1. A. The Institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

   In order to meet these challenges, the college has carefully adopted and integrated into practice two key statements, the NCC Mission Statement and the NCC Vision Statement. From these statements and the accompanying documentation, it will be evident that the institution’s mission is clear and publicly articulated, guiding the institution’s operations. Here are the current statements that serve as the guiding principles for decision making at Northwest Iowa Community College.

   **NCC Mission Statement**
   Northwest Iowa Community College is a progressive learning college rapidly responding to the global needs of our changing community.

   **NCC Vision Statement**
   We are driven to be the community college of choice for lifelong learning, personal development, and retraining.

   The following chart explains how the college’s mission drives other policies, procedures, and processes at NCC.
1. A.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.

NCC has a history of involving both internal and external constituents in developing the mission and vision statements. Additionally, it is necessary to reference the Iowa Code, which established community colleges in the state and dictates components that must be considered in the process of defining the mission.

Chapter 260C of the Iowa Code contains the enabling provisions for community colleges [N39]. Under Iowa Code parameters are specified for the educational offerings of community colleges. These are included in NCC Board Policy 102. [N11] “Northwest Iowa Community College should provide educational opportunities and services in each of the following, when applicable, but not necessarily limited to:

1. The first two years of college work including preprofessional education.
2. Vocational and technical training.
3. Programs for in-service training and retraining of workers.
4. Programs for high school completion for students of post-high school age.
5. Programs for all students of high school age who may best serve themselves by enrolling for vocational and technical training while also enrolled in a local high school, public or private.
6. Programs for students of high school age to provide advanced college placement courses not taught at a student’s high school, while the student is also enrolled in high school.
7. Student personnel services.
8. Community services.
9. Vocational education for persons who have academic, socioeconomic or other disabilities which prevent succeeding in regular vocational education programs.
10. Training, retraining, and all necessary preparation for productive employment of all citizens.
11. Vocational and technical training for persons who are not enrolled in a high school and who have not completed high school.
12. Developmental education for persons who are academically or personally underprepared to succeed in their program of study.”
The college has always operated within the parameters dictated by the Iowa Code. The current mission is certified by the NCC Board of Trustees. This is the third college mission statement since 1993. The previous version of the mission statement was approved in 2004 in the midst of significant institutional changes.

At the time of the last PEAQ visit, NCC just completed a comprehensive strategic planning process, which included writing new mission and vision statements. This process involved input from the entire campus, including students and the Board of Trustees. Leaders from communities served by the college provided input in the process as well.

In 2010 the strategic plan was again updated, and the mission statement was once again re-evaluated. Under the leadership of the Executive Council, with input from college personnel, slight changes were made to the 2004 statements. The NCC Board of Trustees approved the current mission statement in April 2011, which transposed two words, global and changing, to better reflect how NCC serves the area. The college is not a global institution, but area residents and industries do have global needs. In addition, students graduating from NCC need to be prepared to work in an increasingly global world.

At the same time that the mission statement was developed, a vision statement was also created. In 2003 the statement read, “We are driven to be the community college of choice for learning.” In 2011 it was reviewed and now states, “We are driven to be the community college of choice for lifelong learning, personal development and retraining.” This is a change that reflects the percentage of work done by NCC in the area of business and industry training and non-credit continuing education.
This process of developing the mission statement is suited to the nature and culture of the institution through college leadership’s goal to be collaborative and inclusive. Board Policy 101 states, “Partnerships from all sectors enhance community and economic development.” The collaborative effort is further supported by the strategic plan which identified strengthening and expanding learning opportunities for our communities through partnerships and new initiatives [N11]. This policy applies to partnerships with external constituents, but it also guides the relationship between the Board, the administration, the faculty and the staff at NCC. The administration is committed to including input from college personnel whenever possible.

As a small institution with fewer constituents, collaboration may be easier to foster, but here it is done deliberately. The president is committed to this ideal and to thinking and working as a team. Evidence of improvement in this arena includes the Modern Think Survey from the Chronicle of Higher Education in 2012, which demonstrated a composite score on collaboration of 56%. In 2013 it had risen to 64% (which bookends the upper range of the “fair” category) [N5].

### Modern Think Employee Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction/Support</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect &amp; Appreciation</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Average</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Results reflect your school’s average percent positive for each survey dimension, that is, the percentage of your faculty and staff that responded with "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to the statements comprising each theme.

Source: Modern Think Higher Education Insight Survey 2013

The NCC Organizational Chart is not represented as a top-down hierarchy; it is an interconnected network showing the relationship of all college departments and personnel [N6].

1. **A.2 The institution’s academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.**

All divisions at Northwest Iowa Community College are aligned with the NCC Mission Statement, and there are four key components to the statement that support this claim: progressive learning college, rapidly responding, global needs, and changing community.
Progressive learning college – NCC focuses on students first, and their education and welfare are of primary importance. To that end, the college also works to make sure that students have the best education possible by:

• Providing the technology and information needed to train students with industry standard equipment so they may be successful in the workforce. Evidence of this is demonstrated in a 14% increase spent on the information technology infrastructure from FY 2012 to FY 2014.

• Spending significant amounts each year on technology for instruction, particularly for career and technical education. Through a budgeting process tied to assessment, the college works to ensure that students are being trained on the latest technology.

• Seeking input from advisory committee members to inform faculty on industry trends, necessary workforce skills, and curricular changes to provide the best education possible to students.

• Evolving and improving the process of student assessment. All programs have established learning outcomes and expected benchmarks, and instructors are evaluating student success and making changes in the way students are taught and assessed to improve learning.

• Dedicating $34,990 in individual staff development for administration, faculty, and support staff each year. Administration receives $300 per employee, faculty members receive $572 per employee, and support staff members receive $100. The college demonstrates its support for life-long learning by providing opportunities for employees to continue learning for “effective and efficient job performance, to keep up with changing technology, and for personal improvement,” Employee Handbook (p. 24) [N108].

• Maintaining an Educational Assistance Program to allow full-time employees to earn additional educational credentials. Since 2004 35 past and present employees have participated in the program [N108].

• Additional opportunities are provided for faculty and staff to attend state-wide professional development training such as LINC or CLIC, attending HLC meetings, and the annual Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC) conference [N124].

• Preparing for the anticipated influx of Hispanic students anticipated in the next decade due to the growing Hispanic population and Hispanic students graduating from local K–12 schools.

• Encouraging students to participate in clubs and organizations, including SkillsUSA.
Rapidly responding – NCC strives to meet needs as soon as identified. Examples of this include:

• Establishing programs that meet industry need, local interest, and emerging job markets. A total of 14 new programs have been developed in the fields of pharmacy technician, medical coding, radiologic technology, health care management, carpentry, construction technology, heavy equipment operation and maintenance, associate degree nursing—hybrid, advanced welding technology, and professional photography.

• Developing and offering programming to provide necessary updates/required education necessary for industries. This is offered through the Workforce and Continuing Education Division and has included electrical code updates, plumbing and lead safe renovators.

• Sending a rapid response team out when businesses/factories close to inform displaced workers of short-term job training available as well as programs the college offers for retraining workers.

Global needs – Rural Iowa is engaged in the global economy, and NCC strives to assist local business and industry to succeed.

• A six county region, including all of the counties that NCC serves, was granted the fourth foreign trade zone established in Iowa and the first in a rural area in early 2014. The project is handled under the direction of Northwest Iowa Developers. NCC is part of and assists with facilitating the work of the organization. The foreign trade zone will make it easier for businesses to reach customers globally. They will be able to accomplish this by reducing the costs of trade internationally, by streamlining customs procedures, and by deferring customs duties and federal excise taxes.

• Offering foreign language programs through the Workforce and Continuing Education Division including Spanish for Nursing and Spanish for the Workplace [N30].

• Providing English as a Second Language training (ESL), adult literacy training, and the High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) [N118].

• Providing an opportunity for students, staff, faculty, and community members to discuss the changing demographics of rural Iowa through film screenings and discussions [N143].
Changing Community – Rural Iowa is faced with changes that include a growing ethnic diversity, an aging population, and a shift in the economic base.

Ethnic diversity has increased noticeably since 2000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau there has been a 141 percent increase in population identifying as non-white or Hispanic living in Area IV. In the five counties which NCC serves all or part of, the vast majority of that increase in population diversity is under the age of 19. About 10 percent of the total population from the age of 0–19 identify as Hispanic. The other large age bracket with a high Hispanic population is 25–39 year olds. NCC is aware of this changing demographic and is planning how best to serve the growing Hispanic population.

K–12 School Districts annually report student ethnicity to the Iowa Department of Education. In the 10 years between 2003–04 and 2013–2014 in the 13 public school districts located within Area IV, a total of 1,094 more Hispanic students were enrolled in K–12s, which represents a nearly 6% increase in ethnic diversity. At the same time those same schools lost 618 students who identified as white, non-Hispanic. For the first time schools in northwest Iowa are experiencing significant ethnic diversity.

However, NCC remains predominantly homogeneous because the minority numbers remain statistically small. The college has seen a consistent increase in ethnic diversity in students enrolled in classes at NCC from 14 in 2004 to 42 in 2012. However, the age groups demonstrating the highest percentage of Hispanics located within the area served by NCC are under the age of 10 or over the age of 25 at the time of the 2010 Census. More than 80 percent of NCC’s student body identifies as under the age of 25. The vast majority of Hispanics living in Area IV falls outside of NCC’s student demographics.

The changing population of Northwest Iowa is another concern for NCC. The population served by the college is decreasing and aging. This shift is putting pressure on business and industry, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities. The K–12s have fewer students and are struggling to meet educational demands in rural communities. There are fewer high school students to graduate each year, reducing the number of students who are eligible to attend NCC.

### 2010 U.S. Census Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Area IV</th>
<th>Iowa</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population change, 2000 to 2010</td>
<td>-1.02%</td>
<td>3.94%</td>
<td>8.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population 65 and older</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2010 Census and American Community Survey
The **economic base** is experiencing challenges because of the decreasing population and aging population. Business and industry needs employees, especially the healthcare industry. Technology is changing, and employees need skills that have not been a traditional part of the NCC program offerings. Other curricular areas where the college needs to expand programming to meet industry demand for employees includes wind energy, ethanol production, biotechnology, and agriculture. However, the decreasing tax base and lack of students makes meeting these challenges difficult.

### Academic Programs

Academic programs at Northwest Iowa Community College are aligned with the mission statement. Several established processes help the college implement the mission statement and affect the academic programs. Advisory committees inform instructors of changes in industry, necessary curriculum modifications and provide assistance in recruiting potential students and hiring new graduates. The advisory committee plays an important role in program evaluation. All programs of study are required to go through a comprehensive program evaluation every five years. Results of the program evaluation are utilized by program faculty and the curriculum committee to revise courses. The curriculum committee, which is led by faculty and comprised of faculty and deans, student services and marketing personnel, oversees curriculum changes. Through the implementation of the 2008–13 Title III Grant, the college has improved instructors’ ability to assess student learning and to implement active learning strategies. By developing better instructional methods NCC can definitely see that students are learning the defined outcomes. Instructors have implemented various course-delivery methods which include face-to-face, online, blended, and abbreviated terms. As student interest in a specific course delivery method changes, NCC adapts.

The **Arts and Science** program at NCC has grown steadily in recent years. This trend has strengthened as more students are looking to complete college in an economical fashion. A portion of growth has been in the concurrent enrollments of high school students. The number of students in the Arts and Science program with the intention to complete an associate’s degree and then transfer to a four-year institution has grown. This has led to expanding transfer agreements with four-year colleges and universities. Articulation agreements are located in the office of the Chief Academic Officer.

> Jamie Mouw  
> ‘10 Associate of Arts graduate, Northwest Iowa Community College  
> ‘12 Business graduate, Morningside College
Career and technical programs on campus have steady enrollments, and in some instances are consistently full, demonstrating a continued demand in the workforce for these programs. The high number of graduates working within their area of study indicates there is work available for graduates. The college has responded to the changing needs in the community by establishing new programs. New programs include the extended practical nursing, extended associate degree nursing, advanced welding, professional photography, substation technician, wellness management, pharmacy technician and an expanded powerline program. New programs are established based on an environmental scan of the region, state of Iowa and national data, requests from students, and an estimate of the future job growth and change. In the case of pharmacy technician, the program was established to respond to new state legislation that requires all pharmacy technicians to be licensed.

Perhaps one area where the college can most effectively “rapidly respond” is in the area of community services. The college provides business and workforce training, which can be completely customized for each business. These short-term, fast-track certifications allow for the college to respond to newly defined needs in the region. NCC is also the designated trainer for all firefighters, emergency medical responders, and emergency medical technicians for the region. In addition NCC provides High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED formerly GED) preparation and testing and English as a Second Language (ESL) training for those who are not ready to enter the college system.

Enrollment Profile and Student Support Services
Traditionally, NCC students attend college immediately after high school and seek the “college experience” when working toward their degree while still living close to home. More than 80% of NCC’s students are under the age of 26. Additional student housing facilities were built (Lyon Hall in 2007 and O’Brien Hall in 2008). Student activities have been expanded to enhance the college experience. Also, the college built the Northwest Iowa Lifelong Learning and Recreation Center (LLRC) in 2011 to provide an opportunity for expanded intramural and wellness activities for students.

Ethnic diversity has grown in Area IV in the last decade, and the college has responded by employing a bilingual Enrollment Advisor to assist students and parents with the admissions/enrollment process. The college’s diversity committee has brought in speakers and hosted events that help students and staff assist in understanding ethnic diversity and how the world has changed.
Most students are native to Area IV and have financial need. Just over half of the college student body has been identified as Pell Eligible, the definition which is generally used to identify low income status. The NCC College Foundation has for the last 15 years, and three capital fundraising campaigns, raised money to establish student scholarships. Since the 2006–07 academic year, NCC has awarded 1,984 scholarships totaling nearly $1.2 million, an average of $171,162 each academic year. During 2006–07, 199 scholarships were awarded, and in 2012–13 a total of 357 were awarded, representing an increase of 76.5%.

NCC offers new student orientation before the beginning of each semester. This is a time for a student, and parents or guardians, to learn about college policies and procedures, register for classes, meet instructors, and become more familiar with campus.

Once a student is accepted to NCC, they are assigned an Academic Advisor who is responsible for registering the student for classes, providing academic support, and serving as the main contact for the student and faculty in the case where intervention is necessary. The intervention process is well established and allows instructors and student services staff to identify potentially at-risk students and intervene by helping students receive support services where applicable. For more specific information regarding the intervention process, please see Criterion Three.

NCC has established learning communities to provide a relational learning experience for undecided or transfer students to help them find their niche on campus. Applied technology students are enrolled in cohorts, which serve as unofficial learning communities.

Student needs, both academic and financial, are addressed in several ways on campus. All credit students are assigned an advisor to assist in planning their academic career and making sure they are on track to graduate. All students have access to counseling, the library, and learning center for free tutoring. Students who have special needs can seek special accommodations to aid in reaching academic success. First generation, low income, and/or disabled students are eligible for the college’s TRiO Student Support Services program which provides tutoring, academic advisement, grant aid and career counseling.

NCC offers two additional programs for non-traditional students or those who are seeking retraining before re-entering the workforce. Gap Tuition Assistance provides supportive services and tuition for short-term, fast training. In addition, the Pathway for Academic Career Employment (PACE) Navigator provides an advisor to assist an individual in finding their path through higher education. The PACE Navigator works with students to earn a high school equivalency diploma, non-credit certificates, a diploma, associate degree, and to transfer to a four-year college to earn a bachelor’s degree. Both GAP and PACE are relatively new programs which NCC has piloted and is in the process of full implementation of both programs in 2015.
1. **A.3** The institution’s planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

The history of planning and budgeting is more clearly documented in Criterion Five, but these processes flow from the priorities stated in the mission of the college. All budgets and planning activities are conducted by college staff under the leadership of the president, and then approved by the Board of Trustees. Evidence of this is in board policies, board minutes, Executive Council minutes and the certified budgets.

1. **B. The mission is articulated publicly.**

1. **B.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.

The mission and vision statements are articulated through a variety of public documents including catalogs, strategic plans, annual reports, website, view books, tabloids, and all published documents. The mission statement is posted in the hallways on campus and at alternative sites in Orange City and Sioux Center. In addition, the mission is printed on the back of employee badges.

1. **B.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.

Keeping all college documents current is a priority for the college administration. One of the opportunities for improvement that was identified in the 2004 Self-study was the need to review all board policies. All of the policies have been reviewed by the Board, the Executive Council and by legal counsel (when appropriate). In the 2004 Self-study the college challenged itself to incorporate a systematic review of all Board of Trustee policies. It is now part of the routine work of the Board to review all policies on a rotating schedule. Evidence of this exists in the dated policies and as published in board minutes [N10], [N38].

NCC Board Policies are broken down into 8 categories that encompass all aspects of college activity.
- 100: Educational Policy [N11]
- 200: Board of Trustees [N12]
- 300: Administrative Function [N13]
- 400: Personnel [N14]
- 500: Student Personnel [N15]
- 600: Educational Program and Instruction [N16]
- 700: Business and Operating Procedures [N17]
- 800: Community Relations [N18]
1. B.3 The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Northwest Iowa Community College is a public, nonprofit institution of higher learning dedicated to serve the residents of Merged Area IV by providing the first two years of college, career and technical education, and to meet business and industry’s demand for continuing education and training. The college focuses on serving the needs of the four and one-half county region. In areas where the college is recognized for its expertise, it will reach beyond Area IV. Examples of this include unique programs in Iowa (Powerline and Heavy Equipment) and distance learning through the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC).

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

1. C.1 The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.

The college actively addresses its role in a multicultural society and the growing cultural and ethnic diversity in northwest Iowa. The college’s guiding principles include the statement “We believe in embracing diversity by supporting the dignity and work of all individuals” [N11]. The overall population in the area served is now 6.5% percent non-white or Hispanic. This represents a 141% increase in the last decade. While the majority of these persons are not yet of college age, the college has expanded services to assist Hispanics living in the area including hiring a bilingual staff member to work in admissions and advising, English as a Second Language programs in the communities, outreach for dislocated Hispanic workers, and an Español Index link on the web converting core information to Spanish [N119]. Financial aid information and other brochures and documents are printed in Spanish.

Staff and faculty address growing diversity as part of the Global Perspectives goal under the General Education Statement. Concepts are embedded within numerous learning objectives, and students are engaging in discussions regarding diversity and non-western cultures.
1. C.2 The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Diversity issues are being addressed by NCC through policy and procedure. The past decade has been one of change in this area of college operations, largely due to a growing awareness of the global responsibility that is identified in the mission statement.

This is particularly challenging because NCC is located in a region of the country that has a history of being ethnically homogeneous. In 2000, only 2.7% of the population claimed to be of an ethnicity other than white. That number grew to 6.5% in the 2010 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Census Data</th>
<th>2000 Census</th>
<th>2010 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Minority Population in Iowa</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Minority in Northwest Iowa</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 2000 & 2010 Census and American Community Survey*

While the minority population in the region is lower than the state of Iowa, it is changing. In order to prepare for the future and to be responsible stewards of the public trust, the college has done the following:

- **Formalized harassment and discrimination policies and procedures** for students and staff. The Employee Handbook [N108] and Procedure Manual for Personnel [N58] document employee processes. One staff member has been identified as the point person to assist students in obtaining special learning accommodations. Student policies and procedures are in the college catalog [N155].

- **Made facilities improvements**, to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. In addition, all job descriptions provide general physical and environmental conditions.

- **Charged the diversity committee** with developing and presenting information and programming regarding diversity to students and staff. The committee's definition of diversity aligns with the college’s non-discrimination statement which identifies race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability. The committee has gone on to further identify its mission statement as: “We seek to create a welcoming atmosphere to all people, challenge stereotypes and promote sensitivity, inclusion and mutual respect for each other.” In recent years the Diversity Committee has hosted events including panel discussions about mental illness, women in leadership, the growing Hispanic population, international business and cultural diversity days. The committee is interested in expanding diversity activities and opening conversations about differences [N143].
• As part of the **general education outcomes** [N51], the college has identified specific details regarding the development of a student's global perspective. To meet this educational goal, all programs at Northwest Iowa Community College will encompass not only program-specific learning outcomes, but also general education learning outcomes in the areas of personal development, global perspective, critical thinking, written and oral communication, and math. These learning outcomes are taught and assessed in classes, labs, field experiences, and other co-curricular activities. Faculty can assess student success through:
  (1) **Showing awareness of one’s own values and beliefs while showing respect for the ideas, values, and beliefs of others.**
  (2) **Demonstrating knowledge of characteristics and issues of one’s own culture as well as other cultures.**
  (3) **Participating responsibly as a world citizen in a global environment.**

• The college has made a concerted effort to bring more gender balance to the makeup of the advisory committees on campus. Since 2010, the percentage of female representation serving on the committees has increased by 4 percent. NCC is progressive and has focused on bringing gender equity to committees within industries which may traditionally be comprised of content experts dominated by one gender.

1. **D. The Institution’s mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.**

1. D.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.**

This commitment to the public good is demonstrated by providing quality credit and non-credit instruction, by serving on community projects and committees, and by managing the affairs of the college in an ethical manner.

**Credit instruction:** NCC currently offers 46 academic programs, all of which are delivered on campus, off campus, or online. The Board keeps in mind the educational philosophy as stated in Board Policy 102 (statutory purposes for the college) when approving new programs or reviewing existing programs [N11].

**Non-credit instruction:** NCC provides continuing education classes to meet trade licensure requirements and professional education hours. The college provides firefighter, emergency response, and emergency medical training for citizens who staff the volunteer firefighter departments and ambulance teams. The college provides training for topics that relate to industry needs, including state-mandated programs such as moped and motorcycle education. In addition, the heavy equipment and powerline programs provide hands-on learning experiences for students by contracting with communities to complete real-life work. This provides a cost-effective method for cities/schools to accomplish projects while enhancing the applicable learning experience for students.
Ethical Behavior: This is discussed more completely in Criterion Two; however, it is important to state that the college endeavors to be transparent in all of its dealings with the public. Board meetings follow Iowa’s open meeting laws including posting time, date and place, and tentative agenda of each meeting. All Board meetings are open to the public, and a member of the media attends all meetings and reports on them. Each quarter there is a public participation segment on the agenda. In addition, news releases are sent out regularly to nearly 40 interested parties for publication or broadcasting [N38].

1. D.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.

Board Policy 701 [N17] states that the primary purpose of the college is to provide quality education. The mission and vision statements align with this policy and are focused on student learning. There are no investors expecting financial returns because NCC is a public, nonprofit institution, and there is not a public parent organization. The NCC Board of Trustees is responsible to the citizens of Northwest Iowa for the efficient use of public funds and for conducting college affairs in a business-like manner. All board minutes are a matter of public record. Per Iowa law annual expenditures, including faculty and staff salaries, and the certified budget is published annually in a local newspaper.

1. D.3 The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Partnerships with area business and industry, K–12s, economic development groups, and 4-year institutions are essential for the success of the college and the students they serve.

- NCC has 19 advisory committees comprised of employees and owners of area businesses. They play a key role in identifying workforce needs and trends in the region. Instructors, deans, and staff within Workforce and Continuing Education work with area businesses to identify training needs and develop specific training to fit those needs.

- NCC’s Workforce and Continuing Education Division also provides the majority of continuing education requirements (including CEUs) for a variety of professions. Examples include wastewater treatment, child care, cosmetology, insurance, emergency services, accounting, and health care.
• Workforce and Continuing Education provides a resource to area economic developers and participates in Northwest Iowa Developers—a six county regional economic development group. This group is responsible for marketing the region and was instrumental in establishing a foreign trade zone, the first in rural Iowa.

• The college seeks to assist area K–12 partners through the 21st Century Teaching and Learning Conference. This conference, which has had topics dedicated to 21st Century learners, technology for instruction and creating a culture of teaching and learning, has been identified by many K–12 school districts to serve as their fall staff development. The third annual conference in 2013 brought in 300 participants and continues to grow. This conference allows NCC faculty to network and discuss strategies to help students learn and make the transition from high school to college successfully [N166].

• The deans work with other colleges and universities to establish articulation agreements which assist NCC students who are transferring to four-year institutions. The college has a transfer center on campus where a handful of colleges provide a recruiter on NCC’s campus. Recruiters follow a schedule to meet with potential transfer students and assist with the college transfer process.

• NCC is a member of area chambers of commerce throughout the region. One member of college staff is appointed to serve as a representative and build a relationship between the community and the college.

• The NCC College and Career Academy in Orange City is a result of needs identified through collaboration of the city, local business and industry, private and public K–12s, private colleges, and NCC.

• NCC collaborated with the city of Sioux Center to include a computer lab for training in their public library.
Summary of Findings Regarding Criterion One

Areas of Strength
• The NCC mission statement is displayed on walls in campus buildings. It is also included in all major print documents, including the catalog, annual report, and recruiting publications.

• At NCC all appropriate documentation is shared publicly through the website or portal. Electronic documents are available to general public, prospective students, and current students.

• NCC is proactive in addressing the cultures of our merged area. Diversity has been a priority in the college’s past and present strategic plans.

• NCC’s programs meet the needs of area employers by providing graduates who are trained in their particular field of study and ready to begin employment. The graduates have also received licensing preparation for those trades that require a state license.

Opportunities for Improvement
• The college needs to renovate and update the NCC website, enhancing navigation and usefulness.

• The college needs to improve portal usage by improving content and navigation to enhance usefulness.

• The college needs to continue to grow and expand opportunities for non-English speaking students and for minorities at NCC.

Next Steps
• Explore the development of a new website. (Noel-Levitz)

• Continue to prepare to serve an increasingly diverse population.

• Explore the value of adopting core values and integrating them into the culture of the institution. (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan)
## Criterion One—Mission

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CRITERION TWO—INTEGRITY: ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT

Northwest Iowa Community College acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.
2. A. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

The college operates with integrity in all areas and has clear and properly developed policies and procedures for the operation of financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary activities. Fair and ethical policies and processes are in place for the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty and staff. In an effort to be transparent with all interested stakeholders, regular communication with students, staff, faculty, and Board members takes place through the NCC website, email, or through MyPlace (the college portal).

Legal Authority
NCC understands and abides by all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations. The college was established under the laws of the state of Iowa, and operates in accordance with Chapter 260C of the Iowa Code, which contains enabling provisions for community colleges [N39]. It operates as a body politic under 281 Iowa Administrative Rules 21.10. NCC complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and Executive Order 11246. Visits by the State Department of Education in conjunction with the Higher Learning Commission, along with the annual audit performed by an independent third party have verified that NCC is in compliance with state and federal laws. NCC’s Equity Plan is on the portal [N168], and the report from the most recent equity visit by the Iowa Department of Education is available in the resource room (RR).
Governing Board
The NCC Board of Trustees exercises its responsibility to the public to ensure that the organization operates legally, responsibly, and with fiscal honesty. As mandated by the Iowa State Legislature, NCC was established and organized to meet the educational needs of the people of Area IV [N19]. NCC has a publicly elected Board of Trustees whose responsibility is to ensure that the college functions in a legal, responsible, and fiscal manner. The Board of Trustees retains an attorney for legal advice. The Board reviews and approves expenses and financials on a monthly basis and hires an independent third party to perform an annual financial audit of the college. Board policies are reviewed based upon an established cycle. The Board meetings comply with all of Iowa’s open meetings laws and are open to the public. Board policies and minutes are available on the portal [N38] and are available to the public upon request.

Administration
The office of the president authorizes all college activities. As part of the plan to enhance communication and collaborative culture, Dr. Alethea F. Stubbe, college president, has implemented an organizational network, as opposed to a top-down structure. All NCC employees are important to the success of the students, and all have been invited to be part of both the strategic planning process and this self-study. All college activities and responsibilities can be divided into two separate categories: Instructional Services and Support Services.

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</table>
The college president seeks collaboration and shared governance through committees that involve cross-college participation. All committee minutes are posted to the portal and are accessible to all personnel. Here is a list of the committees at NCC.

1. Administrative Council: The president, and the three vice-presidents
2. Executive Council: The president, vice presidents, deans, IT director
3. President’s Council: representatives from all areas of the college
4. Standing Committees: including Affirmative Action, Assessment, Commencement, Compliance, Courtesy/Recognition, Curriculum, Diversity, Enrollment Management, Retention, Staff Development, Internal Monitoring Team for TRiO, Safety, Technology Planning, and Wellness
5. Ad Hoc Committees: Strategic Planning, Accreditation Steering Committee

Further transparency of college activities and decisions is communicated to the staff and faculty through weekly email updates from the president and during mandatory all-college meetings which are held a minimum of twice a year.

**Human Resources — Faculty and Staff**

The Board policies, Employee Handbook, and Adjunct Faculty Handbook are communicated to new employees during new employee orientation. Updates or changes are communicated via email from the Human Resources Department. Faculty and staff are required to act according to the board policies as defined by their respective contracts and inservices. Copies of all regular staff and faculty contracts and personnel files are available in the Human Resources office. Contracts for continuing education and workforce training instructors are maintained in the Division of Workforce and Continuing Education.

On campus faculty and support staff members are organized under the Area IV Community College Education Association and the Area IV Community College Support Staff Association.

**Financial**

A budget and financial statements are published each year, and these are available to the public upon request. The college has a budgeting process that includes all college personnel and faculty under the leadership of the Executive Council. In accordance with the laws of the state of Iowa, and Board Policy 710 [N17], a budget surplus is maintained. The general fund must retain an amount greater than or equal to 8 percent of the fund’s total expenditures and transfers. The plant fund must maintain an amount greater than or equal to 3 percent of the investment of land, buildings, furniture, equipment and building improvements and finally, the auxiliary fund must have a balance greater than or equal to 5 percent of this fund’s revenue. All contractual agreements are maintained by the office of the vice president of college operations & finance. In addition, this office is responsible for all financial aid transactions and reporting. NCC Board Policy 730 [N17] identifies college contracts will be made without prejudice or favoritism: “Awards will be made on the merits of the situation, such as vendor compliance with specifications, quality, price, delivery, service, terms, conditions, and compatibility.” The policy outlines the procedure for the purchase of equipment and capital improvements.
Co-curricular and Auxiliary
The integrity of co-curricular and auxiliary activities is guaranteed by following all board policies and by the integrity of the administration and NCC Board of Trustees. All departments/divisions in the college have representation on the Executive Council; follow college administrative practices as determined by board policies and administrative procedures; follow all appropriate hiring and personnel management procedures; and are part of the auditing and assessment processes.

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.

A detailed website provides extensive information about the college, its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships. The website allows NCC to be transparent, clear, and inclusive in presenting itself and all information to students and the public. The NCC website [N4] is updated frequently to provide the most current information. Content on the website is collaboratively developed by all departments on campus.

In order to be transparent to students and the public, the college formalized the process for meeting consumer information requirements by establishing the Compliance Committee in 2011. This committee is responsible for ensuring the college meets compliance and consumer information requirements and publishes all information on the website [N23].
Credit Programs
All program information is publicly posted to the NCC website [N24], and this information includes program expectations and requirements, the cost of the program, graduation rates, and employability of graduates. Students accepted to a program also receive additional information about the programs in letters and handouts from the admissions office. Orientation is considered mandatory, and parents or guardians are encouraged to attend with their student. These sessions further explain college policies, procedures, and expectations. Assistance with financial aid applications and scholarship opportunities are shared with current and future students and their parents via the NCC website and at orientation. All courses and programs, with descriptions, are available for students and the public online. The catalog provides information about each program available, classes associated with each program, and the descriptions of each class. The catalog can be accessed online [N128].

Cost sheets are available for each program under Programs of Study on the website. Students simply need to select their program of interest and click on Costs for a detailed description of the costs associated with each program [N24].

Programs of Study, transfer information, the academic schedule, and other academic resources are available to students and the general public online. NCC catalog and program information is not only available online, but it is available in print for reference on campus in the Student Services office.

Program information is also shared with area secondary institutions. Guidance counselors at the K–12s are provided with access to electronic and paper copies of the catalog. College personnel regularly meet with interested students and parents and are available on demand to assist in understanding all of the issues relating to successfully enrolling in and graduating from programs at Northwest Iowa Community College. This attention to transparency and assistance to students and parents contributes significantly to the success of students as demonstrated by the graduation rate and employability of NCC graduates. Detailed information regarding the costs associated with attending NCC as well as the financial aid process, policies, and procedures are on the website [N27]. Students may use the NetPrice calculator on NCC’s website [N28]. It is intended to provide estimated net price information (defined as estimated cost of attendance — including tuition and required fees, books and supplies, room and board (meals), and other related expenses — minus estimated grant and scholarship aid) to current and prospective students and their families based on what students in similar programs paid in the previous year.

Students and the general public can utilize NCC’s online directory to contact faculty and staff as well as learn more about their background and education. NCC’s marketing department works each year to update staff and faculty photos and all other information [N29].
Student Complaints and Grievances
NCC documents its response to complaints and grievances, particularly those of students. In 2010 NCC stopped publishing a separate student handbook and transferred all information to the catalog. The first 38 pages of the catalog outline student expectations, responsibilities, and rights as well as the grievance policy and procedure. Students are granted the right to appeal decisions made as part of the grievance policy and student discipline policy. These records are kept by the vice president of student and academic services (CAO).

Non-Credit Programs
The Workforce and Continuing Education Division clearly presents itself to the public through the NCC Continuing Education tabloid, which is produced and mailed to every household in Area IV three times a year (September, January, and March). The tabloid includes general policies and procedures, a description of the classes, dates, cost, location of the classes, and instructor information. The tabloid can be viewed by the public at any time online.

Public Information/Transparency
The NCC Board of Trustees meets monthly in a public meeting which follows Iowa’s open meeting laws. Once a quarter a portion of the meeting is dedicated to public participation. The college’s website provides links to various documents reporting on the status of the college including strategic plans, graduate job placement, the 2004 Self-study, NCC’s Fact Book, annual reports, and the Title III grant.

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.

2. C.1 The governing board’s deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

The NCC Board of Trustees members are publicly elected and represent the seven regions of the geographic area served by the college. Each member serves for a term of four years. The offices of the board are decided each year by the members, resulting in a rotation that provides continuity and stability in the governance of the college. All activities of the board are governed by Iowa Code and published Board Policies and Procedures. Newly elected trustees participate in new board member orientation and training.
The role of the Board of Trustees is defined in detail through the use of NCC Board Policies (200 series) [N12]. The college mission and vision statements guide and direct the Board of Trustees in oversight and decision making. To maintain integrity, the college follows all appropriate board policies which outline business and operating procedures, community relations, and communication with external constituents. Key components in the 700 series outline business and operating procedures. The 800 series focuses on communication with the public and the roles and responsibilities of college personnel. Records of all transactions can be seen in the minutes of the Board of Trustees [N38].

2. C.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.

The NCC Board of Trustees meets monthly to conduct regular business. In addition, the board meets for extended work sessions to further investigate issues related to their responsibilities. At both of these meetings appropriate reports are given to the Board by college personnel.

Board Policy 208 [N12] states the following: “The Board of Trustees shall have the power to formulate and establish policy for the college. Such board policy provides the general direction as to what the Board wishes to accomplish while allowing the college’s administration to implement board policy.”

In addition, Board Policy 221 dictates the code of ethics Board of Trustee members are expected to follow [N12].

2. C.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.

Public record of board activities is maintained in minutes of the publicly conducted meetings and by published accounts of meetings in the media. Board members must follow the code of ethics presented in Board Policy 221 [N12]. Board members abstain from votes in cases of a conflict of interest, or a perceived conflict of interest, in order to maintain independence from undue influence.

The college follows a designated process outlined in Board Policy 730 [N17] for equipment purchases and capital improvements. This policy summarizes in which situations verbal quotes, written quotes, and sealed bids are required and where the paperwork must be maintained for review or audit.

Acting with integrity is addressed in the board policies, including 201—Statement of Guiding Principles and Board Policy 205—Committees of the Board of Trustees. Board members (Board Policy 244) [N12] are required to take an oath (Code of Iowa Policy 277.8) before taking office [N33].
2. C.4 The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

The Board hires the president of the college, empowering the president to conduct college business. They also approve vice president and faculty contracts. The Board is not involved in the daily administration of the institution and communication between the Board and college staff passes through the president’s office.

The curriculum committee, along with the CAO, deans, and faculty, are responsible for curricular changes and implementation of those changes. The curriculum committee’s work is contained in published minutes which are shared on the portal. Curriculum changes are done independently of the Board of Trustees, although regular presentations are made to the Board in the form of educational reports. The NCC Board of Trustees is very interested in the programs of the college and support of quality instruction. When appropriate the Board offers ideas, particularly during education reports during the monthly meetings, but recognizes that they have empowered the president to carry out college operations.

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

At NCC education is viewed as an investment, and faculty maintain high teaching standards through commitment and innovation. In part, this is the result of the institution’s commitment to freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

NCC’s Procedure Manual for Personnel [N34] outlines the recruitment and selection process for faculty. Career and technical faculty must have either a baccalaureate or graduate degree in a related area of study or occupational area or special training and at least 6,000 hours of recent and relevant work experience. Arts and science faculty must have a master’s degree or two or more years of successful experience in the professional field where a post-baccalaureate recognition or professional licensure is necessary for practice.
Faculty are hired as subject matter experts. New faculty members are trained in curriculum development, assessment of student learning, and active learning strategies as part of the Quality Faculty Plan (QFP) and are guided by deans and the Center for Teaching and Learning. The Quality Faculty Plan is required by Iowa Code and has two phases: Initial Professional Development and Continuous Professional Development. In addition, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides ongoing support of development and refinement of quality instruction. Online instructors are also highly trained to engage students in the successful pursuit of learning. Criteria 3 and 4 have a more in-depth look at this. Instructors have great flexibility in content development and in methods of instruction. Faculty members collaborate with deans in the selection of textbooks and in program development.

2. E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

2. E.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.

Academic integrity demands that all members of the institution apply knowledge responsibly. NCC ensures that faculty, students, and staff all have strong guidance and support in the acquisition and application of that knowledge.

At a community college research is generally outside the scope of academic activities. At the present there are no research projects being conducted by Northwest Iowa Community College. If research is conducted in the future, integrity will be maintained in this area of the college as well.

2. E.2 Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.

Academic integrity is an important part of 21st century academic work; the challenge of guiding students in the ethical use of information is being addressed in a variety of ways.

First, the college has a Computer Systems Use Policy with which students, staff, and faculty are required to comply. The agreement covers the appropriate use of both college computers and any electronic or print resources used to assist students in their coursework. Section 2.01 of the policy clearly states that information resources are the property of NCC and are to be used solely for institutional purposes. This policy is designed for the usage of college computers but also covers the ethical use and creation of any electronic files, electronic communications (email), or information storage, as well as gaining access to restricted areas or breaches of security. Any violations of this policy will be reported to the director of technology and information services.
Secondly, all three areas of the Academic Center (TRiO, the learning center, and the library) offer guidance in the use of electronic and print resources. TRiO offers Lunch-and-Learn workshops to their students that cover a variety of topics; one such topic offered is best practices in utilizing research tools. They also offer tutoring in the proper use of MLA and APA citation and format styles and the use of web-based tools such as NoodleTools and Google Docs. Faculty members are trained in the use of Turnitin plagiarism software. The Library offers guidance to students with the selection of information resources and the proper use of MLA and APA citation and format styles. Librarians take time during new student tours of the campus to offer guidance on the use and evaluation of creditable information, tools for creating citations, and paper-formatting skills. The library has created resource guides for student use; these include the APA Citation Guide, the MLA Citation Guide (both found in print in the library or through the portal), and the NoodleTools How-to-Guide (found on the library homepage) [N126]. And finally, the library offers one-on-one assistance with the selection of information resources and proper citation formatting styles.

2. E.3 The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Academic honesty and integrity are demonstrated through and enforced by four major policies. These can be found in the college catalog [N169], the syllabus Academic Dishonesty Policy [N47], Board Policy 614 [N16], and the Computer Systems Use Policy [N37].

Northwest Iowa Community College’s Catalog outlines the expectations for academic honesty and integrity. Under “Student Discipline, Section II.C”, it clearly states how academic dishonesty is defined, what steps will be taken if such occurrences are suspected, and any penalties associated with these cases [N169].
All course syllabi are required to contain the “Syllabus Academic Dishonesty Policy,” which outlines the procedure used in cases of academic dishonesty. The inclusion of this policy on syllabi is endorsed by the deans and the curriculum committee. Instructors enforce this policy by confronting students and allowing them to state their case. If cheating has taken place, faculty enforce the policy by giving students a zero on the assignment and failing them in the course if a second occurrence takes place. If a student decides to grieve the decision of their instructor, then they follow the grievance process outlined in the catalog. If the student is unclear about this policy, deans describe what academic dishonesty means and how to avoid cheating and/or plagiarizing on a paper or assignment. If the offense is flagrant, deans follow the student discipline procedures as outlined in the NCC catalog.

Board Policy 614 [N16] describes the procedure used when a student wishes to use copyrighted material. Written permission is required before an individual is allowed to use copyrighted materials. This policy is enforced with regard to both print materials and information on the internet. If this policy is violated, the individual will be subject to discipline from the college, up to expulsion or termination of employment in the case of an employee.

The Computer Systems Use Policy addresses academic integrity by physically protecting information processing facilities and equipment, maintaining application and data integrity, protecting against unauthorized disclosure of information, and assuring the continued availability of reliable and critical information. This policy was written with the understanding that user awareness is the first line of defense in maintaining the confidentiality, reliability, availability, and integrity of information resources. The policy identifies the means for protecting these resources and defines the security and data ownership responsibilities for the information resources that are maintained by the college. NCC is deeply involved in online instruction, and students enrolled in online courses are required to abide by the Student Ethics Statement posted in each course [N40]. Additional assistance in achieving academic integrity includes a campus-wide license for Turnitin and access to Bio-Sig for authentication during testing in online courses [N103].
Summary of Findings Regarding Criterion Two

Areas of Strength
• NCC has strong processes and policies to govern college operational functions and responsibilities. It is transparent, fair, and responsible with internal and public constituents.

• The NCC Board of Trustees is publicly-elected and makes decisions in the best interest of the college. It acts responsibly, abiding by all current local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

• NCC is open in its processes and provides appropriate information to students.

• The college website allows NCC to be transparent, clear, and inclusive in presenting itself and all information to students and the public.

• The Workforce and Continuing Education Division clearly presents itself to the public by way of the Continuing Education tabloid.

Opportunities for Improvement
• The college may benefit from a faculty handbook for all instructors, not just adjunct instructors. This document would diverge from information in the Employee Handbook and explain responsibilities and duties related specifically to instruction.

• The college may benefit from having every class complete student evaluations, rather than relying on the current system of selective evaluation for campus courses.

Next Steps
• Investigate the need for a faculty handbook with members of the academic community, including faculty, deans, CAO and the president.

• Investigate the benefit of having all classes complete student evaluations, following the practice of online and concurrent enrollment classes.
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CRITERION THREE—TEACHING AND LEARNING: QUALITY, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT

Northwest Iowa Community College provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.
Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) has a rich tradition of quality education, and has endeavored to deliver that education to its constituents in locations and through delivery methods that are beneficial. The college is striving to meet the challenges of the NCC Vision Statement to provide “lifelong learning” opportunities, realizing that students may need to learn anytime and anywhere.

The scope of curricular offerings has expanded in the past five decades, as have the delivery methods. NCC began as a small technical school with a handful of program offerings. Today it has both expanded technical programs and college transfer options to become a comprehensive community college. In addition, the college established the NCC Career Academy, a substantial online program, a large concurrent enrollment program, and an extensive selection of non-credit and contracted training.

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

3. A.1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.

Appropriateness of education begins with the authorization provided to the institution by statute. Northwest Iowa Community College is authorized to deliver degrees, diplomas, and certificates by the Higher Learning Commission and by the state of Iowa. Under Code of Iowa Chapter 260C.1 [N39], community colleges may deliver sub-baccalaureate programs and awards. These include AA, AS, AAS degrees (which are usually two-year degrees), diplomas (which are generally 9 to 12 months in length), and certificates with varying credit/hour requirements. The college also has approval from the Higher Learning Commission and the state of Iowa to deliver online degrees and diplomas [N144].

All programs at NCC are in compliance with the credit limits and recommendations of the state of Iowa and properly documented in the Iowa Department of Education database (Curricunet) in Des Moines. The use of Curricunet has helped both the state and individual colleges correct any errors in program offerings, including outdated courses and incorrect credit information.
Student records are kept in Colleague, the SIS, and student performance is reviewed by the Registrar’s office before a student is allowed to graduate. This degree audit process ensures that all graduates have met all of the requirements for their degree, diploma, or certificate.

Most courses and programs have undergone revision in the past five years to ensure that learning outcomes are measurable and that all the competencies needed for graduation are covered and in the right proportions. The process for course revision is not quite complete, but all programs have measurable learning outcomes. This process for curricular improvement will be discussed in detail in Criterion Four.

3. a.2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its 2-year degrees, diplomas and certificate programs.

All degrees, diplomas, and certificates at NCC are provided at the undergraduate (2 years or less) level and the learning goals (outcomes) flow from the General Education Statement down to programs and then individual course outcomes. In the past five years the faculty have worked to map outcomes through all levels of instruction and evaluated the appropriateness of those goals.

The curriculum mapping process at NCC helps to ensure that all course work is appropriate to the degree/diploma or certificate being awarded. Goal/outcome statements were rewritten for courses and programs. The broader goals are called GIOs or General Instructional Objectives, and the measurable learning statements that flow from them are the Specific Learning Outcomes (SLOs). In addition, all of these statements are mapped from the course level to the program level. Assessment is discussed more fully in Criterion Four [N25].

The program advisory committees at NCC review program curriculum annually and make recommendations based on current industry standards. This information is used by program faculty to update learning outcomes for the programs and to improve student learning outcomes. The involvement of advisory committee members in instruction is an invaluable part of ensuring that graduates are well prepared for the workplace. The 2012 Placement Report demonstrates that graduates of NCC are hired at a rate of 96–98% (depending on the program) and 83% are employed in their field of study [N9].
NCC is a comprehensive community college and offers students an Associate of Arts degree that is transferable to four-year institutions. Since the early 1990s the college has worked to establish articulation agreements with 41 four-year institutions. These are on file with the CAO and are available to the deans and registrar.

In 2005 the community colleges of Iowa implemented a common course numbering system, which assists in the transferability of credits from all of Iowa’s community colleges to four-year colleges. NCC is compliant with this process and has completed transfer of all college course/program data to the new Iowa Department of Education database system (Curricunet).

3. A.3 The institution’s program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations.

At Northwest Iowa Community College, a collaborative effort by the entire college ensures program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations. The efforts of faculty, deans, academic services personnel, and administration contribute to student success in their program of choice. Currently NCC delivers courses on the main campus, online, at a career academy, over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN telecommunications classrooms), and as concurrent enrollment at area high schools. While the delivery systems are different, it is the goal of the college to ensure quality of instruction is the same in all delivery modalities.

NCC uses the following practices to ensure consistency:

**Common Textbooks**

- Faculty members select textbooks in consultation with deans.

- All sections of a course are required to use the same book. Online courses use the same book across all seven campuses, but it may be a different book than the one used on campus.

- All textbooks and ISBN’s are published by semester on the NCC website and [N45] online textbooks are published on the ICCOC website [N46].

**Syllabi**

- The NCC Curriculum Committee has established standards for all syllabi, and these are monitored by the committee and the deans [N47].

- Online syllabi have additional elements that must be included, and these are published on the Faculty pages of the ICCOC [N48].
Training

• All full-time faculty members participate in campus-based staff development which recently focused on active learning strategies and outcomes-based assessment. New faculty will be introduced to these concepts as part of new faculty orientation.

• Adjunct faculty members have two special training sessions a year, at times more convenient to their schedules. During these sessions faculty are kept abreast of campus information, pedagogy, and the instructional strategies shared with full-time faculty.

• Concurrent enrollment faculty also are required under National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) to have discipline specific training each year and to work with campus faculty to ensure that courses cover the same competencies and have similar rigor.

• Online faculty members are required to take two specialized online courses. One focuses on the learning management system (LMS) and technology, and the other focuses on the pedagogy of online instruction.

• The ICCOC has a conference every year for faculty and staff to explore the best practices in online instruction and advising.

• Ongoing training is available on a variety of topics, including the use of computers in the classroom, software, assessment and Quality Faculty Plan (QFP) requirements. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) also provides on-demand training.

Additional Processes

• All program courses are reviewed by the curriculum committee as part of the five-year program review process or when curriculum undergoes major change.

• All full-time faculty report learning outcomes to the assessment coordinator annually. This is discussed more fully in Criterion Four.

• Deans discuss the curriculum with faculty during annual performance evaluations.

• All programs have advisory committees that meet at least annually. At this time they review curriculum and advise faculty on industry needs and standards.
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.

3. B.1 The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.

As stated previously, Northwest Iowa Community College delivers AA, AS, AAS, diploma and certificate programs. Courses taught at NCC fit into those parameters as evidenced in Iowa Department of Education approval and articulation agreements with other institutions. All degrees and diplomas require general education courses in communications and math. Science and humanities are required of degree programs, but not all diplomas.

In addition, NCC has moved beyond thinking about general education as a collection of specific courses, to aligning general education across the curriculum. Program faculty, in conjunction with the assessment committee, the deans and CAO, mapped out general education competencies taught as part of the program curriculum. During a U.S. Department of Education (ED) Title III grant (2008–2013), faculty and academic personnel mapped general education outcomes in all courses [N51]. Now work is being done to assess those outcomes, and this is discussed more fully in Criterion Four.

Evidence of this is found in the college catalog, in the general education mapping document, and in articulation agreements with four-year colleges.

 Evidence from NCC College Catalog (2013–14)

General Education Statement: “Northwest Iowa Community College is committed to providing students opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to graduate, continue their education, pursue the careers of their choice, and be productive citizens. To meet this educational goal, all programs at Northwest Iowa Community College will encompass not only program-specific learning outcomes but also general education learning outcomes in the areas of Personal Development, Global Perspective, Critical Thinking, Written and Oral Communication, and Math. These learning outcomes are taught and assessed in classes, labs, field experiences, and other co-curricular activities (p. 5) [N132].”
Evidence that general education is part of all credit curriculum is found in the NCC College Catalog (p. 26) [N134]

- **Associate of Arts**: Communications 9 semester credits, Math/Science 9 semester credits, Science course with lab required (A minimum of one course in each discipline of math and science), Social Sciences 9 semester credits, Humanities 9 semester credits.

- **Associate of Science**: Communications 9 semester credits, Math/Science 9 semester credits (A minimum of one 3-credit course in each discipline of math and science), Social Sciences 6 semester credits, Humanities 6 semester credits.

- **Associate of Applied Science**: Communications 3 semester credits, Math 3 semester credits, Humanities/Social Sciences 3 semester credits, General Education 3 semester credits.

- **Diploma**: Communications 3 semester credits, Math 3 semester credits.

**Assessment of Student Learning**: “What you learn as a student at Northwest Iowa Community College is the very heart of the educational process. Northwest Iowa Community College has established a comprehensive on-going assessment program that assesses learning throughout a student’s college experience. The goal of this assessment program is to verify the extent of student learning at different levels including the course level, the program level, and the institutional level. General education learning outcomes are also assessed under this program. The results of assessment activities are used to improve both teaching and learning (p. 5) [N132].

**High School Equivalency—GED (HSED)**: “The Adult Literacy Program at NCC provides adults with instructional opportunities to improve their basic skill levels for education or work related goals. Included within Adult Literacy is instruction to prepare for the General Educational Development tests (GED). Upon successful completion of the GED tests, you will be awarded the High School Equivalency Diploma issued by the state of Iowa. This diploma certifies that you have achieved a level of educational development comparable to that of a high school graduate in the following subject areas: reading, writing, science, social studies, and mathematics (p.11).” In the 2015 catalog this has been updated to the High School Equivalency Diploma or HSED [N129].

**Academic Awards**: The section titled “Eligibility for Graduation” of the Northwest Iowa Community College Catalog (2013) states, “Northwest Iowa Community College awards you a degree or diploma once you have completed a specified educational program. In addition to the knowledge attained from specific program courses, you will complete general education requirements. General education courses will assist you to better understand human relations, social, and environmental issues, and to become more competent in communications and mathematics. Additionally, you will acquire knowledge relative to our society/culture and develop the awareness that your full potential is achieved through a lifetime of learning (p. 25) [N130].
Evidence by Articulation Agreements
Northwest Iowa Community College holds articulation agreements with many four-year educational institutions. As shown by our articulation agreements, the general education coursework achieved at Northwest Iowa Community College is accepted as work performed at the freshman and sophomore levels of four-year institutions. This demonstrates general education courses taken at NCC are at the appropriate level for a two-year community college. Articulation agreements are located in the CAO office.

3. B.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.

Northwest Iowa Community College communicates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its general education requirements in board policies, the catalog, and on all syllabi.

The NCC Board Policies and Procedures include a Statement of Guiding Principles (Board Policy 100), and a Statement of Educational Policy/Educational Philosophy (Board Policy 102–105).

According to Policy 101 [N11], “Northwest Iowa Community College, a two-year educational institution, establishes the following beliefs as a foundation upon which the college provides education and services.

- We believe that as a comprehensive community college we respond to our communities’ needs.
- We believe that all people can learn.
- We believe that education is an investment in our communities.
- We believe that accessible, lifelong educational opportunities and services enable people to maximize their potential and improve quality of life.
- We believe in embracing diversity by supporting the dignity and worth of all individuals.
- We believe that effective leadership, education training, and partnerships from all sectors enhance community and economic development.
- We believe that responsible stewardship ensures fiscal stability.
- We believe in embracing a growth-oriented philosophy.
- We believe in maintaining high ethical standards.”
The NCC General Education statement establishes the broad knowledge, intellectual concepts, and skills and attitudes that every graduate should possess. There are five skill areas that the students demonstrate [N51]:

1. **Personal Development**
   Students display personal development when they
   - Engage in leadership/teamwork activities.
   - Exhibit ethical behavior.
   - Show life skills including self-awareness, self-advocacy, time management, fiscal responsibility, the ability to access information, and others.
   - Demonstrate civic engagement and social responsibility.

2. **Global Perspective**
   Students display a global perspective when they
   - Show awareness of one’s own values and beliefs while showing respect for the ideas, values and beliefs of others.
   - Demonstrate knowledge of characteristics and issues of one’s own culture as well as other cultures.
   - Participate responsibly as a world citizen in our global environment.

3. **Critical Thinking**
   Students display critical thinking when they
   - Identify the problem.
   - Find relevant information.
   - Evaluate information.
   - Make decisions based on information and strategies.
   - Assess decisions.

4. **Written and Oral Communication**
   Students display written and oral communication skills when they
   - Organize ideas and information coherently and logically.
   - Articulate ideas and information clearly and concisely.
   - Use language that is appropriate for the situation and audience.
   - Read and comprehend a variety of texts.
   - Listen attentively to a variety of messages.

5. **Math**
   Students display math skills when they
   - Perform basic math computations using the appropriate methods and/or technologies.
   - Demonstrate an understanding of measurement systems, the selection and use of measuring tools, and the appropriate application of measurement data.
   - Construct and interpret tabular and graphical information.
   - Apply computational reasoning in both personal and professional settings.
The college has developed general education offerings that are grounded in this framework which were developed by the institution based on years of research into the best practices of other colleges. As a progressive learning college NCC strives to put students first, focusing on ensuring they graduate, continue their education, pursue the career of their choice, and be productive citizens. At this institution, student success drives curricular development, change, and the budget.

The General Education Statement has evolved over the life of the institution. However, the latest statement and the five skill areas were developed through a series of workshops in 2008 and 2009. Faculty led these discussions, with the assistance of the CAO. It was decided that general education courses gave an incomplete picture of the general education being delivered at NCC in all courses and programs. So, the decision was made to measure general education outcomes across the curriculum, including non-academic activities.

Since 2009 faculty members have worked to map general education outcomes to non-general courses. For instance, if writing/communication is part of a heavy equipment course, then it is part of meeting this broad definition of general education and should be included in assessment strategies.

With the assistance of the Assessment Coordinator, instructors have completed the curriculum mapping that demonstrates where general education goals are addressed in program specific courses [N25].

Communications, math, social sciences, and humanities courses are part of general education requirements and required of all degree programs. General education courses are included on all program descriptions in the catalog and on program sheets used in introducing students to the academic requirements of specific programs. These courses are included in the Arts and Science program and are evaluated as part of that.

3. B.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.

The college general education statement addresses collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. It also addresses the creative work which prepares students for the changing world of the 21st century. This chart maps NCC’s General Education to the competencies which address each of the three areas outlined in this section of the self-study.
# NCC General Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Development</th>
<th>Collecting, analyzing, and communicating information</th>
<th>Mastering modes of inquiry or creative work</th>
<th>Developing skills adaptable to changing environments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Engage in leadership/teamwork activities.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Exhibit ethical behavior.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show life skills including self-awareness, self-advocacy, time management, fiscal responsibility, the ability to access information, and others.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate civic engagement and social responsibility.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global Perspective</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Show awareness of one’s own values and beliefs while showing respect for the ideas, values, and beliefs of others.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate knowledge of characteristics and issues of one’s own culture as well as other cultures.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participate responsibly as a world citizen in our global environment.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Identify the problem.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Find relevant information.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate information.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make decisions based on information and strategies.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assess decisions.</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<th>Written and Oral Communication</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Organize ideas and information coherently and logically.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Articulate ideas and information clearly and concisely.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use language that is appropriate for the situation and audience.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Read and comprehend a variety of texts.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Listen attentively to a variety of messages.</td>
<td>X</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Math</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Perform basic math computations using the appropriate methods and/or technologies.</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate an understanding of measurement systems, the selection and use of measuring tools, and the appropriate application of measurement data.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Construct and interpret tabular and graphical information.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apply computational reasoning in both personal and professional settings.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>
3. B.4 The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.

Northwest Iowa has traditionally been an ethnically homogeneous region of the country. However, that is changing, and the college is preparing itself for an influx of minority students in the next decade. In addition, students who graduate from NCC are likely to work in a global environment.

Global Perspective is one of the general education outcomes that NCC believes students should acquire. These skills are taught in programs and through co-curricular activities. These include these specific outcomes:

- Show awareness of one’s own values and beliefs while showing respect for the ideas, values, and beliefs of others.
- Demonstrate knowledge of characteristics and issues of one’s own culture as well as other cultures.
- Participate responsibly as a world citizen in our global environment.

Specific Courses address these competencies, primarily in the humanities curriculum. Students at NCC are able to enroll in these key courses, among others that have global perspectives deeply embedded in the course content.

- PHI105 – Introduction to Ethics
- REL101 – Introduction to World Religions
- SOC115 – Social Problems
- SPC1122 - Interpersonal Communications
- SOC186 – Contemporary Global Issues
- POL121 – International Relations
- GEO121 – World Regional Geography

The Diversity Committee engages faculty, staff, and students in activities each year that promote cross-cultural understanding. In the past ten years there have been multiple opportunities to learn about other countries, other cultures in the United States, and gender and social issues that contribute to diversity.

Faculty Training in the past decade has included work on the application of active learning in the classroom to meet the needs of diverse learners. As part of new faculty training, there is time dedicated to learning styles and how to accommodate them as part of instruction.

Co-curricular activities also enhance student awareness of diversity. Students are encouraged to participate in diversity activities and are often part of activities. Students also participate in projects away from the campus, including Habitat for Humanity. Faculty members are currently working on ways to expand these opportunities for students.
The Carl Perkins Grant requires the college to seek gender equity in all applied technology programs. In order to facilitate a broader understanding of the career opportunities for both genders, the college presented workshops encouraging enrollment in careers traditionally dominated by one sex. Through the work that is being done with Project Lead the Way, the Perkins staff is helping to encourage young women to take engineering courses while still in high school [N167].

3. B.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.

NCC supports faculty in keeping abreast of the research on teaching and learning and of technological advances that can positively affect student learning and the delivery of instruction. Instructional staff is encouraged to become involved in professional organizations and to participate in leadership roles. As a result of this support, many of NCC’s faculty and staff are involved in professional organizations relating to their field of expertise and several have held offices in these organizations. Presentations at state and national conferences have also been given by administrators, faculty, and staff.

NCC is a member of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC). This partnership of Iowa community colleges facilitates online instruction, vendor contracts, and services for students. NCC is a user of Pearson Learning Studio for the learning management system [N120]. According to HLC guidelines, this partnership is not a consortium.

The ICCOC has engaged in several research projects and was awarded a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Learning Challenges Wave I grant to work on learner analytic dashboards [N54]. As a Pearson partner, the NCC and the ICCOC have been involved in several research projects seeking to find the best practices for online instruction. The most recent project will look at the effectiveness of faculty behavior in student learning outcomes.

Students are encouraged to do research in the appropriate classes and to cite their work correctly. NCC Library staff regularly work with students to use best practices for research, particularly in the electronic age. Faculty members require MLA or APA citations, depending on the discipline. In addition, all faculty and students have access to Turnitin to monitor plagiarism in academic writing.
3. C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

3. C.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.

Northwest Iowa Community College has a 1:14 faculty to student ratio and has continued to meet the challenges of finding qualified instructional staff to meet student and institutional needs. There are currently 40 full-time faculty and 110 adjunct instructors.

Faculty members participate on all appropriate committees at the college and are heavily involved in the curriculum and assessment committees. In 2008 NCC was awarded a Title III grant which focused on improving instruction and assessment of student learning. This was a highly successful grant which resulted in a major shift in attitudes about assessment. All full-time faculty members completed the work assigned, and 37 adjunct instructors also attended training and worked to rewrite learning outcomes.

In addition, faculty members in the state of Iowa are required to meet the Quality Faculty Plan (QFP) requirements set by their own institutions based on state of Iowa standards [N138]. At this time all full-time faculty are in compliance with the QFP. Adjuncts are also under this plan, but with separate requirements. NCC works diligently to train adjuncts in the same criteria as full-time faculty. Online courses focusing on teaching and learning are being developed that will be available to all faculty, including adjuncts, in the QFP standards.

Online faculty are also required to take two training courses offered through our online partnership. EDU101A (use of the technology) and EDU101B (use of online pedagogy) do not cost faculty anything. All online faculty are currently in compliance with these standards.
3. C.2 All instructors are appropriately credentialed, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.

All faculty, including full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and high school instructors who are teaching college courses through the concurrent enrollment (dual credit) program, are hired according to the credentialing standards established by the state of Iowa.

In 2012 NCC achieved National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accreditation [N121]. Part of this process is a review of the credentials of high school personnel teaching college classes. All contracts and credentials are available in the Human Resources office.

3. C.3 Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.

All full-time and permanent part-time personnel are required to have an annual evaluation. This is outlined in Board Policy 416-A,B,C,D,E [N14], which states: “Personnel evaluations are used by the College to promote two-way communication, to promote professional excellence, to ensure employee growth, to improve employee skills, to affirm employee strengths, and encourage professional growth opportunities. While the College expects all employees will actively participate in activities that enhance student learning and institutional effectiveness, employee evaluation is a comprehensive process separate from student assessment and program evaluation. Employee evaluations will provide a source for personnel decisions and shall be performed annually.”

The process of evaluation is outlined in the HR policy manual [N58] and in the faculty contract [N56]. The HR department maintains a calendar to aid in implementing the process and meeting deadlines.

Helpful feedback regarding teaching is given to instructors during classroom visits by the division deans. This is especially true for new faculty as their classroom visits tend to be more frequent and of longer duration. Every full-time and adjunct faculty member is evaluated on an annual basis using a standard faculty evaluation form [N57]. A new faculty evaluation form is under review by the faculty and will be approved in the 2015 academic year for implementation in the 2016 academic year.
The NCC faculty contract provides the procedure for this evaluation process for full-time faculty. Faculty members are observed and go through a performance review on an annual basis by their respective dean. Campus adjunct and high school adjunct are evaluated annually by the appropriate dean with the same tools.

Online adjunct go through a slightly different process since “classroom observation” is different. Each year individual faculty members complete a thorough review checklist to self-identify what they want to improve in their online courses. When the improvements are completed, they send the document back to the appropriate dean for confirmation [N171].

Students complete course improvement surveys at the end of each semester on a rotating basis for campus classes and for all online courses. Once completed, results are compiled by the dean’s office and returned to the appropriate faculty member sometime during the following semester. These results can provide the faculty member with some insight into his or her teaching effectiveness for that particular course [N170].

An Outstanding Faculty Award and Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Award are given annually. These awards are given for excellence or innovation in teaching, performance beyond the average, commitment to personal and professional development, and team/committee participation [N62]. Innovative classroom activities are occasionally reported in the President’s weekly update.

3. C.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.

Northwest Iowa provides faculty with many opportunities for staff development. All full-time and regular part-time instructors have access to staff development funds, and training resources are made available to adjunct faculty. If instructors are not physically located near the college, online training is available. The practice is to work to treat all instructors the same when it comes to training, including all adjunct who may be teaching on campus, online, off campus, or in the concurrent enrollment classes.
Training is provided through two in-service training days open to all faculty, two adjunct workshop days, the 21st Century Learning Conference, the ICCOC Spring Conference, and by participating in professional teaching groups or state and national programs related to specific professions. Here are more specifics about the opportunities available:

• Training for instruction on the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) is delivered by the ICN Coordinator.

• The 21st Century Learning Conference grew out of the 2008–2013 Title III grant and is now integrated into the annual training processes at NCC. It is slated to occur on the third Monday of September each year. All NCC faculty, staff, and area K–12 partners convene and explore the pedagogy and technology needed for students to succeed in the 21st century.

• Fall/Spring in-service days are required of all full-time and permanent part-time faculty. The QFP Committee, Curriculum Committee, Assessment Committee, and faculty all have input into determining the content of these instructional days.

• Online instructors may attend campus training, webinars, or the annual Iowa Community College Online Consortium Spring Conference. The conference was first held in 2001. Since then 15 to 20 faculty/staff members have attended annually. Webinars are conducted by ICCOC staff, assisted by the NCC Mentor Trainer. This group of trainers was implemented under a shared Title III grant that included all seven of the ICCOC schools to improve faculty training across the colleges.

• As-needed training is provided by the staff retained after the Title III grant in conjunction with other college departments. The active learning technician and the curriculum specialist work together with the dean of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to provide academic staff development.

• Adjunct training is provided at the beginning of the fall and spring terms. This training is conducted by the CTL with the assistance of other departments on campus.

• The CTL provides individual or group training for all faculty as needed in the use of technology or the implementation of improved pedagogy.

• Staff development funds have assisted faculty members in attaining access to courses related to teaching, teaching methods, and learning styles. Staff development and program funds are used to allow faculty members to attend seminars, workshops and classes that focus on varied learning environments such as field work for heavy equipment operators and powerline technicians and computer-based learning for specific technical software such as CAD or Mitchell Estimating.
3. C.5 Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

Instructors are accessible for student inquiry during scheduled office hours, in classrooms and labs, through online discussion boards, and through email. Full-time faculty schedules are posted outside office doors for students’ information. Adjunct faculty are not required to have office hours; however, coming early and staying late is a common practice. The campus adjunct faculty have office space, email addresses, and the use of web-enhancements (Pearson Learning Studio/eCompanion) to assist in communicating with students, as do all faculty.

Online faculty are required to have a phone number and to have a stated feedback policy in their syllabi. Additionally they are encouraged to participate in threaded discussions and to have a ‘virtual office’ discussion board.

However, office time for students is an area where the college may need to look at improvement. According to the Noel-Levitz 2013 Student Satisfaction Inquiry (SSI) [RR], it was noted that students desired greater access to faculty during office hours. This survey is given to students as they graduate, and further research needs to be conducted to discover the thinking behind these survey results.

3. C.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.

Having appropriately qualified employees providing essential services to students is a priority for Northwest Iowa Community College.

Appropriately Qualified

All non-faculty staff members are hired according to well-established hiring practices that conform to proper human resource (HR) standards. These include requiring appropriate degrees, certificates, or training for the position. Generally, for any professional staff member, a bachelor’s degree is preferred/required. For support staff necessary experience and training are always identified in the job listing [N58].

All positions are posted publicly. A screening team goes through the applications before an interview team begins their work. Interviews are carefully monitored and conducted under the leadership of the director of human resources. If the president is available, a second informal interview is conducted before the interviewee leaves the campus. Once applicants have been interviewed and the candidates narrowed down, then reference checks are conducted by the position’s supervisor.

All employee records are maintained by the director of human resources, as are all required credentials.
 Appropriately Trained
Once hired, staff members receive an orientation that involves multiple departments of the College, and eight separate orientation interviews and checklists. Significant time is spent orienting new faculty members to NCC and its processes.

1. Human Resources
2. Supervisor
3. Resource Person
4. Student Services
5. Disabilities Coordinator
6. Information Technology
7. LLRC
8. New Employee Training Videos

 Appropriately Supported
Northwest Iowa Community College is committed to lifelong learning for students and staff. Staff development funds are available to all full-time employees of NCC. Each of the three employee units (faculty, support staff and administration) have committees to assist with the use and disbursement of development funds. Employees work with their supervisors during the year and during annual performance reviews to discuss opportunities to expand and enhance skills and knowledge.

In addition, the college provides an Education Assistance Program to assist employees in obtaining advanced degrees. Tuition reimbursement for courses taught at NCC is also available for full-time employees. Continuing education offerings are another option for NCC staff members who desire to improve their skills and knowledge.

Finally, the college also hosts department and campus-wide staff development events. Fall and spring in-service days for faculty have recently expanded to include activities for non-instructional staff. These in-service days are being planned and developed by diverse college groups and overseen by human resources and members of the Executive Council.
3. D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

3. D.1 The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.

Northwest Iowa Community College has a strong record of student success as measured by retention and graduation rates. The success of NCC students may be directly linked to excellent instruction and the quality and variety of these services. More evidence of this will be included in Criterion Four, but it is sufficient at this point to list a few key indicators.

- ASPEN Institute’s College Excellence Program nominee three times for student success as measured by completion (2011, 2013, 2015).

- CNN Money: #7 in the nation for federally reported 3-year graduation rate and transfer rate (2012).

- College Measures: Highest Graduation/Transfer rate in the state of Iowa for Community Colleges (2013).

Much of this is the result of the work done by support services at the College. NCC students benefit from the resources provided by the following departments.
**Academic Center**

In 2009 the library, learning center and TRiO were organized into one group – the Academic Center. These three departments work closely together, under the direction of the CAO, to provide students with important services. Information about these services is available in the catalog, orientation manual, and the website.

- **The library** provides research assistance services, interlibrary loan service, database usage instruction, and information literacy sessions (p. 20) [N66].

- **TRiO** serves low-income, first-generation students with academic advising, career planning, personal counseling, financial aid advising, tutoring, transfer assistance, and cultural activities [N67].

- **The learning center** provides free tutoring, developmental courses, individualized study plans, and study skill instruction (p. 11) [N129].

- **The career center** provides guidance resources, including counseling, aptitude and interest testing, and instruction in job seeking skills. Placement office helps students find employment relating to training after graduation (p.10) [N129]. The 2014–15 catalog (p.10) demonstrates the change in organizational alignment of these duties [N195].

- The **adult literacy program** provides adults with instructional opportunities to improve basic skill levels. Included is instruction to prepare for GED (now HSED) testing (p. 11) [N129]. English as a second language/citizenship preparation services are available for students as well [N118].

- **Short-term individual counseling** is available to students in the areas of career planning, academic planning, and personal issues. Professional referrals are also available (p. 16) [N66].

- Services for **students with disabilities** are provided for equal access to the campus, and accommodations are available to provide students with disabilities with equal access to educational opportunities (p. 16) [N66].

- **SPAN** is the fifth-year senior program for students on Individual Educational Plans with their high schools [N69].

- The **Alternative High School** is a service available to students who have dropped out of traditional high schools or who are at risk of dropping out because of problems at school or in their personal lives. Individualized instruction and support is given to students to earn a high school diploma [N70].
Student Services and Financial Aid
The registrar, academic advisors, admissions office, recruiters, financial aid officers, and support staff are all located within close proximity of one another. Student satisfaction is enhanced by working in the same locale, meeting in cross-disciplinary teams, and by having a common philosophy of student support.

- Academic advising provides instruction of school policies, critical thinking of academic decisions, support and monitoring of academic performance, and support for retention and graduation in academic programs (p. 3 of advising handbook) [N65].

- Student support to help in the transfer process is also available to students. Students can receive help applying, transferring credit, and answering basic transfer questions through the transfer advisor (p. 15 advising handbook) [N65].

- Financial Aid assistance is provided to students so that they can successfully complete the FAFSA process and have access to federal and state financial aid programs and scholarships (p. 22) [N66].

- Student email access – all students are granted a network and email account (p. 37) [N131].

Additional Support
- IT services—NCC is a wireless campus, and the college provides students and staff with email, a helpdesk, and helpdesk support (p. 37) [N131]. This is documented more fully in Criterion Five.

- Student housing is available on campus within 3 housing complexes — Cherokee Hall, Lyon Hall, and O’Brien Hall (p. 14) [N66].

- Open access to fitness classes are provided to students through the LLRC to provide fitness and wellness educational support initiatives [N71].

- VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) is a free tax service for individuals with low and limited income, disabilities, non-English speaking, and elderly taxpayers (including students) [N72].
Developmental instruction at Northwest Iowa Community College is undergoing major changes in order to provide for the increasing academic needs of students. For many years the need for developmental courses at NCC was limited. This was due to the quality of area K–12 schools and the importance that parents in the region placed on education. The relatively small numbers of students who needed developmental work were able to work 1-on-1 in the Learning Center by focusing on modules that were needed to prepare students for advanced work. The college has traditionally relied on COMPASS and ACT testing to indicate developmental need but has not yet delved into the deep analytics that are available. At this time, cutoff scores are required in math and communication courses and selected programs.

The deans and other key personnel are also developing deeper approaches to using analytics and developmental courses to ensure student success. A review of existing courses, test scores, student success in math and communications, and growing need by ESL students for instruction are under consideration. This is now part of the new Vision 2020 Strategic Plan, and evidence of the work can be found in the minutes of the dean’s meetings [RR].

Northwest Iowa has processes for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared. NCC is an open enrollment institution, admitting students into the college with a high school degree or GED (HSED). However, admission to the college does not guarantee admissions into a program or into specific courses. The college catalog outlines admission requirements (p. 9) [N186].

**Advising**
No student may register for a class without talking to an advisor, and all degree-seeking students have regular interaction with both their advisors and program faculty. This personal attention helps students to select appropriate courses, so that they may achieve their academic and professional goals.

**Entrance Exams**
NCC requires students to take the COMPASS test or the ACT. Scores on these tests are used to guide students into the appropriate math and communication classes. Three programs have specific cut-off scores that must be met before being admitted to the program. These are powerline, radiologic technology, and nursing.

**Selection Process**
Information on prerequisites are included in the catalog by program. Health care programs may also have to undergo a selection process based on a list of prerequisites and other criteria [N105].
The Academic Center
In addition to the admissions and advising, the Academic Center provides additional services important for student success. These resources are outlined on page 11 of the 2013–14 catalog, but, in summary, include [N129]:

- Career resources area in the library and learning center
- Resume evaluation
- Interviewing tips
- Interest profile assessment
- Current job listings

3. D.3 The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.

Specific advisors are assigned to specific programs to ensure that students receive consistent advising, which helps build a relationship with one person who has one’s entire academic progress in view. Evidence of this is found in the Advising Handbook (p. 1) [N65].

Advisors have developed an advising handbook to adequately advise students. This handbook was developed under the college’s first Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant (2000–2005) [RR] and has been updated to continue to improve student outcomes. Here are key practices that contribute to student success.

1. Students are required to meet with their advisor for drops/adds.
2. Advisors are sent a 10 and 30–day intervention list from the Registrar’s Office so that they can contact students if the instructor has reported that they are struggling.
3. Advisors make calls to their students when they see they have not yet registered for a future term.
4. Advisors are using a new tool, Degree Audit, to help ensure that students are taking the classes that they need to graduate.
5. Before starting, students attend orientation and are advised on their specific program, along with receiving other important information in the orientation workbook [N66].

Online students at NCC have an exceptionally high success rate that is also tied to key practices by Student Services. To keep students engaged with their online courses, a weekly report is pulled from the learning management system (LMS - Pearson Learning Studio) that identifies students who have not been participating, submitting work, or doing well. These students are contacted by advisors to see what can be done to get them on track [N173].
3. D.4 The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning.

Providing instructors and students with the appropriate equipment and educational space is a priority of the college and is considered in every planning process.

Computer Infrastructure
The college is fortunate to have an IT department that understands that everyone is here to serve students. To that end they have worked to equip students with the experience of smart classrooms, email, personal storage space on servers, computer labs, a Helpdesk, a portal with single sign-on to email and online courses, and a wireless campus (including powerline fields). In order to manage the required use of laptops by students in academic programs, a standing committee reviews all requests by faculty. The committee, which has representation from all areas on campus, looks at the costs and the benefits to students before approving a request. This has included looking at the use of electronic books as a way to manage the cost of higher education.

The decision to implement required laptops for a program involves action by many areas of the college. The registrar works with the deans to make the necessary changes to program sheets and to notify all those who recruit or advise students. Then the Center for Teaching and Learning works with the faculty members to facilitate the needed changes in instruction. Several programs have implemented the use of laptops and e-books into the curriculum. These include computer science, automotive services, nursing, instrumentation, and accounting.

The Technology Committee also meets regularly to discuss the information technology needs of the staff and students [N75].
Applied Technology Laboratories
Students in technical courses at NCC are used to a lab-based, hands-on approach to instruction. Each of the applied technology programs has a discipline specific lab. Each year in the budgeting process a significant amount of money is spent on updating this equipment. The College keeps all labs current; however, budget limitations makes it impossible to meet every request. Evidence of the funding expenditures is included in the annual budgets.

Program Specific Labs
• Welding
• Collision Repair
• Automotive Repair
• Engineering (CAD)
• Carpentry Lab & House
• Powerline
• Substation
• Electrical—DC & AC, Industrial, Residential, Commercial
• Instrumentation and Control
• Computer Science
• Manufacturing

Science Laboratories
Science comes alive and becomes relevant when students can experiment with the theories being taught. With the assistance of grant funding and as part of the budgeting process, the college has three well-equipped science labs. The labs went through extensive remodeling and expansion in 2008. In addition, there is an outdoor prairie area used for laboratory work in natural resource courses.

Library
The Internet has radically changed the world of libraries, and at NCC the library staff has worked diligently to build the appropriate collections for students, faculty members and staff.
• Campus collections are largely discipline specific, and faculty are engaged in the process of determining the best materials to have on hand.
• The online library has extensive resources, and they are available through the website and through online courses. The college is a partner in the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC), and those seven colleges have pooled resources to provide all students with greater access to materials.
• The library staff also assists faculty and students with research projects and in developing information literacy in their patrons.
Clinical and Practical sites
Each year NCC provides clinical instruction to students in its nursing, radiologic technology, health information, and pharmacy technician programs. Area health facilities partner with the college to provide students with the hands-on experiences necessary to their future success. Some of these partners include:

- Orange City Area Health System
- Sanford Sheldon Medical Center
- Osceola Community Hospital, Sibley
- Orange City Heritage House
- Hartley Community Memorial Health Center
- Whispering Heights, Rock Valley
- Unity Point Health, Sioux City
- Mercy Medical Center, Sioux City
- Sanford Health, Sioux Falls

Performance Space
NCC is expanding student opportunities to explore their talents in the areas of physical fitness and fine arts. The Lifelong Learning and Recreation Center (LLRC) is available to all students for classes or to participate in individual or group fitness.

The college cafeteria is used by the Student Government Association (SGA) for entertainment activities during the academic year. Hypnotists, musicians, comedians, games, and other activities are conducted to expand the campus experience for students.

Students have been able to take art classes through NCC at the City of Sheldon Prairie Arts Center. However, in recent years the college expanded offerings beyond painting and ceramics to include other fine arts courses. When the professional photography program opened in 2008, it was the first “artistic” program offered, and the college is working to develop appropriate gallery space to display student work. Most student artwork is displayed in the library.

In 2013–14 the college introduced vocal music to the curriculum. In May 2014 the new choir, Thundertones, performed for graduation.
3.D.5 The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

One component of the General Education Statement focuses on gathering and synthesizing information. Policies have been implemented outlining expectations on the use of research and information services. Resources are available for staff, faculty, and students to assist in evaluating good sources and the use of Turnitin and other research materials. The learning center and library are available to help individuals conduct research and evaluate information resources. Instructors are trained in evaluating student research. Each syllabus includes the academic dishonesty policy, and instructors receive support from deans and administration in enforcing it.

- General education courses usually require written work and teach research methods.
- The college offers courses in information literacy.
- The library and the learning center work with students as they prepare research papers and are available to answer questions.
- All syllabi have an academic dishonesty policy that outlines the penalties for cheating or plagiarism.
- All students and instructors have access to plagiarism software.

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

The Northwest Iowa Community College resides in an extremely rural part of the United States, and many students commute to the campus from as far away as 75 miles. In addition, many students work while they are attending college. Enriching the educational environment of students is a challenge because a significant part of our student body commutes to the campus and may also be part-time students. However, it is a challenge that is being addressed.
3.E.1 Co-curricular programs are suited to the mission and contribute to the educational experience of students.

The NCC General Education Statement includes the idea that everything is not learned in the classroom, and that the five key goals may also be learned in “classes, labs, field experiences, and other co-curricular activities.” In the past decade the college has expanded residence hall space, which provides supervised apartments and a live-in coordinator. Also the college built the Lifelong Learning and Recreation Center (LLRC), and expanded the clubs and other co-curricular activities available to students, in order to provide students with a well-rounded education experience. Some of the student activities include:

- SkillsUSA
- Health Information Technology Club
- TRiO Lunch and Learn Sessions
- Student Government Association
- Legislative Forums
- Housing Educational Evenings: financial education, sexual education, alcohol education
- Diversity Days
- Career Presentations
- Phi Theta Kappa
- Business Club
- Campus Crusade for Christ

3.E.2 The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students’ educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as community engagement, service learning, and economic development.

Community Engagement and Service Learning
Northwest Iowa Community College has strong roots in career and technical education which emphasizes hands-on, active learning. Being able to participate in real-life activities assists students in understanding the relationship between classroom learning and their future workplace.

The first General Education Statement concerns Personal Development. It states, “Students display personal development when they (1) Engage in leadership/teamwork activities, (2) Exhibit ethical behavior, (3) Show life skills including self-awareness, self-advocacy, time management, fiscal responsibility, the ability to access information, and others, and (4) Demonstrate civic engagement and social responsibility.”
Therefore, students at NCC are encouraged to participate in service learning and community engagement activities. This is an area of student learning that is receiving increased emphasis and is currently being explored as part of the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan [N102].

• Students help to build homes with Habitat for Humanity in Tennessee, Florida, and Alabama.

• Powerline students work in the spring to help remove trees, and they have also helped communities who have experienced tornado and flood damage.

• Heavy equipment students recently assisted one of our local communities with flood control. Students and staff volunteered numerous hours to assist with sandbagging, traffic control, building levees, and running heavy equipment.

• VITA is free public tax service offered by the accounting students, with the assistance of interested students from other programs. The administrative secretarial students set the appointments, and the health information technology students work with the records.

• Service organizations (Campus Crusade, TRiO, Business Club, HIT Club, Phi Theta Kappa, etc.) conduct activities throughout the year to provide needed items at Christmas, or Soles for Souls (shoes), and cold-weather gear for children.

• The automotive, collision repair and diesel students refurbish donated vehicles which are donated through Charitable Chariots to needy families.

• SGA students sponsor the Bloodmobile.

• Nursing students have gone on location to practice nursing skills as far away as Haiti.
Economic Development
Students enhance the economic development of the region by practicing their trades while still students. NCC has several specific programs that demonstrate this activity.

• Heavy Equipment students practice classroom learning in the field by completing actual job projects off campus. Students learn to operate equipment and to manage the entire job through projects that benefit local communities. In the past decade the program has prepared the ground for parking lots, ball diamonds, industrial parks, and community development. This greatly enhances the ability of small communities to accomplish economic development.

• Powerline and carpentry students have assisted in lighting sports fields and wiring the new campgrounds at Iowa’s highest point in elevation.

• Computer science students have helped area libraries with their computer infrastructure needs.

• Nursing students have conducted health fairs.

• Natural resource students assisted area nurseries with planting.
Summary of Findings Regarding Criterion Three

Areas of Strength

• At NCC education is viewed as an investment, and faculty do a good job of maintaining high standards through innovation.

• The recently completed Title III Strengthening Institutions grant (2008–2013) had a profound impact on teaching and learning at NCC, changing both teaching practices and attitudes.

• NCC has a strong infrastructure and adequate resources to support effective teaching and learning. This includes quality labs and instructional equipment.

• NCC provides strong student support services for those students who need support to have an opportunity for educational achievement at the postsecondary level.

• NCC has a well-qualified teaching staff that works to maintain their own knowledge of the subjects they teach and to expand their knowledge of pedagogy.

• NCC has been successful in developing alternative instructional modalities, particularly in online instruction. This has enhanced the entire academic community through web-enhancements of all campus classes.

• NCC has a strong concurrent enrollment program that is NACEP accredited.

Opportunities for Improvement

• The college will benefit from completing the task of revising all courses and in assessing student learning.

• The college needs to continue to work on funding to improve infrastructure, especially in student classroom and lab space.

• The college could benefit from the expanded use of learner analytics, either in the hands of faculty members and other decision makers, or in the hands of the students themselves.

• The college would benefit from a formalized process for determining program viability, from the inception of a new program to the need to discontinue a program.

• The college should enhance developmental education by implementing an emporium approach to developmental education in the learning center.
Next Steps

• Continue the work of Title III, and complete revision of all active courses and integrate instruction of general education outcomes.

• Expand the use of learner analytics and continue to expand the use of dashboards by students, faculty and staff. (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan)

• Determine the process to be used in determining program viability. (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan)

• Continue to enhance developmental education programming. (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan)

• Develop process for maintaining records of faculty and staff involvement in professional organizations, presentations at conferences, and volunteer activities.
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CRITERION FOUR—TEACHING AND LEARNING: EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Northwest Iowa Community College 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.
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.

Assessment has been a process of growth for Northwest Iowa Community College, as it has been with all of higher education. The challenge has been to understand, embrace, and facilitate meaningful assessment. This is a journey, not a destination, for any college, and NCC has traveled far in the past decade. In preparing for this self-study, it is important to note that the college community realizes the progress that has been made and is embracing the work ahead.

The NCC 2004 Self-study for accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission did not go onto a shelf but was used by the college to improve assessment. To accomplish the challenges identified in 2004, the college applied for and was granted a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant (2008–13). The major focus of the grant was to rewrite curriculum to include measurable learning outcomes and to implement active learning in all classrooms. As a result of the work done with the grant, faculty attitudes have changed significantly about the value of assessment. In increasing numbers, faculty and staff are seeing the value of assessment and continuous improvement [N7].

NCC faculty and staff understand that the work of assessment is a continuous process of improvement. The assessment strategies at the college move from the mission to the general education statement and then to a process of improvement that includes input from multiple sources. This diagram attempts to visualize the process being described.
4. A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

4. A.1 The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

In compliance with state of Iowa regulations and with the underlying desire to deliver quality instruction to students, NCC maintains the practice of regular program evaluation. All programs are reviewed on a five-year cycle, and there are copies of the reviews going back to the 1970s.

The program review model used by NCC has undergone many changes. Previous to the 2008–2013 Title III Grant, the process used for program evaluation did not always provide meaningful data and analysis and, therefore, did not always result in correctly identifying program strengths and areas for improvement. One goal of the grant was to review and revise the program evaluation process.

An extensive team of people worked to revise the review process. The overall goal was to streamline the process and to make it more meaningful for review. The master schedule for program evaluations as well as the program evaluation model and final evaluation reports (which are presented to the Board) are kept in the CAO’s office. The evaluation model defines who serves on the program team for each evaluation.

Three key steps were included in the revision process:

1. The old process was analyzed for strengths and weaknesses. This process included consulting with those who do not usually conduct program review in order to gain a fresh perspective on the process.
2. Time was spent analyzing what data the college currently has concerning students and programs. It was discovered that data currently being collected was more complete than during the HLC visit in 2004. Where possible, numbers are being used instead of narrative, and then the numbers are analyzed.
3. A review was done on the way that student surveys are conducted and the content being collected. It became evident that students were being over surveyed and asked the same questions multiple times. Instead of 11 surveys, today only three are given to the same groups of students.

Program evaluation is conducted in a five-year cycle, but annual progress is reported on stated learning outcomes. While the requirement to conduct five-year reviews of programs is mandated by the state of Iowa, the form that the evaluation takes is the responsibility of the college. The Code of Iowa outlines the areas to be reviewed.

NCC’s changes to the program evaluation tool have the goal of working towards a more streamlined process and towards the use of data to improve student learning. The components of the NCC program review process are grouped into five phases.
1. Administrative Phase: This is the preparation stage. Deans and program instructors gather the review team and review the process of program review.

2. Data-collection Phase: All data collection takes place during the second stage, including survey and descriptive data. There are ten data sets to collect.
   a. Descriptive data—basic information on the program being evaluated
   b. Curriculum—a review of the catalog, data at the state of Iowa, and syllabi
   c. Recruitment/admissions—a review of program sheets
   d. Educational resources—a review of the materials and supplies used in the program
   e. Advisory committee—this includes the list of advisory committee members, annual survey results, recommendations from the committee captured in meeting minutes
   f. Student achievement—assessment results from the evaluation of program outcomes
   g. Enrollment/graduation—report from the registrar’s office
   h. Student satisfaction—this is a combination of exit surveys from graduates, and surveys of those who have graduated in the past six months
   i. Employer satisfaction—survey data from external employers or those who hire the graduates
   j. Staff recruitment/development—staff development information for the program faculty

3. Evaluation Phase: This is the point where time is spent analyzing data and writing the initial report.

4. Division/Operational Planning & Budgeting: Once the program is reviewed it is analyzed for budgeting and planning priorities within the broader context of the college [N80].

5. Feedback Phase: The evaluation is shared with the Executive Council and the Board of Trustees.

After the five-year review is completed, the program faculty and deans work with the CAO to address the ‘Actions on Recommendations.’

> Students utilize a Monopoly board game to help practice tax preparation
Twelve programs have undergone review under the new process since 2012, and the faculty were surveyed about the new process. Based on their feedback, the internal data-gathering process is better than the previous process, but there are still problems gathering data from graduates and from employers.

In the fall of 2014 work will begin to once again improve the plan, moving towards implementing an annual review process that relies heavily on data from the SIS. Additional work will be done on Annual Performance Indicators (APIs). The goal is to respond more quickly to challenges in order to make changes that could improve student learning outcomes. Faculty will work with deans and administration on the improved process. Possible data sets may include:

- Headcount with demographics
- Credit count in program courses and general education courses
- GPA of program students
- Grade distribution analysis
- Registration and drop/add information
- Program cost
- Faculty instructional load

Program outcomes are measured by faculty and reported annually to the Assessment Coordinator. The goals are written and developed by program faculty in consultation with the deans and assessment coordinator. Generally faculty are provided time every fall and spring to work on assessment during in-service days. In 2012 faculty worked to map course outcomes (GIOs and SLOs) to program outcomes [N25]. This resulted in several programs rewriting outcomes, or in one case, course work. Here are some examples of the outcomes of that work session:

- The automotive service technology faculty discovered that they were teaching a set of competencies for which they had no program outcome to measure.

- The practical nursing faculty collapsed outcomes from ten down to nine due to redundancy.

- The associate degree nursing faculty discovered that they did not have the appropriate balance of instruction on selected competencies.

4. A.2 The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.

The evaluation processes for transferred credits is outlined for students in the 2013–14 College Catalog (pp. 24–25) [N130]. Students are required to speak to an advisor before registering for classes, so all students are able to discuss these questions with personnel who are qualified to answer questions.
Experiential Learning
When a student requests credit for experiential learning, gained through work experience or personal study, the registrar checks with the dean and program instructor to see if the experiences are relevant to the program in which the student is enrolled. The dean may require documentation from the student’s employer or supervisor that verifies the student performed the duties as described for a required amount of time. The credit that is ultimately awarded will be for a specific course or general credit (e.g. technical credit), depending on the competencies. The student does not receive a grade and must pay half the tuition cost of the credit awarded. Although there is no limit specified in the catalog on the number of credits that can be awarded for experiential learning, the maximum that has been awarded is six credits. Credit for experiential learning is requested and awarded approximately one time per year [N130].

Military Experience
When a student requests credit for military experience, the student must provide a transcript from the military that lists military training that would be appropriate for college credit. This transcript also states what college credit would be equivalent to the training received. The registrar awards the recommended credits. This is treated as a normal transfer in of credits, so there is no cost to the student. This kind of credit for military experience is awarded less than one time per year [N130].

Credit by Examination
Students can be awarded credit for selected courses on campus by using locally-developed assessment tools. If a student requests credit by examination for a particular course, the registrar works with the dean and course instructor to determine if credit by examination is possible. If possible, the student would complete the approved assessment and be awarded the credit if he or she can achieve the required score on the assessment. The student pays for the course. A “T” code is placed on the student transcript so the course does not play a part in the student’s GPA. At this time credit by examination is only allowed for non-transferable courses, and this is articulated clearly in the 2015 College Catalog (p. 26) [N130].

CLEP (College Level Examination Program)
Students are also able to receive credit for some courses using CLEP tests. NCC’s CLEP policy is stated in the catalog on page 24. In the 2014 academic year, the college began delivering a selected number of CLEP tests on campus so that students no longer have to travel to an alternate location to take the tests, saving them time and reducing travel expenses [N130].
Normal Transfer of Credits
When transferring in credits from other Iowa Community Colleges, common course numbering has streamlined the process. When credit is transferred in from an in-state four-year college or an out-of-state college, the registrar checks course descriptions in that college’s catalog and might also contact an instructor at that college for more information or ask the student to get a syllabus for a course to ensure it matches an NCC course. A question about transferability of a course is resolved through a conversation with the appropriate dean and faculty and by comparing course descriptions and syllabi.

When a student wants to transfer in credits from another school (Iowa or out-of-state), only credits that apply to the major the student is seeking at NCC are transferred [N130].

4. A.3 The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

NCC follows appropriate practices that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer. The college relies on the quality assurances provided by national, regional, and state accrediting agencies in accepting transfer credits. This is in alignment with national guidelines. The registrar also belongs to the appropriate professional organizations and networks frequently with others in the profession to keep abreast of issues/changes related to the position.

The registrar has processes in place to verify that courses that are transferred into NCC align with NCC courses. This was covered in 4.A.2. The 2013–14 College Catalog (p. 24), contains specific information about the credits NCC accepts in transfer [N130].

- AA and AS students may transfer in a maximum of 16 credits from Vocational/Technical courses as electives.
- Career and technical students may transfer in courses that are reviewed by the Registrar and Dean.
- The college accepts grades of “C” or better from accredited institutions.
- The registrar’s office makes all final decisions about transfer of credits.
- NCC cannot guarantee how other institutions may treat credit hours accepted for transfer to NCC.
4. A.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.

Providing quality instruction is at the heart of the work of an academic institution. Therefore the college maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses and the rigor of those courses. In the 2013–14 catalog there are 390 college transfer courses, 197 courses recommended for transfer, 176 courses that are not recommended for transfer, and 21 developmental courses. Courses are delivered in multiple modalities, in multiple disciplines, and at varying academic levels; however, quality is the goal of all instruction.

NCC also maintains expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs.

**Prerequisites**

Ensuring that students have the necessary knowledge to succeed is the purpose of prerequisites. 145 courses in the NCC catalog have prerequisites, which are clearly outlined in all catalogs and syllabi. To assist students and advisors, the NCC student information database is properly configured to prevent enrollment in a course when the prerequisites have not been met.

As part of the process of monitoring prerequisites:

- All syllabi are reviewed by the curriculum committee as part of the course and program revision processes.

- Individual program instructors review prerequisites with the assistance of division deans and in department meetings.

- Advisory committees help identify the appropriate curriculum for programs including sequencing of courses.

- In the past five years prerequisites for math and communication courses were reviewed and compared with student grades and incoming COMPASS scores. High school course requirements were removed, and COMPASS cutoff scores were substituted. This removed the ambiguity caused by uncertainty about the content of high school courses.
Rigor
Multiple practices are involved in ensuring that courses have the appropriate rigor.

• COMPASS cutoff scores for math and communications were reviewed and set. This helps ensure students are placed in the correct level of a course so that rigor can be maintained.

• Meetings have been held with state four-year institutions to discuss standardization of introductory courses and to ensure transfer students are ready for upper level work.

• Common course numbering helps ensure courses are covering the appropriate learning outcomes. A course database with common course numbers, course descriptions, and program courses is maintained by the Iowa Department of Education. When a new course is created, community colleges must use this system to submit the new course for approval and assignment of the common course number. As community colleges change, replace, or delete courses, that information must be maintained in Curricunet (the state of Iowa database). At NCC, this information is maintained by the CAOs office, in collaboration with the academic deans.

• Course assessment and program assessment supports rigor. NCC has a solid program assessment process, and all programs have completed curriculum mapping to ensure program learning outcomes are actually being taught adequately [N25].

• Some accredited programs have specific entry-level competencies that students must meet. Requiring students to meet certain standards before entering a program helps ensure the courses in that program can maintain the appropriate level of rigor.

• The course revision process helps to ensure courses have learning outcomes appropriate for college-level work.

Student learning expectations are published for students in course syllabi and program specific handbooks, for example, nursing [N81]. Specific program requirements are also published in the college catalog. Advisory committees, members of the assessment committee, deans and the CAO review program learning outcomes.

Evidence that students have learned comes from course and program assessments (4.A.1), course improvement surveys, student satisfaction surveys, and employer and advisory committee feedback (4.A.1).
Course improvement surveys provide some information as to the extent that learning took place in a course. Questions 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 13 are indirect indicators of student learning \[N170\].

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), ACT student satisfaction survey, and Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) also provide indirect indications of student satisfaction with instruction \[RR\].

Every continuing education course is evaluated at the end of the course. More information about results are available in the continuing education department \[N87\].

Students at Northwest Iowa Community College have access to multiple forms of learning resources both on campus and online. This was covered more fully in Criterion 3, but the following learning resources are available.

- **Academic Center**
  - Learning Center — provides free tutoring, assistance with testing and computer access.
  - TRiO — support for Student Support Services students under the federal grant.
  - Library — provides students with books, magazines, videos, electronic resources and databases, assistance with writing and research.

- **MyPlace** — this is the NCC portal which provides students single sign-on to online learning, the library, academic information, web-based software, announcements, and bill paying.

- **Specific course software** — Provided to students in multiple disciplines. In addition, students have access to Microsoft Office software through the portal and Citrix services.

- **Wi-fi** — The campus is wireless and open to all who come to visit the campus.

- **Online resources** — Students have 24/7 access to the LMS helpdesk, free tutoring through Smarthinking, access to Turnitin for help with research, shared library resources with the six other colleges in the ICCOC, and support from the ICCOC staff.
Faculty qualifications are outlined by the state of Iowa and by particular accrediting agencies. NCC works to be in compliance with all standards, and the records are kept centrally in the human resources office.

- The Quality Faculty Plan (QFP) is a state-wide requirement for professional development for Iowa community college instructors. There are two stages of development. New faculty must complete the initial plan within five years of employment. Once that is completed faculty move into the continuous cycle. The records are maintained in the human resources office. There are standards for both full-time and adjunct instructors.

- Concurrent enrollment (dual-credit) instructors must meet the same qualifications as their full-time counterparts at NCC. This is a NACEP accreditation requirement. In addition to college requirements, the faculty also have additional training requirements under NACEP and must meet those annually.

The college also ensures that concurrent enrollment (dual credit) courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to their higher education curriculum. According to Senior Year Plus legislation [N88], dual credit programs in Iowa are referred to as concurrent enrollment. There are two categories of concurrent enrollment courses: those taught by faculty hired by the college, and those taught by high school instructors who are considered adjunct instructors by NCC.

The state of Iowa encourages student participation in these courses by providing supplemental funding to high schools to assist in paying for these courses. However, they also require community colleges to have NACEP accreditation as proof that courses have the appropriate post-secondary rigor and relevance.

NACEP does not cover concurrent enrollment taught by campus faculty. The logic is that these courses are covered by the quality assurance processes in place for campus students.
Concurrent Enrollment at High Schools
NCC earned accreditation from the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) in 2012. The college must provide evidence to NACEP in five categories [N89]:

1. Curriculum: Concurrent enrollment courses use the same syllabi and textbooks used by campus courses. In addition, they use the same learning outcomes. The same enrollment standards, drop/add policies, and prerequisites that apply to campus classes are applied to these courses. All grades appear on an NCC transcript and passes/failures are part of student academic records.

2. Faculty: Concurrent enrollment instructors (high school instructors teaching college classes) must meet the same hiring standards as campus faculty. They must also participate in annual staff development and evaluation by college faculty and deans. Every concurrent enrollment instructor also meets regularly with program faculty who serve as mentors/mentors. Finding appropriate staff development is a challenge, particularly for small institutions. The Iowa Department of Education is investigating ways of sharing resources among community colleges.

3. Students: Concurrent enrollment students are regularly surveyed about their satisfaction with courses, and students who have graduated are surveyed about their satisfaction with concurrent enrollment classes. The outcomes of these surveys are used by the deans and faculty to improve learning outcomes.

4. Assessment: Concurrent enrollment classes also participate in assessment of student learning. The high school faculty are considered adjunct instructors and work with program faculty to develop quality assessments to measure student outcomes. This is an area of expanding opportunity for improvement.

5. Program Evaluation: Finally, concurrent enrollment classes must also participate in program evaluation. In addition to the campus process, high school instructors, counselors, principals, and superintendents are surveyed regularly for their input. The outcomes of these surveys are reviewed by the deans for improvement ideas. NACEP documentation is maintained in TracDat [N90].

Campus/Online Concurrent Enrollment
Students who take courses online, on campus, or at the NCC Career Academy in Orange City follow all college policies and calendars. In order to facilitate these activities the college has dedicated staff to work with high schools; provides web access to critical information for students, parents, and high school staff; hosts regular meetings with high school counselors; and hosts opportunities for campus visits.
4. A.5 The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

Specialized accreditations for programs are maintained for several career and technical programs. This is important for two reasons. First, associations help instructors to know what industry standards are so that they can improve curriculum. Second, students and employers rely on industry certification for assurance that NCC provides quality instruction.

- Health Information Technology: American Health Information Association (AHIMA)
- Nursing: Iowa Department of Public Health
- Industrial & Commercial Wiring: Post-Secondary Electrical Program Approval
- Collision Repair and Refinishing: i-CAR Industry Training Alliance
- Automotive: National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF)
- Heavy Equipment: Certified members of the Iowa Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) and the Iowa Chapter of the Land Improvement Contractors of America (LICA)
- Emergency Services: Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of EMS
- CNA Program: Iowa Department of Public Health
4. A.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.

Graduates of Northwest Iowa Community College have a 96% success rate of employment and an 87% of likelihood being employed in their field of study [N1].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCC Graduate Placement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Responding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Employed</td>
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Source: Placement Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCC Graduate Placement - % Employed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCC Graduates % Employed By Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEA 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder of Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder of US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Placement Office
Data is collected from graduate surveys sent out six months after students graduate, from connections between faculty and students, and, increasingly, from external databases. The college is working with Iowa Workforce Developers to gather more complete data. The goal is to gather data based on social security numbers, both in and out of state.

In compliance with Title IV regulations, the information on the graduation rates and employment data for all programs is published on the NCC website [N23].

Information on transfer rates to four-year institutions is gathered from the National Clearinghouse. In addition, the college has more than 40 articulation agreements with four-year institutions. While this does not guarantee the transfer of all credits, it does indicate that students from NCC are valued as transfer students. Specific transfer programs are included in the NCC catalog (pp. 54–62) [N135].

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

A continuous process of assessment requires time and commitment by the institution and by faculty in particular. At Northwest Iowa Community College the administration is committed to supporting faculty in this pursuit. The decision to support the initiatives of the Title III grant and to institutionalize those processes is helping NCC to continue to grow and expand the application of assessment of student learning [N16].

4. **B.1 The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.**

NCC’s mission, goals, and guiding principles firmly establish a commitment to open access for all students, which includes a commitment to quality instruction. Past strategic plans supported assessment activities and provided an avenue to utilize student learning assessment data to enhance institutional changes and improvement. In addition, the NCC Board of Trustees has established a policy mandating the assessment of all diploma/degree-seeking students. The Board of Trustees adopted Policy 657 in 1994. It states: “All degree and diploma-seeking students shall participate in an assessment relevant to their program of study.” Since that time the college has grown in both understanding and use of assessment to improve student learning.

The assessment committee is chaired by a faculty member. The committee members include a cross-section of the departments and divisions at NCC, because student success is everyone’s business.
Historically, assessment at NCC can be divided into two major initiatives; the first began in the early 1990s and the second was introduced by the 2008 Title III grant. For more than two decades the college has never stopped addressing assessment of student learning.

**1992–2003**

Workshops were held on campus during the early 1990’s addressing the concept of assessment and were used by the college community to decide on the initial course of action. This included workshops on continuous improvement and assessment strategies. It was decided at that time to implement the five-column model by the Nichols group. This was the model the instructors were using in 2004 during the last self-study and is included in the appendix to that document [N91].

Work began by laying down the following guidelines for assessment. Campus-wide assessment workshops led to the initial work that was done by the college prior to the 2004 visit from the HLC.

- Arts and Sciences: Provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to successfully complete college credits that apply to an associate degree and/or a baccalaureate degree.

- Career and Technical Education: Provide students with the knowledge and skills required for successful employment in their chosen careers.

- Continuing Education: Provide individuals with the opportunity to complete a variety of continuing education courses for self-improvement, enhanced employment skills, licensure, certification mandates, or customized training.

- Educational Support Services: Provide students with services that assist in their success (advising, financial aid, placement, library services, bookstore services, admissions, counseling, housing, computer access and service, student life, and cultural experiences).

- Administrative Services: Provide support for all employees to effectively and efficiently facilitate a learning environment (e.g. provide public information, secure personnel needs of the college, conduct business functions of the college, develop positive relationships and partnerships, provide a safe environment, manage information systems, provide leadership and vision, and secure resources).
• Distance Learning: Provide educational opportunities and effectively use distance learning methods and technologies to provide students with knowledge and skills.

• Outreach Services: To enhance the educational opportunities in the area through cooperative efforts with local schools, businesses/industries, and colleges.

• Developmental Education & Basic Skill Development: Provide students with instruction so they can overcome deficiencies and acquire the knowledge and skills to enhance their success in life and/or educational endeavors.

• General Education: Provide students with knowledge and skills in general education curricular areas of communications, humanities, math, science, social science, and computer literacy.

The General Principles for Assessment were written also and are still included in the NCC Assessment Handbook [N92]. They are:
1. The primary reason for assessment is to improve student learning and teaching.
2. The development of an effective valid Assessment Program is a long-term, dynamic process.
3. There should be direct linkage between the assessment of learning, institutional effectiveness, and NCC’s Mission Statement.
4. Assessment must involve a “multiple methods” approach.
5. Assessment is most beneficial when used primarily for making internal decisions that seek to improve programs, instruction, and related services.
6. Assessment initiatives must include training and related support for faculty and staff who are responsible for assessment activities.
7. Assessment will be conducted with reliable valid methods and instruments.
8. Assessment objectives/goals should be stated in terms of observable student outcomes.

2004–2007

Continued to use the 5-column method for course assessment 2005
HLC workshops in assessment 2006
Development of Title III application 2007
After the HLC visit in October of 2004, the college focused on the next steps in assessment. As part of the 2004 self-study process, NCC knew that more needed to be done in the area of assessment. In the 2004 Criterion 3, the college affirmed that “NCC is committed to assessment and using assessment results to improve student learning.” However, NCC also challenged itself to “continue to communicate assessment results to staff and faculty, and that it will review and revise the assessment feedback loop to ensure that all groups receive appropriate assessment data” [N26].

Data kept in assessment notebooks, an unwieldy program evaluation process, and a lack of consistency in data collection were the primary concerns of the faculty and staff during the 2004 HLC site visit.

**2008–2013 – Title III Strengthening Institutions**

- **2008**
  - Developed Title III grant. Awarded 10.1.08

- **2009**
  - Hired Assessment Coordinator. Selected assessment software.

- **2010**
  - Cohort 1 submitted learning outcomes. General education mapping.

- **2011**
  - Cohort 2 submitted learning outcomes. Revision of 5-year program evaluation tool.

- **2012**
  - Cohort 3 submitted learning outcomes. Implemented new program evaluation tool.

- **2013**
  - Completed all grant activities, including measurable outcomes for courses and programs.

The concerns raised in the 2004 self-study led the college to develop the Title III Strengthening Institutions grant application in the spring of 2008. Written under the leadership of the CAO, the grant focused on improving assessment processes to be outcomes-based and in improving classroom instruction. The college was awarded $1.89 million dollars over a five-year period to assist with the endeavor.

**Course Outcomes**

Part of the Title III work completed during the last few years focused specifically on developing student learning outcomes for all courses and programs. The faculty worked with the Title III staff to identify General Instructional Objectives (GIOs) and Specific Learning Outcomes (SLOs). The instructional staff at NCC decided that a two-level approach to course outcomes was a better practice.
Outcomes had to be measurable and faculty spent time in workshops learning the best words to use and the best practices for measuring student learning. Here is an example of one set of course outcomes that were re-written as part of the first cohort under the grant. Each GIO has at least one, if not more, SLO(s) associated with them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHI-105 Introduction to Ethics</th>
<th>Current GIOs and SLOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Former Outcomes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students will be able to:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The overall objectives for this course are:</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To understand and present the basic concepts of ethics</td>
<td><strong>GIO1: Recognize the basic concepts of ethics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be aware of the philosophical systems which are prominent in our western culture</td>
<td>SLO 1.1. Distinguish the different suppositions of ethical systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand the theoretical and practical factors of moral life</td>
<td>SLO 1.2. Compare and contrast the different ethical systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To develop a working vocabulary of philosophical terms related to ethics</td>
<td>SLO 1.3. Critique the strengths and weaknesses of common ethical systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To understand good reasoning and apply it to both individual and community moral questions and issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognize the interrelated nature of ethical thought upon the major problems of life</td>
<td><strong>GIO2: Analyze the ethical systems which are prominent in our western culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 2.1. Explain the relationship between ethical systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 2.2. Give examples of the use of ethical systems in our culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GIO3: Demonstrate a working vocabulary of philosophical terms related to ethics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 3.1. Recognize the presence of ethical content in a variety of discussions and settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 3.2. Discern the appropriate use others make of ethical terminology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 3.3. Articulate appropriate terminology for one’s own opinion in ethically-related situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GIO4: Apply critical thinking to individual and community moral issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 4.1. Analyze the appropriateness of an ethical system to a given situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 4.2 Critique the validity of particular, ethical decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GIO5: Assess the interrelated nature of ethical thought upon the major problems of life</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 5.1. Explain the ethical systems at work in one’s own life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 5.2. Critique specific, ethical decisions: personal, national, or international.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SLO 5.3. Dialogue intelligently with others regarding ethical decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Distinguish,” “compare and contrast,” and “critique” are all active, and involve student learning that can be measured. It is very difficult to demonstrate how to measure “understand” or “be aware.” The work of identifying, reviewing, and revising GIOs and SLOs continues. As part of the course review process under Title III, instructors also had to identify assessment activities that could be used to assess learning. All current learning outcomes are available for the entire campus to read and review [RR].

All sections of a course taught by NCC faculty must use the same GIOs and SLOs. This applies to all teaching modalities, including online, hybrid, and concurrent enrollment. Concurrent enrollment courses use the NCC syllabus, and this is reviewed with the instructors annually.

The quality of courses that NCC students take that originate from other colleges in the ICCOC is ensured, since those colleges are all accredited by the HLC. Deans and distance learning directors at all the ICCOC schools work together to ensure course quality is maintained. Each school in the ICCOC also has a mentor-trainer to help the faculty at their schools maintain certain quality standards.

Program Outcomes
In the 2009–2010 academic year, NCC faculty wrote measurable program-level outcomes for all academic programs. Subsequently, assessment tools and criteria were determined for success for all academic programs. These clearly defined outcomes and assessment tools serve as a plan for collecting the necessary data from classroom projects and exams, capstone projects, and other classroom activities. The assessment planning stage is the most complex and time-consuming stage of program assessment, but planning is a necessary foundation for data collection [RR].

Department Outcomes
During the 2014 academic year, NCC staff began a similar process as the faculty, and began to identify department-level outcomes for the college. Movement is underway to continue this effort toward completion and institutionalization. The results of the 2013–14 outcomes are due to the assessment coordinator before summer 2014. New goals are being written and will be submitted at the same time. The first round of outcomes will be uploaded into the college’s assessment tracking software during the summer of 2014 and will be available to the HLC visiting team [N95].

Structure
The primary work of assessment is performed by the faculty and staff in their program areas, with the support of the assessment subcommittees, and under the direction of the assessment committee.
4. B.2 The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

Curricular outcomes are measured by each program annually. The program faculty members determine which outcomes they will measure, and all outcomes must be measured at least once in the five-year program review cycle. Customized reports are given to each program each year. No matter how many intended outcomes there are, only one, two, or three may be assessed for a program in a given year. The report on program outcomes is included in the five-year program evaluation [N96].

Finally, not only do programs assess program-specific outcomes, but general education outcomes are assessed across the curriculum. The five general education outcomes are mapped to specific courses, and rubrics are being developed for all faculty members to use in reporting outcomes in these areas. The plan is to be able to demonstrate student learning across the curriculum. This is a process that is under construction and will be implemented in the fall of 2015. The preliminary rubrics are available for review [N97].

For each outcome identified, the faculty must decide the appropriate means of assessment to determine student achievement. For each means of assessment, one or more performance criteria for success will be used to determine the level necessary to evaluate that the program outcome has been satisfied. Criteria for success must be identified prior to the collection and analysis of assessment data. When setting criteria for success, it can be tempting to set unreasonably high “nothing but the best” standards or to set unreasonably low “guaranteed to show success” standards.

Faculty are required to have the report of prior year assessments and the plan for the current year submitted to the assessment coordinator by October 31. For the last three years, NCC has had 100% compliance in submitting results and plans for the five-year program evaluation process. These policies and procedures can be found in the NCC assessment program guide and handbook for faculty that is found on the n-drive under the assessment folder [N92]. A sample file is included here [N204].

After the plans and reports are submitted, the assessment coordinator enters the information into TracDat and puts reports regarding the assessment of each program under the appropriate year on the n-drive. Therefore, faculty, staff, or administration can have access to the reports. Also, the assessment coordinator runs a cumulative report for each program to review all the assessment that has been done. A sample file is included here [N98].
Once the reports are submitted, the assessment committee reviews the overall program/department reports and uses a program review rubric to give feedback to faculty and staff on the assessment information presented. All programs have assessments in TracDat, and there are reports going back to 2010.

Closing the loop is critical to sound assessment practice. It is this process that ties together the phases of assessment: planning, data collection, analysis, and decision-making. Closing the loop supports curricular decision-making that is sound, defensible, and most likely to show positive change. NCC is working on this area, and the college considers this an opportunity for improvement. As documented by the Title III survey report, the college has seen a positive and significant change at NCC with assessment, and improvements in the process occur each year.

The college has also begun to assess institutional effectiveness in order to improve processes and increase student success. The work of measuring institutional effectiveness has had several stops and starts in the past two decades. In the spring of 2013, a renewed effort began. Central to the work of assessing institutional effectiveness is the use of survey data. Data from student surveys is being used by college staff to guide the setting of goals.

Two years ago the following activities took place:

• An institutional effectiveness assessment plan was written by the assessment coordinator.

• The college divided into departments and set goals. These were submitted to the assessment committee.

• In the spring of 2014 the outcomes were reported, and new goals were established. The outcomes were reported in TracDat.
4. B.3 The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

The information gained from assessment is used by Northwest Iowa Community College to improve student learning. The college assessment process is faculty driven, and it involves the administration of assessments, and the collection and analysis of results. Because instructors are hired as subject matter experts and are responsible for developing their own curriculum, faculty have significant input into how to use the assessment results. The practice is to look at program content, not individual teaching techniques. The following statements are addressed by faculty on every assessment report:

Criteria for Success

| Yes: ___ | No: ___ | Does your data indicate that this criterion for success was met? |
| Yes: ___ | No: ___ | Does your data indicate that graduates of the program possess the knowledge or skill identified in this outcome? |

If "no" use this space below to provide an analysis of what you believe contributed to not meeting your criteria. What does this tell you about student learning in this program? Then provide a description of what actions will be taken or what changes will be made in your program or assessment plan as a result of these findings.

If "yes" you can use the space provided to discuss any components of the program that you believe contributed to this result. What does this tell you about student learning in this program?

- Where the criterion is met or surpassed, the faculty may rightly conclude that no change in curriculum is needed and report "no action required." If the same outcome is assessed the following year and the results are repeated, the faculty can be assured that acceptable student learning is occurring. The program faculty then consider assessing a different outcome in the next cycle.

- When the results indicate that the criterion level was not achieved, the program faculty need to evaluate the results further. They then establish an action plan and an action plan follow up.

The program faculty can determine what needs to be done, but the assessment committee works with them to ensure that the documentation of results is recorded. This information is the fruit of assessment and the part of the record that will be of greatest interest to outside observers. NCC believes this to be a strength, because the college is using information to improve instruction and student learning. The college recognizes that assessments must be continually reevaluated. A goal for the 2015 academic year will be to institute a peer review process for faculty evaluations.

All this information can be found for each program in the report found on the n-drive under assessment by year. This information is also communicated to advisory committees, Board of Trustees, program evaluation teams, and administration [RR].
4. B.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.

NCC has developed a system that is based on best practices of other colleges and institutions. Research conducted by the Title III team, the assessment chair, the curriculum coordinator, deans, and CAO over a five-year period helped shape the strategies adopted by Northwest Iowa Community College. The review of programs, courses, institutional practices, and internal and external student and staff surveys are used by the appropriate constituent groups to set goals for improvement.

Information on assessment, including all goal statements and plans are stored on the internal public drive (n-drive) before being included in the assessment collection software (TracDat). All faculty and department heads have access to this drive and their program area in TracDat. The results of the evidence-based changes in programs and practices are reported to their respective advisory committees and/or dean for restructuring instruction or services.

Key to the processes at NCC are the involvement of the people most important to the process being assessed. Faculty and staff are engaged in the process; and college leadership supports their efforts through staff development and dedicated time in the academic year to assessment work.

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.

Since the 2004 self-study, NCC has finished the implementation of a new student information system (SIS), added an SQL database to assist in pulling data from the SIS, and introduced assessment tracking software.

Throughout the decade long process, individually developed and handled spreadsheets (shadow databases) have been replaced by reports that rely on the same source for data. This has helped to ensure that the information being used is reliable and useful to both internal and external stakeholders. As the college moves forward, time will be spent on refining data collection and using the data to improve student outcomes.
However, it is also important to note that in spite of challenges in reporting and collecting data, NCC has managed to achieve significant success in graduation and retention rates among community colleges. Here are some examples:

- College Measures—Highest graduation/transfer rate in Iowa for Community Colleges (2013)

- The Aspen Institute—Top 120 Community Colleges (2011, 2013) and Top 150 (2015)

- The Best Schools—#11 in the Nation for Community Colleges (2013)

- CNN Money—#7 In the Nation for success rating in Community Colleges Selected based on the federally reported 3-year graduation rate + transfer rate (2012)

- ICCOC—Highest retention rates in online courses (79%-C or better, 89%-D or better, 2006 through 2013)

Still, there is ongoing work to be done on retention, persistence, and completion at Northwest Iowa Community College. In order to increase student success, NCC has contracted with Noel-Levitz to assist in developing best practices and improving recruitment, retention, and data collection processes.

4. C.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.

NCC has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion, and the work of implementing strategies to meet those goals has begun. Until now NCC has not aggressively sought assistance in the area of recruiting and retention for significant reasons. The college has generally experienced annual growth in enrollments, and in 2011 was lauded by Community College Week for being the 20th fastest growing community college in the nation.

However, enrollments are beginning to decline along with the area population. Northwest Iowa has a significantly low unemployment rate, and that is beginning to have a negative impact on recruiting and retaining students. Also, the college is concerned that it has one of the lowest matriculation rates of high school students to the college of the 15 community colleges in Iowa.

In addition to declining enrollments, the United States president’s emphasis on the college completion agenda has shifted priorities at colleges and at the state and federal government. In 2012, the Iowa community college presidents committed themselves to the Iowa Community College Completion Initiative (ICCCI). The presidents met to share best practices and to work with the state of Iowa to collect data.
NCC is one of five Iowa community colleges evaluating the viability of relying on the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) metrics for meeting the state completion agenda. This framework was chosen because it is designed to encompass and more accurately reflect the nature of community colleges. Work on defining and collecting data is complete, and the state of Iowa is going to fund this project for the community colleges [N99].

In the meantime, the Noel-Levitz work on retention has given the college direction and focus. In the fall term (2013), key campus stakeholders met in multiple group settings to be interviewed by Noel-Levitz to discover the strengths and weaknesses of processes at NCC. This cross-section of staff, faculty and administration were able to voice their ideas and concerns [N100].

In January 2014 a retention planning workshop was led by Noel-Levitz. As part of that workshop, data on college retention and completion by student characteristics was analyzed. Populations of students that could benefit from targeted retention initiatives were identified. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Retention Initiatives</th>
<th>Annual Return Rate Trend</th>
<th>Leading Indicators</th>
<th>Goals Established by Retention Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall 2010 Cohort Annual ReturnRetention Students who are part of the Fall 2010 Cohort who enrolled Fall 2011</td>
<td>Fall 2011 Cohort Annual ReturnRetention Students who are part of the Fall 2011 Cohort who enrolled Fall 2012</td>
<td>Fall 2013 Cohort Annual ReturnRetention Students who are part of the Fall 2011 Cohort who enrolled Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Overall Retention (new first-time-in-college)</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Associate Arts (AA.AA)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. High School GPA</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Financial Need</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Part-time (degree-seeking)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Late Applicants</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on student data, these were the six strategies to improve retention which resonated most with the cross-departmental campus team:

1. Develop and implement a first-year experience seminar that provides all new NCC students access to this national best practice during their first enrollment term, inclusive of opportunities for mentoring and “college knowledge” topics such as improving financial literacy, time management, and life skills.

2. Increase emphasis on and capacity for obtaining and using retention data (for all programs) and research to inform and deepen the understanding of NCC student success without lowering standards.

3. Develop more systematic, intentional, and seamless advising interactions for all students, especially for first-year students, that emphasize relationship-building and high expectations.

4. Provide clear structural responsibility for coordination of NCC’s retention programming to include the establishment of a representative, institution-wide retention committee to be facilitated by the retention coordinator and serve as a forum to encourage improvement in retention-related initiatives.

5. Improve student access to counseling and related services designed to allow students to address mental health issues potentially impeding their goal attainment.

6. Expand, strengthen, and improve access to campus-based employment opportunities for selected student populations.

These goals are ambitious but attainable. Six teams are now in place and beginning to write strategies for achieving the increased retention goals. The teams are cross-functional and represent the stakeholders that will be involved in accomplishing the assigned tasks.

In a departure from more traditional college committee structures, which are larger and long-standing, these teams are small, nimble teams that are designed to be able to respond more quickly to challenges before them. As needed, additional college personnel will work with individual teams to accomplish specific tasks. When the tasks are concluded, these teams will disband and new teams will be assembled to respond to new challenges [N101].
The retention initiatives is appropriate to the NCC mission, student populations, and educational offerings. Because NCC is an open enrollment institution and a comprehensive community college, it is important to provide students with the resources needed to help them achieve their goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention Initiative</th>
<th>College Mission, Student Population &amp; Educational Offerings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. First-Year experience course</td>
<td>Open enrollment students are not always prepared for college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Retention data</td>
<td>Need real-time data to rapidly respond to student needs. Data after the fact cannot change the experience of the student currently enrolled. Two-year colleges have a shorter window of opportunity to help students meet their educational goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Improved advising</td>
<td>Students under-prepared for higher education may not have realistic goals. This should help retention and improve graduation, reducing the college swirl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Retention committee</td>
<td>A rapidly responding team that can address issues quickly and effectively, with clear responsibilities and accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Student access to mental health</td>
<td>Student lives are increasingly complicated and their needs may be significant, particularly in an open enrollment institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Campus based employment</td>
<td>Open enrollment students are not always prepared financially for college, nor are their parents. Increased employment on campus ties the student to the institution, helping them to more fully understand the general importance of the college, and will hopefully increase retention and reduce student debt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. C.2 The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.

One area of growth for NCC has been in the area of collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion. In 2004 the college was working to launch a new student information system. The student information system (SIS) went live in 2005, and since that time the information collected has become more reliable and more accessible to key stakeholders for use in improving processes and outcomes. In 2009 the college added an SQL reporting database to meet the demand for specialized reports. As a result, administrators, faculty and staff have greater access to the same information than ever before. The IT staff has worked with all offices on campus to integrate data collection into one primary source in order to ensure that everyone is using the same information to make decisions.

NCC is working to ensure that data input is accurate so that output is accurate. College decision makers need to know that the reports they have are reliable. Everyone who has worked with a large database system knows the complexity of this task. Currently the college is confident that data reported to IPEDS, to the state of Iowa, to the Perkins grant, and to other agencies is as accurate as possible. A team of people meet bi-weekly to clean up duplicate records and to correct errors that are found.

The next step has been to build reports that correctly reflect student retention, persistence and completion. One challenge for all of higher education is the lack of consistent definitions in these three areas. IPEDS data, the most common data set, does not include all populations the same way.

At the community college the diversity of populations is significant. Besides first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students, there are increasingly large numbers of students who are part-time, who are not first-time, and who are not degree-seeking. The college swirl is part of the educational landscape of higher education, and, in particular, the community college. Research for the current strategic plan confirmed that more and more students are moving through higher education in a non-linear way [N102].
Therefore, it is easy to demonstrate that the completion agenda is extremely important to Northwest Iowa Community College as evidenced by:

**Strategic Plan:** The first goal is centered on student success, including retention, persistence, and completion. It says “Enhancing Student Success—Northwest Iowa Community College is dedicated to enhancing student success by facilitating processes where every individual can realize his or her full potential through learning.” Goals under this initiative include:
- A. Develop retention plan
- B. Enhance developmental education program
- C. Iowa Community College Completion Initiative
- D. Increase minority student success (completion rates)

**Noel-Levitz:** Retention goals have been set and the work of implementing those initiatives has begun. In addition, work is being done in the area of recruitment. Five-year program reviews are used to evaluate student learning outcomes, improve instruction, and provide focus for college development and expansion. These have been conducted at the college for more than 30 years.

**Dashboards:** Data is necessary, particularly real-time data where possible. By building a system of dashboards, the college hopes to improve the ability of decision makers to make sound judgments.

**ICCOC:** Improving instruction through the use of data has been a part of the online learning community for more than a decade. The introduction of dashboards for instructor use has improved student retention by 1% in key gate-keeper courses. Additional research has begun to evaluate the impact of faculty behavior on retention and completion in key gatekeeper courses. This research should be completed by the end of 2014 and published in 2015.

**ICCCI:** The Iowa community college presidents are committed to this project and the VFA. Work is ongoing with the colleges and the Iowa Department of Education to gather the data needed to make informed decisions [N99].
4. C.3 The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

As part of the five-year review cycle for all programs, the graduation and retention of students is always included as part of the evaluation of a program. This information is shared with advisory committees, and the review team makes recommendations for program changes. Starting in the fall of 2014, annual data is going to be delivered to program faculty so that annual improvements can be made. Waiting five years to review data on a program does not match the demands for rapid change that is recognized in the college mission statement. Through the Annual Program Indicators (API) project identified in the current strategic plan, NCC is hopeful to take a major step forward in providing faculty and staff with meaningful data on programs annually, rather than every five years.

4. C.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.)

NCC is working with Noel-Levitz data sets to analyze information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs. Data submitted to IPEDS is not useful enough for the retention work that the college is undertaking. Noel-Levitz is working with college IT staff to pull 175 data fields that are program specific. This is good practice for a small college without an in-house statistician to rely on the Noel-Levitz team for analysis.
Summary of Findings Regarding Criterion Four

Areas of Strength
• NCC has strengthened instruction through the assessment process.

• NCC general education outcomes have been mapped across the curriculum to add value to all instruction and all courses.

• NCC program assessments are institutionalized and collected in a single database. Outcomes are included in the five-year program evaluation process and reviewed by advisory committees.

• NCC has changed its attitudes about assessment, embracing it as a necessary tool for continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

• NCC has been recognized for the quality work that it does, promoting high retention, graduation, and transfer success.

Opportunities for Improvement
• The college should continue to improve program evaluation by moving parts of the process to an annual review of data. Also the process could be reviewed again to further streamline the process.

• The college should take the time to complete the course revision process started in 2008. There are still courses at NCC that have not undergone revision under the guidelines established by the Title III grant.

• The college should increase student success through the use of the electronic grade book and enhanced use of web presence in campus based courses.

• Students at NCC would benefit from expanded use of learner analytics, either in the hands of faculty members and other decision makers, or in the hands of the students themselves.

Next Steps
• Develop a data-informed retention plan that is updated annually, managed by the Retention Committee, and strategically funded. (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan)

• Continue to revise the five-year program review process, integrating more data and making some data available annually.
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<th>Document Title</th>
<th>Section</th>
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<td>N7</td>
<td>2008–2013 Title III Grant</td>
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<td>Course Learning Outcomes</td>
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<td>CCSSE</td>
<td>4.A.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>ACT Student Satisfaction Survey</td>
<td>4.A.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey (SSI)</td>
<td>4.A.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>New Program Evaluation</td>
<td>4.B.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Assessment Reports</td>
<td>4.B.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CRITERION FIVE—RESOURCES, PLANNING, AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Northwest Iowa Community College’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.
CRITERION FIVE—RESOURCES, PLANNING, AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Northwest Iowa Community College has sufficient resources and processes in place to fulfill its mission. The quality of educational offerings at the college are well-supported by the work done by personnel to ensure that student needs are met in an effective and quality manner.

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

NCC is an institution marked by a history of strong organizational leadership, financial stability and a dedicated team of people committed to the mission of the institution. In an era of rapid changes in both the economy and in higher education, the college works to provide resources for quality instruction both now and the future.

5. A.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.

Providing sufficient resources and a strong infrastructure are two pillars necessary for successful academic programs. NCC primarily delivers education in one location – Sheldon, IA. The college administration has established policies and procedures to ensure the institution has the fiscal and human resources and infrastructure to provide a quality education to students and to provide necessary student support services.

Fiscal Resources
The college maintains a fund balance greater than 8% of operating fund expenditures. This ensures the college will have adequate liquidity to respond to changing market or fiscal conditions. The Board of Trustees adopted Board Policy 710 in September 2003, which states that the operating fund balance shall be greater than or equal to 8% of the operating fund expenditures [N17]. The following graph shows minimum fund balance required by board policy, and actual operating fund balance levels, indicating the college maintains a more than 8% balance. The institution’s financial position, including fund balance and revenue/expenditures, are carefully monitored by the administration and reported to the Board of Trustees monthly.
### Fund 1 operating revenue has demonstrated consistent growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Support</th>
<th>Tuition &amp; Fees</th>
<th>Property Taxes</th>
<th>Federal Support</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 04</td>
<td>3,568,043.00</td>
<td>3,084,051.00</td>
<td>539,829.00</td>
<td>240,418.00</td>
<td>7,432,341.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 05</td>
<td>3,620,786.00</td>
<td>3,318,470.00</td>
<td>472,497.00</td>
<td>279,976.00</td>
<td>7,691,729.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 06</td>
<td>3,768,799.00</td>
<td>3,679,622.00</td>
<td>480,715.00</td>
<td>265,092.00</td>
<td>7,914,228.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 07</td>
<td>3,968,416.00</td>
<td>4,036,451.00</td>
<td>502,765.00</td>
<td>259,039.00</td>
<td>8,766,671.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 08</td>
<td>4,244,371.00</td>
<td>4,350,370.00</td>
<td>508,640.00</td>
<td>228,385.00</td>
<td>9,331,766.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 09</td>
<td>4,415,343.00</td>
<td>4,594,817.00</td>
<td>521,020.00</td>
<td>213,884.00</td>
<td>9,745,064.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 10</td>
<td>3,630,192.00</td>
<td>5,334,185.00</td>
<td>550,420.00</td>
<td>835,051.00</td>
<td>10,349,848.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 11</td>
<td>3,823,186.00</td>
<td>5,743,853.00</td>
<td>589,246.00</td>
<td>201,606.00</td>
<td>10,357,891.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 12</td>
<td>3,926,503.00</td>
<td>5,957,493.00</td>
<td>620,158.00</td>
<td>116,200.00</td>
<td>10,620,354.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 13</td>
<td>4,177,205.00</td>
<td>5,947,868.00</td>
<td>665,467.00</td>
<td>90,139.00</td>
<td>10,880,679.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Operating Fund Balance — FY04 through FY13

![Operating Fund Balance Chart](chart.png)
Operating revenue has also increased each year, indicating a business model that has adequately cash flowed the operations of the college during the last ten years.

In 1966, when the college was established, there were three equal sources of funding: tuition, state aid, and property taxes. Today, tuition and fees account for more than half of the college revenues. State general aid, as a percentage of total revenue, decreases every year. Property tax revenue increases if property valuation increases; however, the general fund and plant levies have remained at 20 ¼ cents per $1,000 taxable valuation since the college was founded. Finally, federal aid is not a significant part of college funding, coming in the form of grants. Funds from other sources are primarily comprised of interest income, Accelerated Career Education (ACE) withholding funds from Iowa, and rental of college facilities [N104].

The college is subject to annual audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. The college has always received an unqualified report [N20].

In 2008 and 2009 the college experienced a decrease in State General Aid. As part of the recession, the state of Iowa experienced a decrease in revenue. All community colleges experienced a decrease in state aid in addition to a mid-year funding cut. While other community colleges laid off staff and in some instances furloughed employees, NCC’s conservative budgeting practices and commitment to maintaining an adequate fund balance preserved staff. However, in a few instances open positions were not filled immediately.

Human Resources

Human capital is important to Northwest Iowa Community College. As you can see in the chart below, a significant part of the college budget is spent on salaries and fringe benefits. The percentage spent on salaries is comparable to all other Iowa community colleges.

Northwest Iowa Community College has stayed competitive in compensation when compared to other community colleges. The table on the next page demonstrates that salary and total compensation package increases have been competitive.
The college utilizes the interest based bargaining model with both the Faculty Association and the Support Staff Association. This process has been successful in ensuring that the interests of both personnel and the college have been met. Through this process data has been gathered to support that the salary and benefit structure of NCC is competitive with other state community colleges. The college funds employee learning through staff development funds, departmental budgets, grant funds, foundation funds, institutional support for LINC and CLIC, and the tuition reimbursement program. The table below details expenditures in the staff development fund for 2009–2014.

The college established an ad hoc committee made up of 15 volunteers in the fall of 2013 to study long term trends in health insurance, with the goal of identifying strategies that will ensure the viability of the college’s employee health insurance benefit. This committee demonstrates the willingness of administration and NCC staff to work together to find long-term solutions.
All personnel are required to have annual evaluations. This allows the individual and the college to discuss identified strengths and areas for improvement. Additional information regarding employee evaluations can be found in Criterion 3C [N108].

Evidence supporting staff and faculty satisfaction with compensation packages and the work environment is demonstrated in the 2012 and 2013 Modern Think survey results [N5].

Based on those survey results, the college was named one of the best places to work by the Chronicle of Higher Education, three years in a row. The highest rankings were identified for job satisfaction and work environment. In past years, NCC utilized the PACE survey, but in 2012 the decision was made to use the Modern Think Survey to evaluate staff attitudes. The survey has been administered three times, most recently in the spring of 2014.

Physical Infrastructure
Northwest Iowa is located on 263 acres and has 264,036 square feet of building space. Funds used to maintain the campus come from the following sources:

• Plant Fund Levy: The 20 ¼ cent plant fund levy was renewed in the fall of 2013 and provides approximately $725,000 to maintain campus buildings annually.

• Accelerated Career Education (ACE) Infrastructure Funding: This funding, provided by the state of Iowa, assists community colleges with funding new or remodeled building projects to increase capacity. NCC is currently being allocated $400,000 per year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recent ACE Projects</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>General Machining—construction in Bldg. C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Electrical/Electronics—remodeling of Bldg. C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002, 2004</td>
<td>Associate Degree Nursing—construction of Bldg. H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Practical Nursing—construction of Bldg. H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007, 2008</td>
<td>Biotechnology—remodeling of Bldg. D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Heavy Equipment—pending construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Diesel Technology—pending remodeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Substation Technician—remodeling Bldg. C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Advanced Welding Technology—pending remodeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Undeclared program under the new rules of the Department of Education to remodel Bldg. D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• General fund allocations: The college annually allocates $125,000 for the maintenance and upkeep of buildings and grounds.
• Department of Transportation Road Funds: In 2009, the college was awarded $365,000 to fund the construction of a new road initiative on campus.

• Future Projects: The college has plans to remodel Building D (the original building on campus), remodel student services, the entrance to the college, and add a new Applied Technology building. These projects are part of the building plan and are all designed to either improve instructional space or to provide students with adequate space and proper environment for student/college personnel interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building and Grounds Improvements since 2004</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sioux Center Library—rental of computer lab</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health addition – space for Nursing instruction and offices</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofs</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence hall — Lyon (new construction)</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiology addition – space for instruction and offices</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence hall — O’Brien (new construction)</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology addition — added science lab, classrooms, computer lab and office space</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learning and Recreation Center - enhanced student life</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence halls — Cherokee (remodel) originally built 1992</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility improvements — including HVAC</td>
<td>2011–ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Store — expanded and remodeled bookstore</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substation — program expansion</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder Road — roadway infrastructure</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange City Career Academy — rental of public building</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technology Infrastructure
NCC is fortunate to have an IT department that focuses on providing students
and staff access to what they need, helping all to focus on student learning.
Using input from the Technology Planning Committee, the IT department works
to create efficiencies and to meet the needs identified in strategic planning and
budgeting. Since 2004 NCC has:

- Expanded internet connectivity from a connection of 6 Mb to 100 Mb of
  bandwidth for the campus (not including the residence halls or the LLRC).

- Added internet connectivity to all student housing units
  and the Lifelong Learning and Recreation Center, a
  combined bandwidth of 80 Mb.

- Expanded wireless access from key locations with sepa-
  rate access points to a cross-campus solution, enabling
  continuous connection throughout all the buildings.
  Added partial wireless access to the Powerline field for
  the instructors to access information and enter grades
  real-time.

- Increased the backbone of the internet from 1 Gb to 10 Gb
  to allow for the increase of cross-campus network services.

- Added a web portal to allow students to have access
  to grades, class information, financial information, and
  single sign-on capabilities for online courses.

- Added Citrix XenApp to allow students and staff access
  to campus software from any device capable of connecting
  to the internet.

- Added virtualized datacenter server environment, cutting the need of
  physical servers from 47 to 10.

- Implemented Colleague (Ellucian/Datatel) to optimize day-to-day operations
  and allow reporting from one database, eliminating multiple reporting
  sources.

- Started using Rave Emergency text messaging, giving an option to staff
  and students for emergency notifications, as well as other alerts.

- Implemented standardized technology podiums in all classrooms to
  eliminate instructor confusion from room to room, providing additional
  technology for instruction.

- Increased the number of student accessible computers on campus from
  296 to 408.

- Installed a new IP phone system to better ensure unified communications
  with students.
Future initiatives will look at updating technology in the classroom, expanding the use of personal devices in the classroom, continuing to expand bandwidth and wireless connectivity, implementing document imaging, installing a backbone update, and exploring mobile applications.

Funding for technology infrastructure comes from multiple sources.

• Students at NCC are charged an $8 per credit technology fee that generates approximately $167,000 a year. This money is used to support existing student computers and IT needs.

• A portion of the 9-cent equipment levy is used for technology upgrades.

• Additional funding may come from grants or the general operating fund. Generally these are for one-time purchases.

According to a review of the budget that is published in NCC’s Annual Report, instruction receives more than half of the annual budget each year.

Budgeting for superordinate entities is based on the income generated. The Lifelong Learning and Recreation Center, the NCC College Store, residence halls and the NCC Foundation are examples of this practice. All of these entities support instruction at the college and are supported by general fund budgets if needed, but not at the cost of instruction.
5. A.3 The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution’s organization, resources, and opportunities.

The mission of the college is to be a progressive learning college and to rapidly respond to the global needs of a changing community. The organizational structure at NCC has been developed to achieve these goals. The structure is visualized as a web because it is important to the administration to demonstrate the interconnected relationships between all departments and divisions. All members of the college community are essential in ensuring that students are successful. Leadership at NCC encourages an open door approach to governance, making it easier to have discussions with multiple groups on campus. As a small institution the result is a networked organizational structure in which it is easier to rapidly facilitate change [N6].

Resources at Northwest Iowa Community College are well-managed and it is astonishing to look at what has been accomplished in the past decade, particularly with the narrow funding streams of two-year colleges. The college has added buildings, improved infrastructure, increased enrollments, and started new programs. In order to accomplish these changes, it has required the college to exercise careful budgeting, to seek additional funding through grants, to successfully renew two long-term levies, and to continue to seek funding through the NCC Foundation.
NCC has had to deal with significant challenges including fluctuations in state funding, decreasing federal funding, rising healthcare costs, aging buildings and failed attempts to pass a general obligation bond to deal with aging infrastructure. Opportunities exist for Northwest Iowa Community College. The mission statement and planning documents encourage exploring opportunities. If the college is to “rapidly respond” then a pathway based on data and a fiscal plan must be developed to follow the established trajectory.

5. A.4 The institution’s staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.

Northwest Iowa Community College meets the Code of Iowa and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association’s requirement that higher learning organizations employ qualified faculty. Staff at NCC are hired according to education and skills listed in the job description of the position. For some positions applicants are given a technical skills test during the interview process.

The college has detailed processes for hiring faculty and staff which are outlined in the NCC Procedure Manual for Personnel. It is recognized that hiring the right person for each position is essential. All faculty and staff are hired with the expectation that their skills and knowledge will positively impact the quality and success of the academic programs and of the supporting services and process that the college undertakes. If the applicant pool does not provide a viable candidate for the position the process starts over until the right person for the position can be hired. Details are outlined in the Procedure Manual for Personnel (pp. 22–23 [N58]).

Orientation of New Faculty and Staff
Each new employee receives orientation from several different departments on campus including, but not limited to: human resources staff, the employee’s direct supervisor, an assigned resource person, student services personnel, the Learning Center/Alternative High School staff, the LLRC, and the information technology department. The new employee is responsible for viewing seven video programs dealing with topics such as blood borne pathogens, hazard communications, harassment, bullying, substance abuse, workplace violence, and OSHA labeling requirements. Faculty members are required to complete voluntary child abuse reporting training, which is delivered online by the college [N123].
Educational Assistance and Staff Development

Northwest Iowa Community College is committed to the development of its human resources. Employees have a need to continue learning for effective and efficient performance, to keep up with changing technology, and for personal improvement. It is, therefore, the policy of the college to assist employees in reaching short-term and long-term educational goals.

Staff development is part of the annual evaluation process for all employees. Goals are set and activities are listed which will help the employee meet their goals. All full-time and permanent part-time staff and faculty are eligible to request staff development dollars, which allows them to attend workshops and conferences.

NCC provides staff development funds to three employee groups: faculty, administrative staff, support staff. Each group has an oversight committee that reviews applications for funds and manages the process.

If costs for training exceed the individual’s allotted staff development amount, additional funds from programs or divisions may be requested. Some academic programs require ongoing and extensive training, and those funds are covered by department budgets. At the end of the year, remaining funds may be disbursed to cover out-of-pocket expenses by faculty or staff.

Educational assistance is available to college employees to meet long-range development goals. If advanced degrees are recommended as part of a full-time employee’s staff development plan, they are eligible for educational assistance or tuition reimbursement. This applies to credit coursework completed through applicable delivery systems. Seminars, workshops, and conferences are not eligible. Requirements are outlined in the Employee Handbook [N108].

The Quality Faculty Plan (QFP) outlines requirements faculty need to fulfill in order to teach in the state of Iowa. New full-time faculty are placed on an initial professional development plan and upon completion, experienced faculty must meet continuous professional development requirements. All college instructors shall comply with the college’s QFP as required by the Code of Iowa and prescribed by the Iowa Administrative Code. When a full-time faculty member signs their contract, it is stated that the employee must make annual progress, as specified in NCC Board Policy 403 [N14], toward achievement of the ten competencies identified in the initial stage of professional development or annual progress toward acquiring continuous professional development hours as identified in the QFP. Part-time or adjunct faculty are also included in the plan, and the staff development opportunities for these instructors apply to the ten categories required in the QFP [N138].
The college delivers campus-based instruction beyond the previously mentioned training opportunities. As a learning college it is recognized that NCC needs to promote staff learning. Here are some of the instructional activities of the past ten years:

- Annual fall and spring faculty in-service days—These are orchestrated by the QFP Committee and the Center for Teaching and Learning.

- Staff in-service training—This is as needed, but recently has focused on assessment of institutional effectiveness.

- 21st Century Learning Conference—This is a fall conference for the college and area K–12 partners sponsored by NCC and held at the campus.

- Catch the Wave—Before the start of fall term, faculty are invited to attend a one- or two-day workshop on teaching and learning.

- ICCOC conferences—Since 2001 faculty and staff from NCC have participated in the fall and spring conferences and workshops held by the Iowa Community College Online Consortium.

- Microsoft training—Provided as needed by the IT staff.

- Adjunct workshops—Every fall and spring under the leadership of the Center for Teaching and Learning.

- Assessment Workshops and Active Learning Workshops—These were held specifically for five years during the 2008–13 Title III grant. Now this information is included in all new faculty and adjunct workshops.

- Learning Management System training—Training is ongoing for all online and campus-based instructors in the use of the LMS (Pearson Learning Studio).

- Software specific training—Provided as needed by either the IT staff or by the Center for Teaching and Learning (Camtasia, StudyMate, Respondus, TracDat, etc.).
The college prepares an annual budget; it is a collaborative effort and involves administration, faculty and staff. The process starts with a wide set of questions and works to narrow down to specifics so that the college is able to meet the needs of students for quality instruction. Developing the budget consists of three major iterations which include 20,000 foot considerations, 10,000 foot considerations, and tactical execution of the budget model.

20,000 Foot Considerations
In this portion of the budget process, larger trends are considered and can include analysis such as:

• What are the economics of the state of Iowa tax receipts? Will this result in either an increase or decrease in state general aid?

• Are recruiters seeing and/or reporting recruitment trends that may be positive or negative? This would include area plant closings, interest in specific programs, applications currently on hand, and conversations with students from recruiting visits.

• What strategic initiatives, identified in the strategic planning process, are expected to be funded in the current year?

• Are there any inflation factors to be considered that will affect purchasing patterns and the expense of doing business?

• What new construction (along with related funding sources) is expected to occur?

• Will the college be offering any new programs, either funded internally or through outside sources such as grants?
10,000 Foot Considerations
In this iteration of the budget process focus narrows and is primarily directed internally. Questions focus on:

• What is the status of the interest based bargaining process, and what is the projected benefit package increase?

• Does NCC expect to add any new positions, and will these be full-time or part-time?

• What financial trends are evident from the most recently completed fiscal year and in the current fiscal year that may impact the year for which budgeting is being conducted?

• Begin to prepare “what-if” Excel spreadsheets that model the college’s financial performance based on assumed parameters including:
  – Tuition per credit hour
  – Credit count
  – Change in benefit package
  – Expected overhead levels
  – What specific equipment requests should be funded?
  – What specific plant fund building repairs need to be funded?

Tactical Execution
At this level decisions are made based on the following questions and/or requests:

• Deans/departmental leaders submit annual departmental budget requests based on assumptions outlined from the 20,000 feet considerations above.

• Deans/departmental leaders submit new initiative requests.

• Executive Council identifies program issues or program constraints that need to be considered.

• Executive Council discusses results of departmental budgets and new initiatives.

• Consolidate department budgets, new initiative requests, and other 10,000/20,000 funding considerations into a comprehensive budget model.

• Review the combined budget model, and consider where adjustments are needed.

• Executive Council continues to discuss with departmental leaders on possible budget options/adjustments.

• Finalize budget, and load into Colleague (Ellucian/Datatel) where departmental leaders will have access to their budgets.

• The budget becomes part of the monthly financial report that is reviewed with the Board of Trustees at the regular monthly meeting.
Budget Monitoring
Once the budget has been finalized and loaded into the Colleague general ledger system, departmental budgets can be accessed and viewed by budget stakeholders by logging onto the college portal (Web Advisor) and accessing a report which shows year-to-date actual vs. budgeted totals. Account details may be obtained by clicking on account totals. Questions from budget stakeholders may be directed to the business office. Regular monthly budget monitoring is conducted by the business office when preparing the monthly financial statements for the Board of Trustees meeting. In cases where actual results differ than anticipated budgeted amounts either by specific object code or at the department level, personnel from the business office will investigate and discuss with departmental leaders on reasons for the variance. In cases where a budgeted amount is later determined to be unrealistic, the budget is adjusted.

The Business Office closely follows the Iowa Community College Accounting Manual [N172], which has been adopted by all 15 community colleges and serves as the defining reference document for financial transactions.

The college seeks to maintain the segregation of duties, in order to minimize risk of financial defalcation. Every month, a board member reviews a random selection of paid invoices for appropriateness and supporting documentation.

All expense payments must be documented with an initial request and a separate approval. This may be done by a paper request for reimbursement or a purchase order in Colleague. All expenses must be supported by an original invoice. Month-end statements are not permitted for expense documentation.

The vice president of operations and finance and the director of business services attend semiannual statewide community college business officer meetings. In addition, the same business officer group has monthly teleconferences to discuss business service issues.
5. B. The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

Northwest Iowa Community College is Iowa’s smallest community college, and as a result everyone at the college has the opportunity to participate in decision making through participation on committees.

5. B.1 The college 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.

Board policies are covered more fully in Criterion 1B, but it is important here to mention that they are publicly accessible to all college constituents. The Executive Council and the Board regularly review the policies and consult with college legal counsel when appropriate. Every committee has a stated purpose and minutes are also available to all college faculty and staff. The goal of college leadership is to be open and transparent and to involve as many people as possible in decision making. It is also a goal of the president to keep communication open. Shared governance depends on shared information. The college portal, shared computer drives, weekly news updates from the president, and campus-wide meetings all contribute to the process.

The NCC Board of Trustees holds monthly meetings, and the required open laws are followed. The content of the meetings are designed to maximize information availability to board members, and each meeting will typically include action items (including faculty contract approval), educational information, financial information, policy review when needed, and other updates pertinent to the operation of the college. One board member is designated to take part in the interest based bargaining process.

All new board members undergo individualized training and are provided support materials [N32]. Work sessions are typically scheduled twice a year and allow board members to gain a deeper understanding of scheduled topics. Both state and federal education seminars and continuing education classes are made available to board members. The Iowa Association of Community College Trustees (IACCT) sponsors a monthly “Wednesday Leadership Club” covering a series of topics.
In addition to the regular board meeting, the Board is copied on the president's weekly college update, which allows board members to stay abreast of weekly campus happenings.

Once a year, the Executive Director of the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees (IACCT) will attend a board meeting and update members on new developments regarding community colleges. There are established protocols to meet with area legislators, the Area Education Agency, and the NCC Foundation annually. In addition, two board members sit on the NCC Foundation Board. The entire college is invited to attend monthly board meetings, and members of the Executive Council regularly attend.

Administration is under the leadership of the college president who works closely with two advisory groups. The first is the administrative team, and the second is the Executive Council. The administrative team consists of the president and the three vice presidents who meet weekly.

The Executive Council consists of the administrative representatives from all divisions of the college. The president, vice presidents, deans, registrar/associate dean, and the director of information technology meet twice a month. The first meeting of the month generally focuses on campus-wide information sharing and joint decision-making processes. The second meeting provides focused work time on a college-wide project that needs more attention by the group. Other committees of the college report regularly to the Executive Council and participate in work sessions as needed. Meeting minutes are posted on the portal for the college to review.

Faculty members are encouraged to participate on committees and do so as part of their contract with the college. In addition, they are encouraged to attend board meetings and are required to attend when they are participating in a five-year educational program review. Chosen representatives take part in the interest based bargaining process.

Staff members are also encouraged to attend monthly board meetings. In addition, they participate in regular committee work at the campus. Selected staff members participate in the interest based bargaining process.

Students are invited to attend monthly board meetings. Students often receive invitations to present at regular board meetings as well as NCC Foundation Board meetings. Students are also included in strategic planning and other significant committee work.
5. B.2 The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight for the institution’s financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

The NCC Board of Trustees sets all college policies. New policies are regularly brought to the Board for approval. A review cycle has been established so all policies are reviewed/revised over a four-year period [N111]. The Board president regularly meets with the college president to discuss emerging, topical issues that impact the college.

• The Board receives the president’s weekly email update.

• The Board has ongoing access to specialized materials including:
  — Financial audit reports
  — Monthly financial reports
  — Unlimited access to all web portal information

• Work sessions are scheduled throughout the year, which typically allows time for focused discussion on a few specialized topics. These could focus on educational topics, infrastructure projects, or financial topics.

• Board input and approval is sought for specific issues including new programs or program closings, faculty hiring, strategy alignment, long-term financial strategy, levy votes, training bonds, campus construction, and annual salary increases.

• All new board members take part in a new member orientation. Vice presidents and the president share information which is supported by printed materials.

• Board members take turns reviewing monthly bills and the accompanying source documentation.

• The Board participates in closed sessions as allowed by law, primarily to discuss personnel matters.

• The Board is encouraged to attend local, state, and national conferences.

• One board member is designated as the IACCT representative and attends monthly IACCT meetings and reports back to the local Board. Recently NCC’s representative served as the IACCT president.

• Faculty and deans present educational program updates and reviews at all monthly board meetings.
5. B.3 The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff and students in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

The college is small and many people find themselves on multiple committees that all relate to one another. Most committee structures require certain participation from diverse departments in order to ensure carefully thought out ideas capable of implementation [N21].

Administrators attempt to involve all members of the college community through participation on committees and communication. In order to operate transparently, the college has implemented a number of resources to help share information.

- Shared network drives enable people to work together and to share information.
- The NCC portal provides a password-protected space to share information, including minutes for meetings of the Board of Trustees, the Executive Council, and all standing committees. The portal also has a place for announcements and has access to information from Colleague.
- All-college communication takes place weekly through the president’s emailed weekly updates, all-college meetings, the president’s council, and “Food for Thought” discussions during lunch in the cafeteria.
- Division and department meetings are held to update college faculty and staff about decisions and initiatives decided at the Board of Trustees meetings or Executive Council meetings.

Committees are established by the Executive Council and are responsible to them for their duties and activities. Each year they make reports to the entire Executive Council. Budget requests are made by the committees through their representative on the Executive Council.
Key committees include the president's council, assessment committee, curriculum committee, technology committee, QFP committee, enrollment management committee, retention committee, safety committee, staff development committees, and advisory committees.

- **President's council**: The group provides the president with input from all campus constituencies. It also fosters communication throughout the college community. The council receives information and reports from other committees and makes recommendations to the president. Membership is selected from: Executive Council, full-time faculty, adjunct/part-time faculty, support staff, faculty association chair, support staff association chair, and the administrative group.

- **Assessment committee**: The group is responsible for the overall development of the college plans for assessment of student learning through a continuous improvement process which includes the collection, examination, and interpretation of the data. The college strives to improve student learning and consumer satisfaction through assessment. Membership is selected from: faculty, deans, and student services.

- **Curriculum committee**: The group is responsible for facilitating the application of quality academic standards in the instructional credit area. They will provide input and oversight in the following three areas: course review, program review, and development of instructional policies and procedures. Membership is selected from: faculty (Arts and Science/Business and Health Division and Applied Technology Division), student services or library, registrar, deans, and CAO Office.

- **Professional development (QFP) committee**: The duties and responsibilities of this committee are to monitor the college’s compliance with the Quality Faculty Plan, assess effectiveness of the plan, modify plan and procedures when necessary, and review the individual professional development plan of each new faculty member, including plans for attainment of initial hiring requirements. Membership is selected from: faculty, the HR director, and the CAO.

- **Technology planning committee**: This committee is responsible for developing the forward-looking plan for technological advancement at NCC. This group is comprised of representatives from all areas of the campus in an effort to better serve the college. Membership is selected from: all areas of the college.

- **Advisory committees**: These committees serve as advisors to specific academic programs. Committees meet at least once a year to look at issues from a broad perspective as well as from their individual perspectives, to maintain contact as needed with college instructors and administration, to assertively support the college and its operations. Members of these committees come from area business and industry, program graduates, and members of the college community, including program faculty, deans, CAO, and student services [N112].
5. C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

Northwest Iowa Community College understands the importance of systematic and integrated planning. Public record of the past ten years of strategic planning documents are available at [N113]. Documentation and completion of the activities in the strategic plan are kept in TracDat [N114].

5. C.1 The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.

The strategic plan is aligned with the mission and vision of the college and is used to guide the allocation of the human, physical, and financial resources of the college.

Strategic planning begins with the assignment of a task by the president. The process at NCC is inclusive, and all members of the college are asked for input at different stages. Once the process is completed, it is shared with the Board, the college, and external stakeholders. The final document is shared publicly on the NCC website [N113].

Authority and planning is under the direction of the college president who appoints a vice president to execute the strategic planning process. The direction of the plan is proposed and shared with the Executive Council. Here are the steps used by NCC:

1. Environmental Scanning is the first step in the process of writing a strategic plan. This has been conducted in various ways over the decades. The exact method for this varies from plan to plan. Sometimes the entire campus participates in this review, and sometimes specific personnel are asked to do the scanning and submit their findings to the entire campus for comment. The most recent plan was done this way. The Executive Council meets several times to review the prevailing trends and to write an analysis before the trends are shared with the campus and external stakeholders.

2. Review of mission and vision statements is conducted in conjunction with reviewing the trend statements from environmental scanning. In 2003 a new mission statement and vision statement were crafted. In the planning process the mission statement was reviewed in 2010 and one word was transposed to better reflect the true scope of the college’s influence. The 2004 Mission Statement was: “Northwest Iowa Community College is a progressive learning college rapidly responding to the changing needs of our global community.” It was decided that NCC did not truly serve a global community, but a changing community with global needs. Therefore, the new statement says, “Northwest Iowa Community College is a progressive learning college rapidly responding to the global needs of our changing community.”
3. Internal and external meetings with key stakeholders are held to review the trend statements and gain insight into the potential goals for the college. College wide discussions are held to review potential goals and ideas for the final plan. This process includes students and community leaders.

4. Strategic initiatives were developed by the Executive Council who met several times to review and revise the ideas of all the external and internal stakeholders. The proposed initiatives were reviewed for common threads and to separate daily tasks from ideas that would push the college forward and be strategic in nature. Once the strategic initiatives and specific goal statements were written, the tasks were assigned to members of the Executive Council to write objectives, action plans, and establish timelines and measurements.

5. Implementation of the plan is being tracked in the college’s assessment software, TracDat. The system assists the president and Executive Council in keeping track of the progress of all the initiatives, goals, objectives and action plans. The persons responsible for objectives are required to update their progress in the system, and it is also possible for those in charge to email reminders to those who have activities to complete. The current strategic plan is the second to be tracked in the system. The first report is completed and available for review [N114].

A strategic plan can anticipate change and give direction to an institution; however, changes occur that are not always anticipated. In order to respond to these kinds of changes, the college conducts both formal and informal assessments of progress.

NCC developed a facilities plan in 2008 to help the college assess improvements and expansion in all areas of the college. The plan identified the need to remodel Building D, expand/change educational space, and improve student life. In the past decade, the plan has guided:

- Expansion of health care programs and facilities.
- Installation of new, brighter, energy efficient lighting.
- Implementation of the early stages of remodeling Building D, including improvements to the HVAC.

The NCC budgeting process, which was explained in 5.D.1, is used to meet emerging needs, particularly through the new initiatives portion of the process. Here is one example of reallocating funds to meet needs through a planning process. In 2013 staff was increased in financial aid due to exceptional enrollment growth over the past five years and the effect of increasing rules and regulation of the federal financial aid system.
The technology plan was also discussed in Criterion 5A, and it is reviewed at regular meetings through the year to discuss changing needs for technology. Members of the team, and the college IT staff, regularly read and interact with others on campus to determine their needs.

The Emergency Response Plan (Safety) has been revised over the past five years to give direction to processes in the event of an emergency and to make recommendations for improving campus facilities. In 2013, NCC was named the Safest college in Iowa by StateUniversity.com. To attain this distinction, the college has:

- Developed a crisis communication plan
- Sought training in ALICE for key personnel. Campus wide training will be conducted in the summer and fall of 2014 [N174].
- Changed door locks so that they can be locked from the inside
- Installed seven external electronic door locks/monitor access
- Added lighting in the hallways and in the parking lots
- Installed interior and exterior security cameras
- Installed emergency phones in the parking lot
- Implemented RAVE alert system
- Increased types and numbers of emergency drills
- Issued faculty and staff IDs in Spring 2014

5. C.2 The college links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.

One of the hallmarks of Northwest Iowa Community College is the focus on students; however, until recently assessment of student learning was not directly included in operational planning or budgeting. It was considered indirectly, but not directly. In order to better facilitate the assessment of student learning into all college operations, the college president expanded the membership of the Executive Council to include the deans and representatives of all major divisions.

This body is responsible for all college activities, including evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
Deans evaluate full-time faculty annually and conduct the five-year program evaluations, which was discussed more fully in 4. A.1. Information gained from these activities is discussed with faculty as they plan for program improvements or expansions. The data gathered from student services about persistence and completion, advice from advisory councils, and data from student surveys assists in making informed requests of the Executive Council.

NCC has a strong base of applied technology programs, and there is no end to the wish list for equipment. Many of the programs at the college are expensive to operate, and the space/equipment needs are significant. Often it is not possible to fund all requests. The Executive Council prioritizes all funding requests and weighs information before making decisions. The need for additional space by programs is also evaluated in light of student learning outcomes.

As Northwest Iowa Community College continues to grow as a learning college, two other processes are being evaluated to strengthen the use of student learning outcomes in planning processes. First, the five-year program evaluation model is going to be revamped into an annual process of improvement. Second, the Annual Performance Indicators (API) developed specifically for the college will provide faculty, administration, and staff with annual performance indicators to use in planning [N115].

5. C.3 The planning process encompasses the college as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

As reported in 5.C.1 faculty, staff, board members, and students are invited to participate in the strategic planning process. In addition to strategic planning, the college community is also involved in budget planning, technology planning, budgeting, facilities plan development, safety planning, and advisory boards. External constituents are regularly consulted during the strategic planning process and through the work of the advisory committees.
5. C.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.

NCC closely monitors the financial capacity of the college’s financial business plan. The college’s annual budget and related financial planning cycle seeks to model key drivers in both revenue recognition and expense management. Key components in revenue modeling include an examination of credit hours in order to know the expected revenue and expenses associated with instruction. Credit hours are analyzed for three categories:
   1. Campus classes
   2. Online classes
   3. Concurrent enrollment classes

The above categories carry different tuition rates per credit hour as well as a varying fee schedule. Credit hours can be counter cyclical to the local economy. When local business and industry is showing strong growth, credit hours often trend down. Similarly, when local business and industry is in decline, enrollment may trend up as local residents seek new training. Finally, area demographics are continually assessed as the college strives to predict the number of available students and corresponding market penetration.

Enrollment management is a key strategic initiative the college is addressing with the help of consultants. Through more targeted student recruitment as well as increased retention for existing students, the college is attempting to maximize student success and maintain strong tuition cash flows.

Tuition rates per credit hour are considered by examining competing colleges in NCC’s service area as well as other Iowa community colleges. This is done in conjunction with budget planning which is an indicator of future expenses. Property valuation establishes the tax levy the college assesses area taxpayers. Local property tax valuations are updated and serve as the foundation for this calculation which is included in the certified budget. The revenue stream, while important, only accounts for 5.5% of all operating funds.

State general aid tends to positively correlate with the state economy and tax receipts and currently makes up 36% of operating revenues. Through communications with local legislators as well as the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees, the college strives to develop an estimate of future fiscal year funding.
Key Components in Expense Estimation

• Faculty and Staff Salaries – Strategic staffing decisions are made for academic responsibilities as well as student support and administrative duties. Salary adjustments are determined through the interest based bargaining process and are analyzed with the goal of maintaining competitive salaries within the existing budget. Non-bargaining employees’ salaries are also based on interest based bargaining outcomes.

• Program Support—The model is built annually with input from stakeholders as to the specific program needs based on the curriculum outcomes and the expected student count.

• Overhead—The college attempts to quantify and model all other costs that are expected to be incurred in the operations of the college. This includes funding strategic initiatives, including efforts to strengthen student success and retention, maintaining a current technology system, and maintaining buildings and grounds.

Building and Space Utilization

The college continually assesses facility usage in order to maintain the highest level of education for area students. Space limitation and age of facilities have resulted in a major Building D renovation initiative as well as the construction of facilities to provide room for expanded programs. In 2008, with the help of the college’s architect, a campus-wide facilities report was created that provided a broad analysis of potential building needs and constraints. Many of the findings have been addressed independently, while others will be addressed through larger building initiatives. Private funding alternatives and long-term financing will likely be key revenue sources for the upgrading of buildings since a general obligation bond was unsuccessful in three attempts.

5. C.5 Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, globalization, and increased reporting and accountability.

The Strategic Plan, Technology Plan, and Fiscal Plan all address the future needs of the college. Leadership at the college regularly review scholarly journals and share information that helps them to direct the planning processes. They read the Chronicle for Higher Education and other journals, attend conferences, share best practices in higher education, and participate in the National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP).

As one example of this, the environmental scanning process in preparation for the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan led to the development of ten trends that will have an impact on the college in the next few years. They address emerging factors, which include technology, demographic shifts, globalization, and increased oversight. The trends outline the emerging global needs of area businesses for education and training [N102].
TREND 1: The Completion Agenda will have a significant impact on all aspects of higher education.

TREND 2: A college education is increasingly pursued in a nonlinear way frequently combined with work and periods of non-attendance and requiring extended time to complete degrees.

TREND 3: Internet-based instruction will continue to grow and will be integrated with traditional instruction and distance education at the college.

TREND 4: Competition for public funds, economic variability, fluctuating state/federal budgets, and changing regulations will impact funding for Iowa’s community colleges.

TREND 5: As the cost of higher education increases students will be forced to rely more heavily on loans, student/family contributions, scholarships, and working while in college to fund their education.

TREND 6: Colleges continue to expand utilization of internet/intranet infrastructure, computerized data collection and analysis, mobile access, and documentation.

TREND 7: Competition for students enrolling in higher education will continue to intensify.

TREND 8: Age and population demographic trends of the past decade will continue in the decade of 2014–24.

TREND 9: The most significant job growth in northwest Iowa in the next three to five years will be in Advanced Manufacturing, Renewable Fuels and Renewable Energy, Information Technology, Biotechnology, Healthcare Technology, and Nursing Care Technology.

TREND 10: Federal/state legislative bodies and other agencies will continue to impact college operations through accreditation, greater accountability, and compliance.
Out of these trends, the planning process led to the development of four strategic initiatives and accompanying goals. In past strategic plans NCC has had five strategic initiatives; however, evaluating trends and identified needs within the college led to consolidation.

### Strategic Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Emerging Factors</th>
<th>Trend #s</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Enhancing Student Success—</strong>&lt;br&gt;Northwest Iowa Community College is dedicated to enhancing student success by facilitating processes where every individual can realize his or her full potential through learning.</td>
<td>Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Develop Retention Plan</td>
<td>Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Enhance Developmental Education Program</td>
<td>Technology&lt;br&gt;Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Iowa Community College Completion Agenda</td>
<td>Technology&lt;br&gt;Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Globalization&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>1, 2, 10, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Increase Minority Student Success (completion rates)</td>
<td>Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>2, 3, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Expanding Opportunities—</strong>&lt;br&gt;Northwest Iowa Community College will pursue, strengthen and expand learning opportunities for our communities through partnerships and new initiatives.</td>
<td>Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>1, 2, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Recruitment Plan</td>
<td>Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>1, 2, 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Marketing Plan</td>
<td>Technology&lt;br&gt;Demographic shifts</td>
<td>2, 5, 7, 8, 9</td>
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<td>C. Expand Partnerships</td>
<td>Technology&lt;br&gt;Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Globalization</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 9</td>
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<td>D. Strengthen Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Technology&lt;br&gt;Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Globalization&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
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<td>E. New Program Development</td>
<td>Technology&lt;br&gt;Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Globalization&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Enhance Co-curricular Opportunities</td>
<td>Demographic shifts&lt;br&gt;Globalization&lt;br&gt;Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>2, 7, 8</td>
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### Strategic Initiatives

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<th>Emerging Factors</th>
<th>Trend #s</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>III. Develop, Allocate, and Conserve Resources—</strong></td>
<td>Northwest Iowa Community College will aggressively pursue alternative resources that will sustain and augment programs and facilities.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Develop</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Demographic shifts</td>
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<td>Reporting and accountability</td>
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<td>B. Allocate</td>
<td>Technology</td>
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<td>Reporting and accountability</td>
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<td>C. Conserve</td>
<td>Technology</td>
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<td>Demographic shifts</td>
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<td>Globalization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reporting and accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IV. Embracing a Collaborative Culture—</strong></td>
<td>Northwest Iowa Community College faculty, staff and administration are devoted to enhancing collaboration and communication that will support the College’s belief system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Adopt and disseminate core values</td>
<td>Demographic shifts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Globalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Employee learning and growth (staff development)</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demographic shifts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reporting and accountability</td>
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</table>
5. D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

Quality instruction and services have always been a hallmark of the college. The faculty and staff of NCC have long held the values of hard work and excellence. Applying a system of improvement to these core values is a process that is evolving.

5. D.1 The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.

The development and use of significant data resources is one of the major changes at NCC in the past decade. In the 2004 Self-study for the HLC, the college identified the need for improved data collection and dissemination. At the time of the last accreditation visit, NCC was in the process of implementing a new student information system, Colleague. In 2005 the college switched SIS systems and for the past nine years has worked to improve the quality of the data being gathered and the ability of personnel to access reports and dashboards to improve decision making. Here are several key initiatives to improve the collection and dissemination of data:

- Colleague/SQL Database – The college student information system provides standard reports, but other reports are also needed. The SQL database is used to create additional reports and is the foundation for the emerging use of dashboards.

- Noel-Levitz – The college is relying on this consulting firm to improve student recruitment and retention. The data sets used by Noel-Levitz will be refined and used by NCC to build better and more useful reports and better dashboards.

- TracDat – The assessment collection software is used to track assessments being collected from academic programs and institutional effectiveness.

- Pearson Learning Studio Enterprise Reporting – Data collected regularly on student and faculty activity in the LMS is used by college personnel to improve instruction and student retention.

- Surveys are utilized to identify key stakeholder information and are a key source of organizational continuous improvement. Student surveys are reviewed closely to quantify strategies. Surveys include:
  - Student Opinion Survey (ACT) and/or the Student Satisfaction Inventory (Noel Levitz SSI)
  - Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)
  - Clarus Study - contracted research group
  - Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System data (IPEDS)
  - Modern Think Higher Education Insight Survey
  - National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP)
  - Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)
5. D.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.

NCC utilizes a variety of tools and methods to support decision making while also focusing on continuous improvement and student success. Horizons of focus include organization-wide strategic planning down to specific department-related statistics. Taking raw data and making it useful to key stakeholders is another challenge. The SQL database and reports have been instrumental in improving institutional behavior. TracDat serves as a strategic tool in recording key benchmark initiatives and documenting progress on those initiatives. The following initiatives demonstrate the commitment of the college to integrate data collection to improve institutional effectiveness.

• The college utilizes a strategic planning process which includes college employees, students, business and industry, K–12 partners and other area leaders. Major areas of focus are identified with related benchmark data. Financial resources are identified to support the strategic initiatives. Progress on the strategic plan is measured regularly throughout the year and is maintained in TracDat.

• The college develops an annual budget and monitors its financial results against that budget on a monthly basis. The financial results are reviewed with the Board at each monthly board meeting. All department heads have access to their specific departmental budgets and are required to manage them effectively.

• The college is developing Annual Performance Indicators (APIs) for each academic program, which detail total revenue generated as well as all incremental costs of delivery including salaries, supplies and other costs. This analysis will be used to assess the needs and sustainability of a particular program while also identifying multi-year enrollment patterns.

• The college monitors financial metrics over a comparative 10-year period in order to identify long-term financial trends. NCC also uses statewide community college financial reports (IPEDs, certified budget, and Iowa Condition of Community Colleges Report) to benchmark NCC’s financial results against other Iowa community colleges.
• The college initiates an annual survey to all Iowa community colleges in order to build a statewide faculty compensation database. NCC benchmarks compensation rates in this survey in order to determine the reasonableness of its pay rate. This benchmark is an important statistic in the Interest Based Bargaining process.

• The college annually has a certified audit performed. The financial results are compared with prior year results. In addition, action plans for compliance findings are adopted.

• Report Manager is the campus name for the SQL Database that pulls information from the student information system. This database is used to run custom reports from the SIS. In addition to reports, dashboards are being constructed to give decision makers productive views of discrete data sets.

Evaluation of institutional effectiveness has been a part of the assessment practices at NCC for many years, but in the past two years it has taken on a new resolve and focus. Applying the process developed for assessing student learning, the assessment coordinator worked to help produce a manual for non-instructional units of the college. Part of the new strategy was to apply the two-level approach of academic assessment to non-instructional units.

In the spring of 2013, at an in-service workshop, all non-instructional personnel were introduced to the new methodology and then took on the task of writing measurable outcomes for specific departments and divisions. All of this was entered into TracDat, and the outcomes will be recorded during the summer of 2014.
In the spring of 2014, again at an in-service workshop, non-instructional units of the college examined the past three years of CCSSE data that applied to non-instructional services. Like the academic teams, they selected the key challenges to be addressed. New outcomes are being written and will be addressed in the upcoming academic year. Examples of the 2013 Institutional Effectiveness goals include:

**Center for Teaching and Learning**
- Identify institutional learning goals/needs.
- Integrate Title III activities into the Center for Teaching and Learning.
- Evaluate online administrative effectiveness.

**College Operations and Financial Aid**
- Use Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and CCSSE surveys to assess current students and graduates on their satisfaction of financial aid.

**Institutional Advancement**
- Increase the number of respondents to the annual search piece.

**Learning Center**
- Develop and implement flowchart of COMPASS testing process from setting up time, starting student on test, discussing outcomes, recording scores, handling fees. All staff will be cross-trained to do steps within the learning center. Will work with the enrollment management team.

**Library**
- Increase student access to information sources by developing a reserve collection of textbooks and other materials relevant to individual courses.

**IT**
- Provide technology media that meet minimum hardware standards by maintaining and monitoring a statistical index that measures the age of computers.

**TRiO**
- Work to ensure participants persist towards graduation and transfer to four-year institutions.

Other institutional practices help to inform the effectiveness of college services. Annual employee evaluations are conducted and are a key process for addressing employee performance and focus as needed. Results of annual reviews are documented and serve as a road map for ongoing performance improvement. Program advisory committees provide a key source of institutional learning and serve as an important conduit for business and industry input on student learning. Grant activities have provided both resources and direction for improving the college. The most recent Title III Strengthening Institutions grant has provided important tools for organizational growth and development including staffing, technology enhancements, active learning training, and assessment training. Information supplied by students is also used by the college to assess performance. Besides surveys, students provide feedback through the SGA, strategic planning, “Food for Thought” informal chats with the president, and program evaluation feedback.
Summary of Findings Regarding Criterion Five

Areas of Strength
• NCC is a fiscally strong college with adequate reserves and an inclusive and strategic budgeting process.

• NCC has made fiscal choices that prioritize investing in students, staff, and faculty.

• NCC uses a planning process that is inclusive, participative, and functional.

• NCC has a strategic vision generated by campus conversations. Vision 2020 is the latest version of the strategic plan and was developed while the self-study was being written.

• NCC has a history of strong leadership at all levels of college operations.

• NCC has expanded data collection and dissemination processes and provided college personnel with the resources needed.

Opportunities for Improvement
• The college has building infrastructure needs that need to be addressed to enhance student learning.

• The college needs to continue the major gifts campaign. (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan)

• The college needs to develop alumni relationships and enhance alumni engagement. (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan)

• The college could benefit from reviewing the current marketing plan, including the website. (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan)

• The college would benefit from additional co-curricular activities and enhanced student life activities.

Next Steps
• Update master facility plan (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan).

• Improve facility presentation—including signage, hallway seating, lobby area, and overall public space presentation (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan).

• Utilize Noel Levitz and marketing staff to review, expand, and contract initiatives identified in current Marketing Plan (Vision 2020 Strategic Plan).
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REQUEST FOR REAFFIRMATION
OF ACCREDITATION

Northwest Iowa
Community College
The promise of self-evaluation by the college was a compelling motivation for all who contributed to the self-study. Those at NCC who compiled the evidence and reviewed the various chapters were pleased to see evidence of significant institutional strengths related to each of the five accreditation criteria. In this self-study, the college acknowledged strengths and recognized areas for improvement. In sum, the self-study describes Northwest Iowa Community College as an institution that:

- Takes the college mission seriously, and has developed strategic priorities designed to enact that mission.

- Acts with integrity and transparency in ways consistent with high ethical standards as well as requirements of Iowa state code and expectations of the Higher Learning Commission.

- Recognizes the necessity of high-quality teaching and learning in all its courses and programs, and provides the necessary resources for teaching and learning in the 21st century.

- Has made significant progress on assessment of learning and is committed to evidence-based practice as well as systematic institutional improvement.

- Has the benefit of a stable resource base, managed under sound administrative leadership and used to support appropriate institutional priorities.

Within this document and the associated links, readers will find the evidence used to draw these conclusions. We look forward to conversations about these findings and opportunities to continue learning through the team review process. On the basis of this self-study and in accordance with the Commission’s processes, we respectfully request reaccreditation.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7x7: The name for the accelerated courses at NCC. They occur at different times during the summer and between the fall and spring terms.

AACC: American Association of Community Colleges.

ACCES: Alliance of Community Colleges for Electronic Sharing.

ACE-PIAP: Accelerated Career Education Physical Infrastructure Assistance Program. Most commonly known as ACE Funds.

AEA 4: The local Area Education Agency.

ALICE: A system for responding to an active shooter scenario utilizing the following tactics: Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate.

API: Annual Performance Indicators.

Area IV: The 4 1/2 counties served by NCC.

ASME: American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

AWS: American Welding Society.

BEDS Report: Basic Educational Data Survey collected by the state of Iowa from K–12 schools.

Beta Lambda Pi: The NCC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international honors student organization.

CAD: Autocad drafting software.

CDL: Commercial Driver's License.

Choices: A computerized career options assessment program available to students through the NCC Career Center.

CLIC: Community College Leadership Initiative Consortium.

COMPASS: ACT program for assessment of student learning.

Concurrent Enrollment: A high school student enrolled in college courses. Sometimes referred to Dual Credit or a PSEO (Post-Secondary Educational Opportunity)
**CQ Researcher**: Online database available in the NCC library and through the NCC website.

**CRD**: The Council for Resource Development, a national association of community colleges.

**Colleague (Ellucian/Datatel)**: Management Information System used by NCC.

**CCSSE**: Community College Survey of Student Engagement.

**Dateline**: NCC’s weekly employee newsletter.

**EBSCOhost**: Online library database.

**eCollege**: The online learning platform used by NCC and the other members of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC).

**eCompanion**: Web enhancement for face-to-face courses from Pearson Learning Studio.

**ESL/ELL**: English as a second language/English Language Literacy.

**Executive Council**: The administrative team at NCC made up of the president, all three vice-presidents and the two deans.

**FAFSA**: Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

**Fast Track**: Condensed academic term occurs in between traditional 16-week semesters and includes both face-to-face and online components.

**Gap Tuition Assistance**: Need-based tuition assistance to help qualified individuals complete continuing education certificate training programs for in-demand occupations.

**HIT**: Health Information Technology.

**Hybrid**: A class which has face-to-face and online components. Sometimes referred to as blended learning.

**IACCT**: Iowa Association of Community College Trustees.

**ICCCI**: Iowa Community College Completion Initiative.

**ICCOC**: Iowa Community College Online Consortium, a partnership of seven Iowa community colleges dedicated to providing online learning opportunities.

**ICN**: Iowa Communications Network.

**ICW**: Industrial and Commercial Wiring.
IEP: Individual Education Plan developed for and used by students with special needs.

IWD: Iowa Workforce Development.

LEA: Local Education Agency.

Learning Community: Program which a group of students take three classes together and instructors team-teach and have interrelated assignments.

Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe: An online library database.

LINC: Leadership Institute for a New Century.

LMS: Learning Management System, a platform for delivery of online course content from Pearson Learning Studios.

Merged Area IV: The 4 1/2 most northern counties in Iowa that NCC is mandated to serve by the state of Iowa.

Mitchell Estimating: Business software used by the NCC parts department.

Modern Think: Modern Think Insight Survey designed to measure employees day-to-day experience and health of the organization.

MOS: National Microsoft Specialist certification. Online certification tests in Microsoft applications software offered on the NCC campus.

NACEP: National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships.

NCLEX: National Nursing Exams.

Pathway for Academic Career Employment (PACE): System, including support services to help guide participants/students, to acquire effective academic and employment training. This includes the transition from noncredit certificates to credit programs.

Pearson Learning Studio/eCompanion: The learning platform provides web-enhancements for face-to-face classes.

Portal: A clearinghouse of information and resources available to student, staff, and employees which is located on NCC’s website and called “My Place.”

QFP: Quality Faculty Plan developed by NCC to ensure quality instruction. This was mandated by the State and replaces the Iowa Licensure requirements.

SENSE: Survey of Entering Student Engagement.
**Sigma Kappa Delta:** English national honor society.

**Skills 2000 & 2006:** Assessments of the business and industry climate in Iowa conducted by Iowa Community Colleges.

**SkillsUSA:** Formerly known as VICA, this is a national student association of technical students.

**SQL Database:** System NCC uses to extract data and usable reports out of Colleague (Ellucian/Datatel).

**Studio Enterprise Reporting:** A product NCC uses through Pearson Learning Studio that assists in using learner analytics to identify at-risk students.

**SIS:** Student Information System.

**SSI:** Student Satisfaction Inventory, a survey from Noel-Levitz given to graduating students.

**The Collegian:** The NCC student newspaper.

**Title III:** This is a five year federal grant program also known as the Strengthening Institutions grant. This program helps eligible IHEs to become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability. NCC has received grants in 2000–2005 and 2008–2013.

**TracDat:** Software used to track student learning outcomes and progress on the strategic plan.

**TRIO SSS:** A federal grant program for first-generation, low-income and/or disabled students.

**VFA:** Voluntary Framework of Accountability.

**VITA:** Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program.

**Web Advisor:** Public portal into Colleague.

**Winterim:** Condensed academic term which falls between the fall and spring semester and are online only.
CNNMoney
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for Success Ratings in Community Colleges
*Federally reported 3-year graduation rate + transfer rates

Community College Week
#20 Fastest Growing
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