

Assurance Argument
Northeast Iowa Community College

Review date: 10/5/2020

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Argument

1A1 *The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.*

[Northeast Iowa Community College \(NICC\)](#) is a comprehensive two-year institution governed by nine publicly elected [Board of Trustee members](#) (Board), who each represent a sub-district within the community college district. The college district is nearly 5,000 square miles, with a campus on the north (Calmar) and south (Peosta) ends of its district and service centers in strategic locations (Cresco, Dubuque, New Hampton, Oelwein, and Waukon). NICC serves nearly 6,000 college-aged, adult and high school concurrent enrollment students, and delivers customized training to nearly 22,000 businesses, their workforces, and community members, across eight, mostly rural counties. NICC confers certificates, diplomas, and AA/AS degrees across a broad range of programs, including but not limited to Agriculture, Business, Health Care, Liberal Arts, and Manufacturing. NICC employs almost [600 faculty and staff](#) who are distributed across the district. As a college deeply rooted in the communities it serves, NICC places an emphasis on community constituencies in its mission, its actions, and services.

With the understanding of the institutional context, the following is an explanation about the process the college used to develop its mission. The NICC senior leadership team began meeting in June 2018 to assess and update the college mission, vision, and values statements. It was paramount that these statements reflect a keen sense of purpose that would resonate with our internal and external communities. Prominent in the development process were varied methods of participation by constituents including the Board, faculty, staff, and administration. Because of this, the next six months threaded together opportunities for input, revision, and regular updates, culminating with a new mission statement in January 2019:

- **August 2018** - The President shared the first [mission](#) and [vision](#) draft with the Board at the [regular board meeting](#) and college community at Convocation.
- **September 2018** - Staff, faculty, and administration were [kept apprised](#) of mission and vision drafts and [invited](#) to continue providing input through email and two town halls.
- **October 2018** - The Cabinet continued to [refine](#) the mission, vision, and values statements following Convocation and the town halls.
- **November 2018** - Staff, faculty, and administration were formally [invited](#) to provide their input on the latest iterations of the mission, vision, and values statements via Google surveys.
- **December 2018** - [Feedback](#) from the Google surveys was used by the President's Cabinet to [clarify and modify](#) the statements.
- **January 2019** - Updated [mission](#), [vision](#), and [values statements](#) were presented to the [Board of Trustees](#) and college community in their entirety at Convocation. The mission states: "Northeast Iowa Community College provides in-demand education and training focused on improving lives, driving business success, and advancing community vitality."

1A2 *The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.*

As referenced in 1A1, NICC shared its updated [mission](#) and related statements with the college community in January 2019. NICC's mission of providing in-demand education and training focused on improving lives, driving business success, and advancing community vitality is supported, directed, and expanded upon through its [vision statement](#), [values statement](#), and [three-year strategic plan](#).

The college vows through its vision statement to be the "premier source of education and training through innovative thought and talent development." The [six core values](#) laid out under the mission and vision statements - service, respect, stewardship, innovation, integrity, and resiliency - provide the behavioral expectations that guide the actions of the college to ensure that lives are improved, and that business success and community vitality are advanced. First and foremost is the value of service: "We listen, identify, and respond to the needs and expectations of our internal and external communities."

The [college's 2019 - 2022 strategic plan](#), which was developed in tandem with the mission, vision, and values statements, lays out four priority areas among which there must be synergy in order for the college to be successful in fulfilling the various aspects of the mission. These four priority areas are 1) our people, 2) our consumers, 3) our organization, and 4) our finances. Each key area specifically lays out the goal, the rationale, how the goal will be achieved, and how success will be measured. In doing so, the strategic plan emphasizes various aspects of the college mission, such as building strong teams, creating accessible and responsive programs, and formulating resilient financial strategies that then support the college in delivering in-demand education and training focused on improving lives, driving business success, and enhancing community vitality. The mission statement is reviewed as the strategic plan is developed. If changes are recommended, the process outlined in 1A1 is initiated.

1A3 *The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.*

The college's mission and related statements were crafted to capture the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the college's offerings and services within the context of the institution as described in 1A1. For example, the nature of "in-demand education and training" is captured in the credit and non-credit programs and services featured in the [course catalog](#), [community education catalog](#), [high school partnerships/concurrent enrollment web page](#), and the [customized training web page](#). The purpose of offering in-demand education and training - a focus on "improving lives, driving business success, and enhancing community vitality" - establishes the scope and intended constituents of programs and services. For example, the college offers 21 [career pathway certificate programs](#) in which students can obtain a credential that will enable them to go directly into employment or transfer education credits to a four-year institution. Both paths fulfill the mission of "improving lives." In another example, the college partners with the [Small Business Development Center](#) to offer business counseling services because there are over 7,000 small businesses in the institution's district, and through this partnership, the college can deliver on its mission to drive business success, which enhances community vitality.

Therefore, with the mission, vision, and values statements serving as the foundation, the [2019 - 2022 strategic plan](#) further defines the specific nature, scope, and intended constituents of institutional offerings and services through a framework which cascades from priority area to goal, to rationale for the goal, to tasks to achieve the goal, and finally to measures for knowing we have achieved the goal, which in turn fulfills the promise of our mission, vision, and values. For example:

- **Priority Area:** Our consumer (*intended constituent*).
- **Goal:** To provide high-quality, innovative, affordable, accessible, and responsive programs (*nature*).
- **Rationale:** Our communities need more skilled workers and 39 percent of future jobs will require some post high school education and training up to an Associate's degree (Source: 2015 Georgetown University Center on Education) (*scope*).
- **Task to Achieve Goal:** Enhance customized training and consulting services for business and industry (*intended constituent, education offerings and services*).
- **Measurement:** Increase credit and Business and Community Solutions enrollment through multiple entry points (*achieve mission of providing "in-demand training and education...that drive business success"*).

1A4 *The institution's academic offerings, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.*

In order to link our mission with enrollment goals, it is important to understand who our students are:

- 5,944 credit students were served in the 2018-2019 academic year with 45.2% (2,688) students enrolled on the Calmar campus, and 54.8% (3,256) of the students enrolled on the Peosta campus.
- 61% of the student body is female, and 39% male, with 102 students identifying as military veterans.
- 84% of all credit students are enrolled in part-time coursework, with 52% of the students

- reporting they work more than 21 hours per week.
- 48% of non-concurrent students are enrolled on a part-time basis.
- The majority(58%) of credit students are between 18 and 24 years of age, and 92% of students are in-state residents of Iowa.
- 48% (2,867 students) were served through concurrent offerings associated with twenty-five district high schools ([Blue Book](#)).
- The [ethnicity of the college](#) is homogeneous with 89% of the student identifying as White, 3% Black, 3% Hispanic, 2% multiple ethnic backgrounds, and 1% of the students report Asian ethnicity. Less than 1% of the students are of American Indian or Alaskan Native descent, and less than 1% identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders. 2% of the enrolled students did not report an ethnic background.
- Over 22,000 community members were served through non-credit programming with enrollment demographics consistent with the credit population ([Non-credit FY 18-19 enrollment](#)).

NICC's educational offerings support "in-demand" education and meet workforce needs. The college offers four degrees: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Applied Science and an Associate of General Studies in addition to a variety of certificates and diplomas.

- *The [Associate of Arts \(AA\) and Associate of Science \(AS\) degrees](#) are designed for students working to transfer to four year institutions of higher education. Fifteen transfer major agreements with the Iowa regent universities ensure the seamless transfer of core coursework in nine AA and six AS program areas.*
- *The [Associate of Applied Science \(AAS\) degree](#) prepares students for immediate employment in a career field with general education coursework applicable toward further education. We offer twenty-nine AAS degrees which includes formal partnerships with four area institutions to offer dual enrollment health programs.*
- *The [Associate of General Studies \(AGS\) degree](#), is a non-transfer degree that is awarded upon completion of an individualized course of study with coursework in lower-division transfer, occupational education, and professional/technical education.*

Career and technical [diploma programs](#) prepare students for entry employment into a specific career field. Twenty diploma programs are available at the college with seven programs providing the option for a student to complete an associate's degree with an additional year of study.

- [Certificate programs](#) are available for students who desire focused training in a specific field of study. Certificates are designed to serve students who want to develop new occupational competencies to meet current employment needs or to enhance their employment marketability, or prefer a condensed curriculum focusing on specialized knowledge. Thirty-one certificates are available at the college. Credit certificates, often linked to credit programs, provide students an opportunity to earn credits and apply federal financial aid.
- [Non-credit career pathway certificates \(CPC\)](#) provide hands-on training that leads to entry-level employment. Career pathway certificates provide an option of transferring credits into a diploma or two-year degree program. NICC students looking to advance their education can benefit from [80+ transfer agreements with 25 institutions of higher education](#).

NICC provides credit and non-credit programming in a variety of formats to serve working and part-time students. Traditional face-to face course offerings are scheduled during the day and evening

and late start classes (typically 8 - 10 weeks in length) are available after the semester has begun. [Eleven credit programs](#) are fully available in an on-line format with additional courses offered online or in a hybrid format. Competency-based programming is in the early stages of development and will offer students the future ability to move through competencies at their own pace within the semester structure.

In fall 2018, the college unveiled an Associate of Arts degree in an on-line, "[Z-degree](#)" or zero textbook format. Offered in an eight-week year-round format, the Z-degree has attracted 956 students with [\\$183,361.92 savings](#) in textbook costs. The faculty teaching these courses have begun to implement the Z-degree concept in traditional course offerings and settings.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) must be aligned with the business and industry competencies. A variety of initiatives, such as the high school [Career Learning Link](#) program, engages students in the secondary setting in a variety of career fields. Introductory credit coursework provides work-based learning opportunities which assist the student in identifying potential career choices. Career and technical program students engage in a variety of work-based learning opportunities that include: projects, internships, field experience, clinical, and pre-apprenticeships. Earn and learn and/or sponsorship opportunities are promoted as a way to engage students early in their program with the work-force and provide a pipeline of workers for business and industry.

Credit is available to students through [credit for prior learning \(CPL\)](#) options. Traditional CPL options such as credit transfers between institutions, articulation of high school coursework, and passing national proficiency exams credit may be awarded based upon portfolio evidence, skills assessment, or course test out. Over [60 non-credit offerings \(course or certificates\) articulate seamlessly into credit options](#). Military students receive credit based upon an evaluation of their Joint Service Transcripts (JST's) and credits earned via the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), in accordance with the American Council of Education (ACE) standards. In addition, military credit has been identified in four academic programs according to Military Occupation Specialties (MOS) and skill levels (example [LSS Associate of Arts Veterans MOS](#)).

NICC students benefit from a wide range of [services and supports](#). Traditional services: libraries, admissions, advising, career planning, financial aid, counseling, disability/accommodations services, learning centers, testing centers, and student life are housed on the Calmar and Peosta campuses and available online. Support coaches, located across the district in high schools and/or college centers, provide on-site career coaching and advising. Testing services are available at center locations. TRIO Student Support Services are available on the Peosta campus. Specialized academic supports; new student orientation, ReadSpeaker (a text to speech service), Brightspace (learning management system) knowledge base, and SmartThinking (a tutoring service) are available online.

Student engagement is critical to student success. New students receive care calls to welcome them to the college and to address questions or assist with needed referrals. [Care call support](#) was expanded to all students transitioning from a face-to-face to online format during the COVID-19 restrictions. The iMPACT student organization engages students in on-campus leadership, service and co-curricular learning opportunities. Chapters for the Phi Theta Kappa honor society (to recognize academic excellence) and the Alpha Beta Gamma honor society (the two-year Business society) are active on each end of the district. The college has engaged a military consultant to [expand the services available](#) to active-duty military students, their spouses and dependents, and veteran students. In 2007, a [student crisis fund](#) was established to assist students with unexpected financial needs. To date, over \$180,000.00 has been raised to support 481 students.

IA5 *The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.priorities.*

NICC clearly and publicly articulates its mission through a [dedicated page](#) on its public website, where the public can access the mission, vision, values, and three-year strategic priorities. Upon hire, incoming college employees attend an orientation ([faculty](#) or [staff](#)) where the college vision and mission are shared. The mission statement is included in a variety of documents viewed by the college constituents such as:

- The [College Catalog](#)
- The [Blue Book](#), Academic Year 2018 - 2019 Data
- The Board of Trustees [meeting landing page](#)
- The [Advisory Committee meeting agenda](#)
- [iNdex \(the New Student Resource Guide\)](#)
- [Online Student Orientation](#)
- [New Student Acceptance Packet](#)

Sources

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- LSS New Staff Orientation
- LSS Online Degree Programs
- LSS Online Orientation Mission Statement
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- LSS Student Resources
- LSS Success Coach_FT_PT job description

- LSS Transfer Information - Northeast Iowa Community College
- LSS Z-Degree

1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

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

Argument

1B1 *The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.*

NICC was [established](#) to provide pre-professional and career and technical educational opportunities to the citizens of Iowa. The Board of Trustees is the legislative and policy-making body of the college and is responsible for the oversight and control of college activities.

Board of Trustees (Board) policies expand upon the general provisions of state code and further define the public good of the college's educational role. The opening statement of NICC [Board Policy 501: Education Program](#) proclaims:

"each student should be given the opportunity to develop his/her human resources to the maximum of his/her capabilities, talents, and diligence. A major goal of the college is to provide a flexible educational environment which will satisfy the needs of those who desire a liberal arts or pre-professional education and those youth and adults who desire specialized training, retraining, enrichment, and/or improvement of skills or knowledge. The community should become, as far as possible, a laboratory for practical instruction, wherein people and resources of the community are used to supplement the educational program."

This statement is followed by the definition of our institution as [publicly supported](#). Furthermore, [Board Policy 502: Instruction - Education Program Practices](#) defines program practices, including accreditation, evaluation, credit for prior learning, and articulation agreements with other post-secondary institutions, which exist to support the public in accessing education opportunities. The college's [mission](#) is derived from Board policies, which clearly define that the college's educational role is to serve the public, and not solely its own interests or those of another entity.

An example of decisions which demonstrate the institution's primary role is to serve the public are those related to adapting programs to meet the needs of students and businesses, constituencies defined in 1A3. Declining enrollment in the Carpentry and Construction Business diploma programs led to a [curriculum review in January 2019](#) by college personnel and an [advisory committee comprised of community and industry partners](#). The college learned that a curriculum combining the technical and practical content from the Carpentry and Construction Business programs would provide instruction opportunities and a foundation in the skills that construction employers want

while allowing students to complete a credential and enter the workforce earlier. In February 2020, the [Board took action](#) to suspend the Carpentry and Construction Business diploma programs (Peosta) which were [determined to no longer meet the needs of students](#) and replaced them with a [building trades diploma](#) which incorporates earlier workforce entry, earn and learn opportunities, and utilizes community resources as a laboratory for practical instruction by allowing students to train at community-owned buildings. These actions demonstrate an understanding of and willingness to adapt programming to serve the public rather than the institution itself or a superordinate entity.

1B2 *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.*

The college's primary purpose, to fulfill its educational responsibilities in delivering educational programming to the public as described in 1B1, is established in [Board Policy 103: Governance - Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Objectives](#), which articulates the college's educational responsibilities through a series of objectives directed by state code. The primacy of the educational responsibilities (objectives) is further articulated through [Board Policy 601: Business and Operational Procedures - Guiding Principles](#), which recognize the primacy of the governing board's fiduciary responsibilities to assist the college in achieving its educational responsibilities (objectives). These principles are made visible through financial oversight, described in 2A2, and by internal and external entities and processes, which demonstrate the college's stewardship of expenses and investments related to educational programming and services.

Additionally, the [NICC Foundation](#) exists as a separate non-profit entity accountable to state and federal requirements, and governed by a separate board of directors, whose mission is to promote "the ongoing success of students by providing external resources that support and expand educational opportunities and priorities." Because of this, delivering educational programming and services is the primary responsibility of college staff and faculty, rather than generating funds for the institution or related organization.

1B3 *The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.*

The college's mission, to provide in-demand education focused on improving lives, driving business success, and enhancing community vitality, is achieved through engaging external constituencies and responding to their needs.

The college uses a variety of methods and opportunities for engaging and responding to external constituencies, including:

- The Business and Community Solutions division (BCS) offers non-credit customized training, workforce development, and continuing education to external businesses and individuals. [In 2019](#), BCS served 21,766 students who enrolled in 4,223 classes and 20,949 workers who participated in contracted training through 450 businesses.

- Community and Business Sector Boards provide critical and important connections between employers, educators, community developers, regional workforce development boards and other stakeholders in the NICC district. The objective of each sector board is to serve stakeholders through the exchange of information and implementation of workforce solutions, based on shared goals and human capital needs, [leading to measurable results](#).
- [Advisory Boards](#) assist and advise college administration, board, faculty, and staff in their efforts to plan, develop, evaluate and maintain career and technical programs. They facilitate communication and cooperation between college representatives and the public (including business, industry, agriculture, labor, secondary educational institutions, consumers, and program graduates) to ensure continual relevance of career and technical programming, and to validate that graduates are prepared for successful employment in the workforce. The college currently has 37 Advisory Boards.

Additionally, as an institution committed to providing a "community focused" approach to education, the college [partners](#) with several organizations, such as chambers of commerce and public libraries, to promote economic growth, expand educational services, and implement workforce development projects tailored to the specific needs of northeast Iowa.

Sources

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Argument

1C1 NICC encourages curricular or co-curricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.

Throughout their college experience, students are involved in activities that promote informed citizenship and workplace success. The college has identified the following areas (among others) as co-curricular in nature: **Career Services**, **Career Readiness** curriculum, **Student Life** (iMPACT), **Student Organizations**, **Academic Competitions**, and **Clubs and Committees**. [Co-curricular student learning outcomes](#) have been identified in the student services areas. In each of these examples, students are prepared for informed citizenship and/or workplace success beyond curricular efforts (detailed in Criteria 3 and 4).

Career Services - The Department of [Career Services](#) provides co-curricular support to students to prepare them for the workplace. Providing career planning and job-search assistance to students and alumni through the [Career Hub](#), students can:

- Learn about career interests, skills confidence, and work values.
- Access area employer information and jobs as a student and alumnus.
- Take career assessments and then work one-on-one with a counselor to determine the best personal route.

Specifically, counselors coordinate [mock interviews](#), conduct [resume and cover letter workshops](#), and help facilitate [job fairs](#). These examples illustrate that the college earnestly works to prepare students for workforce success.

Career Readiness - Career Readiness elements in the curriculum also prepare students for workforce success. Many programs require students to complete a career readiness course at the end of the program which teaches interview and application skills within the context of the discipline. [Work-based learning](#) (WBL) provides students with real-work exposure and learning in career fields. [Twenty-two work-based learning courses](#) assist students in learning about career and work expectations by incorporating employer and community experiences. Offered in the high schools, these courses connect classroom content to relevant career opportunities.

Student Life iMPACT Group - The Student Life iMPACT group is organized to foster citizenship,

service, and leadership skills in its members through extra- and co-curricular activities. iMPACT is open to all students and is the voice of the student body. iMPACT events are open to the general student body and include such events as musicians, hypnotists, novelty acts, motivational speakers, bus trips, intramural sports, and service opportunities.

A variety of iMPACT events promote informed citizenship and workplace success. iMPACT students volunteer throughout the semester at the NE Iowa Food Bank, lead [campus food drives](#) for students in need, host blood drives, and promote volunteer opportunities within our district's communities. An example of a volunteer opportunity in the community is the [Days of Caring](#) event which brings together over 1,200 volunteers from around the Dubuque area to support one-time service projects for local charities and organizations. NICC hosts a project every year during Dubuque Days of Caring where students, staff, and faculty come together to beautify the NICC campus, outdoor learning lab, and Child Development Center.

iMPACT students are interviewed and selected to participate in an [annual student service trip](#). Scheduled during spring break, selected students and staff travel to impoverished inner city locations and partner with local organizations to meet the needs of the community. For many students, this is the first time travelling beyond the college district and working with diverse communities. Student feedback upon returning falls within the following themes: teamwork, citizenship, appreciation, respect, diversity, and service (3B3). In addition to donating their time, students raise funds to defray travel costs.

Each January, students from NICC join community college students from across the state of Iowa at the [Annual IACCT Legislative Seminar](#). Our students learn about advocacy and the legislative process from guest speakers during the one-day seminar. The day also includes a visit to the state capital to meet with our legislators, so students can directly share their personal stories, career goals, and perceptions about the value of a community college education.

The NICC [Emerging Leader program](#) provides students with an opportunity to develop leadership tactics that build on their classroom skills and foster many of the abilities that employers seek. The program aims to assist new and emerging leaders in developing the necessary knowledge and skills and to help seasoned student leaders refine their leadership skills and to make a difference at Northeast Iowa Community College and beyond. Students who complete the program receive a non-credit certificate which enhances their professional resume.

In 2018, the college implemented a "common hour" that blocked off courses on Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon - 1 PM. During this time, students are given access to expanded co-curricular offerings, activities, and resources to improve the student experience. Student Life maintains a [calendar](#) that is shared with students and faculty. Faculty are encouraged to attend and engage their students in the common hour event.

Student Organizations - Career and student organizations (CTSO) support the career and technical curricula by providing work based and community experiences which expand the participant's understanding of the associated career and professional fields. CTSOs enhance a student's self-esteem and self-confidence and build leadership skills through skill development and competition. [Business Professionals of America \(BPA\)](#), and the [Iowa Professional Agricultural Student Organization](#) are active at the college. In response to the Perkins V criteria, all CTE programs at the college will partner with articulating high school programs and engage in the affiliated CTSO by 2024.

Voluntary student organizations such as the [National Student Nurse Association \(NSNA\)](#) offer opportunities for students to engage at a local and national level. [Phi Theta Kappa \(PTK\)](#) honor society provides leadership and scholarship opportunities.

Academic Competitions - Competitions such as the [Iowa Community College Advertising and Design Invitational "ICCADI"](#) or the [annual writing center competition](#) hosted by the Writing Center, provide an opportunity for students to be recognized for their accomplishments.

Clubs and Committees - Formal and informal clubs provide a sense of collegiality and belonging around a common interest or cause. The district-wide [Shooting Club](#), formed in 2015, has engaged 43 students to date with participants [averaging a 3.05 GPA and 86% program completion](#). Members of the [Garden Club](#) grow food that is shared with the NICC community including the local food pantry. Seed money for start-up is available from iMPACT for committees meeting the formal [requirements for formation](#).

As part of the comprehensive assessment plan (see more in Criterion 4) and further demonstrating the role and importance of developing activities which promote informed citizenship and workplace success, programs developed curriculum maps ([Administrative Office](#), [Graphic Design](#), [Early Childhood](#)) which include co-curricular activities. The intent is to acknowledge the role that co-curricular plays in the development of a students' education. Additionally, curriculum mapping helps to inform planning, resource allocation, and scheduling.

1C2 *NICC makes intentional efforts to treat diverse populations with inclusion and equity.*

NICC is an open-door institution that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age (employment), sexual orientation, gender identity, creed, religion, and actual or potential parental, family or marital status in its programs, activities, or employment practices ([NICC Notice of Nondiscrimination](#)). The NICC non-discrimination statement is posted in multiple areas such as the [college catalog](#), [high traffic campus areas](#), and on each student [course syllabus](#) to inform our community members of this commitment.

Every individual is a [valued member of the NICC community](#) and is to be treated with respect and equity. This belief is reflected in [Board](#) and [college policies](#) and NICC staff, faculty, and student educational [equity and diversity offerings](#).

Inclusion and Diversity Practices and Policies

Core Value: Diversity - One of the college's [core values is respect](#). Respect at NICC means showing consideration for one another and encouraging diverse perspectives to build trust, cooperation, and accountability. Respect is a common theme threaded through Convocations and staff and faculty development. One of the [strategic priorities](#) of the college is to build a strong, collaborative team that is creative, forward thinking, solution-oriented, and respectful of the individuality and diversity of its members.

Common Learning Outcome: Diversity (general education component) - NICC defines Diversity as, "Respecting and embracing others and their differences," and is discussed in Criterion 3.

Income Equity - Removing financial and personal barriers for students is essential in the creation of an equitable student learning environment. 52% of credit students participating in the Community

College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) stated they [work](#) more than 21 hours per week while attending school. 73% of NICC students enrolled in the 2018-2019 academic year received [financial aid](#). Additional [supports](#), such as free child care assistance is available for qualifying students through a partnership with Greater Dubuque Development Corporation and Opportunity Dubuque.

Personal Identity - A task force has been identified to develop a policy to support our practice allowing for usage of preferred name, gender identity, and preferred pronoun. Lumens, the non-credit software system, has been updated to capture preferred name. The internal college software system is under revision and will accommodate preferred name, biological sex, gender identity, and preferred pronouns in the future.

Inclusivity - In fall 2019, the ALL ARE WELCOME HERE campaign was released across the campuses with the intent to share the NICC philosophy that each of its members are valued and to be treated with respect. [ALL ARE WELCOME HERE](#) information is distributed to attendees at all new-student orientations.

LGBTQ Safe Zone - [Designated zones](#) are identified across the college campuses. These visuals indicate that the person displaying the sticker has gone through a Safe Zone training and wants to communicate to others that they are open to talking about and being supportive of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning +) individuals and identities. In-house Safe Zone trainers provide opportunities to learn about LGBTQ+ identities, gender and sexuality, and to examine prejudice, assumptions, and privilege.

Ex-Offenders - Thousands of inmates are released from Iowa prisons each year. Many of the recently released inmates are eager to get a job, re-enter a community, and lead a productive life. Without education, training, or a job, it is nearly impossible for these individuals to establish a new life and become productive citizens. The Ex-Offender Reentry Standing Committee of the State Workforce Development Board is focused on aligning efforts by state and local entities to give ex-offenders a better opportunity to start a new career and find self-sustaining employment to help them successfully re-enter their communities. An NICC administrator represents the Association of Community College Presidents on this board. NICC offers several options for ex-offenders: high school equivalency, adult basic education, registered apprenticeship, national career readiness certificate, and skilled Iowa initiatives. [Programs](#) that require criminal and abuse registry background checks are clearly identified on our [website](#) and on [individual program pages](#). The Compliance Department monitors guidelines for all programs and ensures potential applicants have access to the [Program Requirements](#).

Human Resource Policies - NICC affirms its commitment to promote the goals of fairness and equity in all aspects of the educational enterprise. The Executive Director for Risk Management and the Executive Director of Human Resources are jointly responsible for the college's policy on equal opportunity, harassment, and nondiscrimination.

Any member of the campus community, guest, or visitor who acts to deny, deprive or limit the educational, employment, and/or social access, benefits, and/or opportunities of any member of the campus community on the basis of their actual or perceived membership in the protected classes is in violation of the college policy on nondiscrimination. Protected classes include race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age (employment), sexual orientation, gender identity, creed, religion, and actual or potential parental, family or marital status. When brought to the attention of the college, any such discrimination will be appropriately remedied by the college according to the procedures

outlined in the [Equal Opportunity, Harassment, and Nondiscrimination Policy](#).

[Annual Notice of Nondiscrimination](#)

[Continuous Notice of Nondiscrimination](#)

[Board Policy 201 Nondiscrimination](#)

[LSS Syllabus example for Statement of Non-Discrimination](#)

Presentations such as "[Civil Rights, Equity and Incidents](#)" are delivered during all college convocation days.

Title IX - NICC is committed to ensuring a safe campus climate for all of our students and the entire college community. Through a comprehensive compliance program, we promote fundamental rights, advance individual and institutional integrity, and uphold the vital aims of Title IX. Policies, procedures, and [support resources](#) related to gender, pregnancy, and parenting are available to the public on the [Title IX page of NICC's website](#).

SafeColleges - [The SafeColleges Training System](#) is a comprehensive, web-based training management system that delivers engaging compliance and prevention training for faculty and staff. The [Employee Course Library](#) has 150+ engaging, research-based courses in Human Resources and Employment Practices and includes a variety of [courses focusing on diversity and inclusion](#) such as *Avoiding Discriminatory Practices, Sensitivity Awareness, Discrimination Awareness in the Workplace, Diversity and Inclusion, Diversity Awareness: Staff-to-Staff, Implicit Bias, and Microaggression Awareness*. In addition to mandatory training, the system is open to all employees for training of interest.

National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) - In 2014, the college contracted with NAPE to offer [PIPE-STEM NT](#) training to guide state and local efforts to improve access, equity, and diversity in nontraditional occupations and STEM fields. The findings from this training indicated a need for faculty and staff development and tools to better equip faculty in dealing with diverse situations and ensure they are adept at creating an equitable learning environment.

In response to the findings from the PIPE-STEM NT research, NAPE was invited back to the campus to offer "[Micromessaging to Reach and Teach Every Student](#)" training. This research-based professional development program addresses gender and culturally based implicit biases that occur in the classroom and that are manifested through "micromessages." This program provides participants with an awareness of the power of micromessages, which include looks, gestures, tone of voice, or the framing of feedback that subtly yet powerfully shape our culture, our classrooms, and the individuals within them. Participants in this training were required to carry out a [work-based project](#), applying the lessons learned in this training. These projects were taped and shared on the faculty professional development site to generate further initiatives such as; a [convocation day presentation on "College Efforts in Establishing Equitable Learning Environments,"](#) a [presentation to the student service group](#), and ensuring [NAPE posters](#) were hung in every classroom across the district. In 2017, the faculty and Vice President of Learning and Student Success shared the NAPE lessons learned in a "[Building an Equitable Learning Environment](#)" [presentation](#) at the annual Iowa Association of Career and Technical Educators meeting.

In 2016, the college invited Ms. Audrey Seldon, a NAPE facilitator, to serve as the keynote speaker at "All College Day," a district-wide networking and professional development workshop that brings over 400 college employees together. Building upon lessons learned from NAPE offerings, the theme, "[Collective Awareness in Realizing Equity](#)," was selected. Ms. Seldon led a discussion and activities to create a collective awareness of the changing student demographic and how to better serve all.

Additional NAPE programming offered by the college on mandatory faculty development days includes:

- "[Realizing Potential with Mindset](#)," a program that assists educators in transforming their practice to foster a growth mindset in themselves, and in their students:
- "[Inspiring Courage to Excel through Self-Efficacy](#)," a workshop to prepare educators to build student self-efficacy through intentional micro-affirmations, provide actionable strategies for implementation in the classroom, and offer a turn-key coachable model for helping students build their own self-efficacy.

Since 2014, 311 (198 faculty; 93 staff, 14 administrators, 6 high school counselors) actively participated in one or more NAPE sessions. The attached [summary](#) outlines all NAPE initiatives over the last six years.

Marketing - The college ensures access to information is equitable for students who have been historically underrepresented and/or undeserved in higher education. Clear standards and practices throughout NICC help ensure that access to information is equitable for historically underrepresented demographics. Marketing has [clear graphic standards](#) defining size, color, white space, typeface, font, abbreviations, etc. The standard, "Maintain an active voice without using more words than necessary" encourages concise written and electronic communications that provide easy to understand message for all audiences. To ensure the integrity of the NICC website, posted information is in accordance with the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* (WCAG) established by the World Wide Web Consortium. Weekly automated scans using Siteimprove software detect potential interpretation issues. A manual process utilizing the NV Access (NVDA), a screen-reading assistive software, is used to test the system.

1C3 *NICC fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.*

A [core NICC value](#), respect, is identified as "show[ing] consideration for one another and encourag[ing] diverse perspectives to build trust, cooperation, and accountability."

Respect is cultivated through opportunities for collaboration among students, faculty, staff, and leadership. For example, the NICC College Senate, represented by a cross-section of faculty, staff, and students, meets monthly to discuss issues and forward recommendations to Cabinet. The College Senate President serves on the College Cabinet which facilitates open communication and respect across the organization. Outcomes indicative of engaging with peers, students and community members in a respectful manner are measured with staff and faculty evaluations. The Student Ratings of Instruction Survey (IDEA) measures student perception of faculty engagement which does not occur without a perception of mutual respect. Respect posters are prominently displayed in each college building. The posters remind us that each of us plays a part in creating a respectful learning

environment. One on one meetings, group training, collaboration across departments, and open college events allow staff at all levels to develop and learn how everyone contributes to a climate of respect.

Civility Statement - NICC defines civility as the art of treating others, as well as ourselves, with respect, dignity, and care. Civility is demonstrated when we are sensitive to the impact that our communications, practices, and behaviors have on others, and when we acknowledge each person's self-worth and unique contributions to the community as a whole. All members of the NICC community, students, faculty, staff, and visitors have the right to work and to learn in a safe environment that fosters mutual respect, professionalism, and cooperation. It is recognized that differences of opinion, or conflicts can arise in any organization. To ensure effective working relations, it is important that such matters be resolved before serious problems develop. NICC believes that a policy of open communication is best for all concerned. *The Fair Treatment Policy* provides guidance and resources for handling employee problems as efficiently as possible.

Equity - NICC is involved in an Iowa Community College Guided Pathways grant initiative to continue to strengthen [equitable guided pathways](#) for all students. Through this work, [equity resources](#) have been identified and an [equity scorecard](#) developed. NICC continues to strengthen its multicultural community as evident by the ongoing work with [HiSET and ESL](#) students, the on boarding of a veterans consultant to grow [veterans initiatives](#), and recent [re-authorization](#) of the TRIO student support grant. The Vice President of Learning and Student Success (VPLSS) has been asked to serve as one of ten stakeholders in the first [Equity Leadership Academy for States](#), a pilot program to amplify equity in Perkins V legislation, Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, and to provide state and local education agencies with a critical framework to center equity within Career and Technical Education (CTE). In partnership with the Iowa Department of Education and the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE), this work will directly impact the success of underrepresented students in CTE programs at the college and in the state of Iowa.

Business Leader Equity Cohort - NICC is participating with Dubuque-area business executives on the [Business Leader Equity Cohort](#) project. The aim of the project is to foster a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion across organizations and throughout the community. A primary goal of the group is to create a network of business leaders who can work together to reduce barriers to employment and increase financial stability for lower wage earners. By partnering with community leaders to collaborate on the project, NICC is working to ensure an equitable community environment which directly impacts the mission of "improving lives, driving business success. and advancing community vitality."

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) developed its original mission statement in 1967. In collaboration with the Board, faculty, staff, and student leadership, the college revised and clarified the mission statement most recently in January 2019. The Mission Statement serves as a foundation for the college's strategic planning and undergoes periodic review to remain current and relevant to internal and external constituencies.

The NICC mission connection to the Northeast district in Iowa is clearly articulated and supported by the college community. The college's Strategic Plan, values, and goals are aligned with state priorities as well as the needs of the students, local/regional labor market, and communities served by the college within Northeast Iowa.

The Mission Statement is readily available in public documents, the college website, and the catalog. The college's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its mission. In addition to processes, the college intentionally engages in activities designed to improve the lives of those served, advance business success, and improve community vitality. In addition, the college continues to engage in initiatives to ensure a diverse and equitable learning environment.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

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

Argument

2A1 *The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.*

The development of the NICC mission vision, values, and goal statements was a collaborative process (described in 1A). The college community and Board of Trustees were engaged and given the opportunity to provide feedback throughout all stages of development.

2A2 *The college operates with integrity in all of its functions.*

[Integrity, an NICC value](#), is defined as being ethically accountable to ourselves and others. This value permeates all areas of the college. Board of Trustee (Board) processes, human resources, finance, academics, and auxiliary service areas provide examples to demonstrate integrity in college functions and operations.

The NICC Board members govern the college in accordance with the laws and policies that govern its [duties and responsibilities](#) (functions) which are documented as actions in Board minutes as [required by law](#). [Board Policy 106 - Code of Ethics](#), outlines the ethical guidelines the members of the Board adhere to. In October 2019, minutes, agendas, and other documents were made more visible and transparent when the Board implemented a web-based management tool, BoardDocs, to manage meeting documentation. The agenda and related documents are more accessible and [available 24/7 through the public Board of Trustees webpage](#) making it easier for internal and external constituents to follow and monitor the deliberations and actions the Board undertakes as the legislative and policy-making body charged with the oversight and control of college activities.

Human Resources - The Human Resource Department oversees the hiring of all NICC community members; its hiring practices ensure that the process is done with integrity.

- The [NICC website](#) and application for employment include [Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination statements](#).
- NICC utilizes the [PeopleAdmin platform](#) to upload, share, and archive job postings and

applicant materials.

- The [Talent Search and Hiring Process](#) outlines the process and procedures for job approval and posting, the Search Committee Chair duties, the application review and screening, recommending candidates for hire and background checks, and the closing of the hiring process. The Hiring Checklist is designed to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all applicants and hires. For example, [rubrics](#) are developed to evaluate the required and preferred attributes for all candidates. Those that meet required criteria are moved to the interview process where reviewers utilize a [rubric aligned to the interview questions](#). This process ensures all members of the interview team are ranking similar areas. Reference checks are done utilizing a [standardized form](#). Additional tools such as; [sample behavior description interview questions](#), [search committee guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable candidate inquiries](#), [interview guidelines](#), and a rubric template support the integrity of the hiring process and are available to guide the hiring committee.
- Search committee notes are filed in the Human Resource Office.
- The search committee chair works closely with the Executive Director of Human Relations to ensure the integrity of the search and hiring process.
- The Board agenda includes employment changes for approval. The Board ensures hiring is done in alignment with relevant [Board policy 301 - Guiding Principles for Employment](#) and the [Board policy 302 - Employee Standards of Ethics](#).

[The Employee Handbook](#) outlines policies and practices for workplace conduct. The college's [Fair Treatment Policy](#) promotes an inclusive and productive work environment that fosters mutual respect, professionalism, and cooperation by clearly defining processes and guidance in conflict resolution in the workplace. New employees, who will work with confidential and/or sensitive information, are required to sign a [Confidentiality Agreement](#) to acknowledge understanding of information that falls within these categories and processes to ensure confidentiality.

[Supervisor Training](#) was implemented in the Spring 2018 term to address the changing employment environment and to provide education and resources for supervisors across the district. Meetings occur monthly to provide relevant federal, state, institutional, and professional information and training. Supervisors are equipped to lead effective teams, regardless of size or work responsibilities. A shared drive is located in campus shared files to house agendas, documents, presentations, and communication for supervisors and the HR team. Supervisor training topics such as conflict management and employee evaluations help inform consistent and ethical standards.

Financial - The Finance department oversees the college's fiduciary responsibilities and ensures the integrity of its functions. NICC's financial functions are guided by a hierarchy of policies, including federal regulations for grants and financial aid, state statutes, Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) standards, NICC Board of Trustees Policy Manual, and departmental policies. For example, to ensure college assets are protected, accurately processed, and properly reported, the Finance Department has policies and procedures related to [investments](#), [cash receipting](#), and [purchasing](#), including the use of a college [purchasing card](#). To facilitate broad awareness of current policies and regulations, the Finance Department provides [notices of changes](#) and conducts training programs on [financial processes](#) including [budgeting](#), [purchasing](#), [requisition processing](#) and [purchasing cards](#). Documenting and enforcing all financial policies and procedures demonstrates NICC's commitment to operate with integrity in its financial functions.

Separation of duties is a vital component of this system; no one person has sole control over the lifespan of a financial transaction. As a part of the college's internal controls, weekly [account](#)

[payable](#) check runs are reviewed and approved by our Financial Accountant. [Purchasing card expenses](#) are approved by the card holder's supervisor and are 100% audited by the Finance Department staff. The Finance Manager reviews the [daily cash receipt](#) sessions prior to running the general ledger posting processes. [Bi-weekly payroll](#) is reviewed by both HR staff and Finance staff prior to finalization. Payroll transfer is a two-step process that requires a separate authorization for the file submission. Bank statements are reconciled monthly with the college's general ledger by a staff member not directly responsible for receipting or accounts payable.

In FY19, the college implemented an [Internal Monitoring Plan](#). The objectives of this process are:

- Identify areas of risk and the controls in place to mitigate those risks;
- Confirm compliance with college policies and external regulations; and
- Make recommendations where weaknesses or inefficiencies are observed.

The initial focus is on high-risk areas such as financial aid, payroll, and cash management. The Financial Accountant, tasked with this responsibility, reports the [findings and recommendations](#) directly to the Board of Trustees' audit committee along with senior leadership

The college's finances are audited annually by an independent audit firm. The preliminary audit is presented to the Audit Committee which is a subcommittee of the Board. The audit firm, audit committee members, the college President, and representatives from NICC's Finance Department meet to discuss the preliminary audit including the financial statements, internal controls, and compliance reports. An [Audit Committee Report](#) along with the [Audited Financial Report](#) is then presented to the full Board of Trustees. Once the Board of Trustees accepts the audit report, it is made available to the public on NICC's website. In addition, as required by Iowa Code Chapter 260C, NICC publishes the annual [Treasurer's and Vendor Report](#) for the previous fiscal year in at least one newspaper in our district. Publishing the Audit Committee Report and Treasurer's Report demonstrate the college's commitment to transparency and financial stewardship of public funds.

Practices to ensure the transparency and integrity of operations include:

- Detailed [monthly financial statements](#) are included in the monthly Board meeting packets;
- The [estimated college budget](#) for the upcoming fiscal year and the proposed property tax levy rate are presented to the Board annually;
- [Unaudited financial statements](#) of the previous fiscal year detailing revenue, expenditures, and changes to the fund balance are presented to the Board annually.
- The [Annual Treasurer Vendor Report](#) that shows the disbursements of all funds and a detailed statement of disbursements for the preceding fiscal year is published in at least one newspaper and on the website;
- The [Annual Foundation Financial Statement](#) detailing the activities, expenses and cash flow of the foundation activities is available to our constituents on the NICC website;
- The [Moody's Rating](#), or the rating of the opinion of the quality of the college's general credit worthiness, is available to the public on the Moody's.com website.

Academics - The [Faculty Guide](#) connects readers to academic policies to ensure consistency and integrity in practices. For example, the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) states, "Academic integrity is based on honesty and the expectation that work produced by students represents their personal effort. Academic integrity requires that the intellectual contribution of others is properly documented. Academic integrity applies to honesty and ethical conduct in all academic activities, including but not limited to classwork, labs, clinical field, practicum or co-op assignments." Information in the

Faculty Guide informs a faculty member on the integrity guidelines related to [copyright](#) and the [personal resale of college textbooks and supplies](#).

The [College Catalog](#) includes a comprehensive [student conduct code](#) which outlines expectations of appropriate behavior to support a safe environment which is civil in all aspects of human relations. Information includes the [overview of the conduct process](#), the [formal student conduct procedures](#), [student rights at a conduct hearing](#), and [sanctions for student conduct code violations](#). Examples of other student policies and procedures included in the college catalog are a [grievances, complaints, and concerns procedure](#), a [fraudulent academic credentials procedure](#), and a [final grade appeal process](#) which allows a student to appeal alleged capricious grades or the merits of a particular case. The catalog also includes a section on a student's rights with respect to their education records under The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)). These academic policies and procedures allow NICC to ensure that academic functions, rights, and responsibilities are communicated, documented, and reinforced with an ethical and empathetic foundation. Each [course syllabus](#) contains a reference to "Netiquette," or the etiquette guidelines to ensure civility in electronic communications. The "open door, voluntary enrollment" process of the college implies consent that students agree to adhere to the policies and regulations of the college.

A variety of academic programs have embedded principles of ethical behavior associated with the care of clients, animals, or licensure requirements. For example:

- Upon entrance to the core Nursing courses, nursing students are required to review [ethical guidelines associated with their program](#) of study that are outlined in a Nursing Policy and Procedure manual they purchase. Each student is required to sign a [Policy and Procedure Acknowledgement form](#) which verifies an understanding and agreement to comply with the guidelines. The ethical principles associated with a program are embedded into course objectives throughout a variety of courses. For instance, students enrolled in [PNN: 183 Introduction to Nursing Concepts](#) have a unit on *Profession of Nursing, Ethical and Legal Concerns, Communication*. Key concepts such as the Professional Code of Ethics and the Patient Bill of Rights are included in this unit. Education and application of these ethical principles are then embedded throughout the nursing curriculum in [PNN:246 Application of the Practical Nurse Role](#), [ADN:332 Introduction to Associate Degree Nursing](#) and [ADN:478 Psychiatric Nursing Care](#).
- The Large Animal Veterinary Technician (LAVT) program requires incoming students to sign a [memorandum of understanding](#) (MOU) outlining the expectations for the students when working with animals. The MOU protects the students and the animals from harm.

Auxiliary Functions - NICC bookstores are located on both the Calmar and Peosta campuses and provide [guidelines](#) for posting the required textbooks and supplies for all offered courses. These guidelines ensure students have time to compare vendor costs and purchase the required textbooks and supplies from their preferred vendor.

Child Development Centers are located in Calmar and Peosta. Enrollment is open to children in the community, as well as children of NICC students, staff, and faculty. Enrollment is granted without discrimination in regard to sex, race, creed, national origin, or political beliefs. The centers are designed to provide accessible and convenient care for children of our community. The childcare centers participate in the state of Iowa Quality Rating Scale initiative as well as the CACFP food programs. The Peosta Center is [accredited](#) by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Accreditation means the Center has voluntarily undergone a comprehensive

process of internal self-study, inviting external professionals to review and verify compliance with the Criteria for High-Quality Early Childhood Programs and was awarded accreditation.

The services listed above are supervised by the Associate Vice President of Operations. This position is a member of Cabinet and also a member of the Senior Leadership Team. An [Operating Statement of Auxiliary Enterprises](#) is a part of the detailed monthly financial statements provided to the Board of Trustees. Auxiliary services are also a part of the annual audit. All auxiliary services are required to comply with the college's internal policies and procedures noted above to ensure that the institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary services.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

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

Argument

2B1 *Northeast Iowa Community College presents itself clearly and completely to students and the public regarding programs and their requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, college procedures, and accreditation relationships.*

To present the college clearly and completely to students and the public, considerable effort and scrutiny is put into development of clear and concise marketing materials that communicate; the **programs and their requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, recruitment and admissions procedures, and accreditation relationships.**

Programs and their Requirements

An extensive redesign of the [college's program pages](#) was initiated to align with guided pathway best practices and to ensure prospective students have ready access to program information that includes the following: program description, degree awarded, credits, location offered, entry points, tuition and fees, supply costs, financial aid information, career outlook information, enrollment process, [admission requirements](#), program information, accreditation relationships and awards, transfer information, and program contacts. Links for additional financial aid, career outlook, and admissions information are embedded on the program information pages. Additional information such as the program policy and procedure manual, licensure, or certification requirements are included when applicable. Program [advisory committees review the program web pages](#) to ensure the information is clear, accurate, and reflective of workforce needs. [Changes](#) are then forwarded to marketing for publication.

In addition to specific program pages on the college website, prospective students are informed about the college and its programs through a variety of printed promotional materials. One is the [Viewbook](#) which is primarily used for general promotion of cluster areas, programs, college statistics, services, enrollment steps and campus visit days. Another recruitment piece is the [Academic Program Guide](#) (APG) which is used for students who are exploring careers and for general prospective students. The APG promotes programs and their cluster area and encourages students to visit campus for either a [Visit Day](#) experience or a 1:1 meeting. [Individual program brochures](#) are used for specific program promotion at recruitment and informational events. These promotional materials are used extensively by recruitment staff for the prospective student audience during high school visits, college and career fairs, campus visits by students and their parents, and general community events.

In summer 2019, a new online [College Catalog](#) was launched. Using DIGARC's Acalog catalog management system, NICC now has an interactive catalog integrated into its website. Program and course information can be readily accessed in a user-friendly, searchable format. Catalog updates are made in a more timely fashion.

Faculty and Staff

A "[Directory](#)" tab, located on the toolbar of all NICC webpages provides a search function for faculty and staff by name or title. A [faculty and staff list](#) is included in the College Catalog.

Costs to Students

Prospective students are encouraged to research all direct and indirect costs related to their educational goals. [Tuition and fee rates](#) are maintained on our website along with an estimated cost of attendance for the current and upcoming academic year. The [Net Price Calculator](#), accessible from the admissions and the financial aid web pages, provides a tool for students to [estimate cost of attendance](#) including tuition, required fees, books, and supplies. [Career and technical programs may have additional costs](#) such as uniforms, tools, supplies or equipment expenses. [Total estimated program costs](#) are available from the Admissions Office. Prospective students can compare schools using the [College Scorecard](#) available on the NICC Admissions web page.

Admission Procedures

In 2016, NICC revised its admission and on-boarding process for new students and implemented an [integrated service model](#). The philosophy of the new model, with an open office environment and cross training of staff, provides earlier, more personalized and comprehensive service to students as they apply to the college. This has alleviated the sense that students were inefficiently being passed from department to department (admissions, advising, career services, financial aid) and helps them move through the pre-enrollment process more smoothly.

The current process works in this manner.

1. Students are accepted when they apply to the college and assigned to an [Enrollment Advisor](#).
2. Students receive an [Acceptance Packet](#) which outlines next steps to complete the enrollment process. In programs such as [Nursing, students receive additional program admission information](#) about requirements for entry into the program.
3. The advisor then reaches out to the students (via phone, text, and/or email) to review the packet and help them identify career goals and decide if their program choice is an appropriate fit, assist in filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid documents, determine [course placement assessments](#) needed, discuss degree requirements, and assist them with registration for courses.
4. Advisors register students for an orientation session and provide the New Student Resource Guide, [iNdex](#), which highlights important "next steps" in the enrollment process and helps students navigate their first semester. iNdex is provided in paper format or electronically through the NICC website.

[New Student Orientation](#) prepares students for a smooth start to their first semester. Students have opportunities to ask questions, pick up class schedules, talk to advisors, confirm Financial Aid, get a student ID and parking pass, purchase books, and find classrooms. Many programs have a [separate mandatory Program Orientation](#) prior to beginning classes at the college.

Students who attend orientation gain an increased knowledge of college resources and also develop a basic understanding of Brightspace, the college's learning management system. As a result, [they have increased confidence and decreased anxiety](#) leading up to the start of the term.

An [online version of the New Student Orientation](#) program went live in summer 2020 to provide access to all incoming students who are unable to attend on campus. This platform provides an interactive on-boarding process that can be used to analyze student participation and student learning. A feature of the new platform includes the ability to customize tracks for specific academic programs or other demographic groups. A track will also be developed for concurrent high school students.

NICC's MyCampus portal, in addition to providing access to student email (Gmail) and Brightspace, links to a [Self Service for Students](#) menu. Self Service allows students electronic access to their personal information such as grades and transcripts, view and accept their financial aid offer, view and pay their tuition bill, and use a module called "[Student Planning](#)" to check degree requirements (My Progress), search for courses, and register online. This task accesses real-time student record information from Ellucian Colleague, the student record management system. The new Colleague Self Service module was implemented in the Spring of 2018 in phases and replaced the former Colleague WebAdvisor functionality. As a much more student-friendly system, it allows students to access more detailed financial and financial aid information, develop an ongoing comprehensive course plan, and register through their degree plan, thus reducing the chance of enrolling in courses that do not meet graduation requirements. Students can quickly see how close they are to completing requirements through a colored progress bar as "My Progress" shows completed credits, planned (future) courses, currently enrolled courses, and courses still needed to complete their program of study. Students can also perform a "what-if" scenario and view program requirements for a new program should they want to change their program of study. The "My Progress" platform is heavily promoted to high school students to explore how their completed concurrent courses meet NICC degree requirements.

Accreditation Relationships

[The Higher Learning Commission \(HLC\) accreditation information and seal](#) is found under the "About" tab on the main page of the college website. Directly under the HLC accreditation information is the information for the accreditation bodies for [10 academic programs and the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships "NACEP" programming](#).

The [State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement \(SARA\)](#) is listed on the "Academics" tab off of the main webpage. [The Community for Accredited Online Schools seal](#) ranking the Online and Blended Learning at NICC among the best in the state of Iowa's community colleges for the second consecutive year is found on this page. This ranking is reserved for regionally and nationally accredited colleges and is based on quality, affordability, flexibility, and degree options for students.

NICC is a Home Base Iowa Certified Higher Academic Military Partner (CHAMPs) and has been recognized as a Military Friendly School for several years as designated on the the [Military-Veterans-Family admission webpage](#).

A dedicated [Transfer](#) page was linked off of the main page of the website. Transfer partnership information and transfer articulation agreements are found according to institution of higher education in alphabetical order. In addition, this information is cross-referenced to each applicable NICC program for transfer. Direct links to the partnership and/or institution for transfer are found in

this location.

In 2018, the Iowa Community Colleges joined the three Iowa Regent Universities in laying out transfer educational plans in Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degree areas. Referred to as "[Transfer majors](#)," these agreements ensure seamless articulation of core coursework in the identified areas. Fifteen transfer majors are available at the college and are found under the "Academics" tab from the main page.

Program information is presented to prospective students in a variety of ways to ensure incoming students are well-informed on all program aspects: costs, admission processes and requirements, program requirements, and program and college accreditation relationships.

2B2 *The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development*

The [Strategic Plan Dashboard](#) evidences the progress made in the four strategic priority areas; our people, our consumers, our organization, and our finances, thus supporting the college claims regarding community engagement, educational experiences, and economic development. The dashboard is updated quarterly.

Community Engagement

NICC is committed to providing a community focused approach to education. Community engagement is essential in meeting this goal, and the college [partners with several organizations](#) to identify and expand educational services, promote economic growth, and implement workforce development projects tailored to the specific needs of the northeast Iowa region.

NICC utilizes social media in the form of [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#) to share our story and engage with our community. Some areas of the college have dedicated Facebook pages such as the [National Education Center for Agricultural Safety](#) (NECAS), and [Business and Community Solutions](#). These dedicated pages exemplify 21st century community engagement best-practices.

In addition to the college's digital community engagement, the college publishes several written publications or news articles to reach various constituents. For instance:

- [Friday Takeout](#), a weekly e-newsletter, is produced by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. *Friday Takeout* provides news, faculty and staff member highlights, student and alumni updates, and college event information. Current employees, Board of Trustees members, Foundation Board members, and college retirees receive the e-publication each Friday.
- [Focus](#), a biannual magazine designed for both business constituents and students, is a targeted promotional publication designed to be succinct and easy to read while it tells NICC's story to the community, including how the college makes major contributions across the district. Recently, *Focus* moved from a biannual magazine to a direct mailer to ensure delivery to key partners.
- [Visions](#), a biannual publication, is produced and distributed by the Office of the President to

provide information about current college issues. All current employees of the college receive the publication in April and November.

- [The Donor Steward Impact Report](#), distributed biannually to donors reports \$190,768.00 in scholarships were awarded to 357 students FY19.

Educational Experience

The [United States Department of Education NICC Scorecard](#) provides aggregate graduate data for all credit students attending NICC. Updated annually, the scorecard is accessible through a link under the Admissions webpage. This scorecard provides helpful insights into various aspects of the educational experience, such as graduation rates, average costs of completion, and program data.

NICC is a member of the American Association of Community Colleges, [Voluntary Framework of Accountability \(VFA\) initiative](#). The VFA metrics provide key data in how well the college is serving a variety of students and purposes and are available to the public at vfa.aacc.nche.edu. The college utilizes the data to benchmark student progress and completion data against community college peers.

The [Blue Book](#) is a source for data, statistics, and commonly sought after institutional information. The data included in the Blue Book is based on official census data, enrollment, and reports maintained by institutional research, financial aid, and other departments. Published annually, this document is available on the website and the annual data used for all presentation materials.

The [Viewbook](#), a key source of program information, student support opportunities, and student outcome data provides evidence of the NICC experience for potential students.

Key data sources that are utilized in the Bluebook and Viewbook include:

- The [Community College Transfer Report](#), published annually by the Iowa Board of Regents, provides key data illustrating the success of the Iowa community college students who have transferred into one of the three regent universities.
- The [Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(CCSSE\)](#) provides information on five key areas of student engagement, a key indicator of learning. NICC has participated in this survey since spring 2015 and works to remain higher than the top 10% of the cohort group.
- The [Survey of Entering Student Engagement \(SENSE\)](#) is administered during the fourth and fifth weeks of the fall academic term and provides information regarding a new student's experiences related to academics and service areas of the college. NICC has participated in SENSE survey since fall 2014.
- Common Learning Outcome [assessment dashboards](#) depicting the proficiency trends in identified courses are in the early stages of analysis. As these dashboards become more robust, they will be provide key evidence to the student experience.

Economic Development

Evidence on how the college impacts economic development is often compiled from a variety of sources. The [Blue Book](#) provides a summary of data in the following areas.

[Community and Economic Impact](#) data includes:

- 90 pre-kindergarten students were enrolled in the Calmar childcare;
- 96% of NICC graduates are employed or continuing their education one year after graduation;

- One in 10 residents were served in the most recent academic year;
- 1,119 community members were employed (receiving a W-2) by the college.

[Business and Community Solutions](#) data includes a wealth of data such as:

- 510 students were enrolled in Adult Education and Literacy courses for Adult Basic Education;
- Since 1985, the college has secured and invested \$95,490,469 in the 260E Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training program, funding 324 different projects and creating 16,819 jobs;
- Since 1997, the college has secured and invested \$3,897,915 in 260F state job training for 11,332 employees, funding 450 different projects.

[Partnership](#) data includes:

- The non-profit, Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation was developed to address the need to retain young people in the rural areas while bolstering the economic impact of dairy farms in northeast Iowa through education;
- The Small Business Development Center served 15 new businesses, created 334 new jobs and infused \$6,653,500 of capital in the 2019 academic year.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Argument

2C1 *The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.*

The Board of Trustees (Board), meets monthly, and additionally when needed, to discuss, deliberate, and as directed by Board policy and state law, act on [fiscal](#) and [academic](#) matters of the college.

Newly elected Board members are [oriented](#) to the policies, duties, and responsibilities of the Board and the programs of the college, to ensure that they are trained and knowledgeable in making informed decisions that may occur in regular or committee meetings.

On an ongoing basis, the President, members of his Cabinet, and other college staff regularly educate and update the Board on operations, programs, and activities that may inform decision-making by the Board. For example, on the 18MAR2019, agenda, the Board was informed about retention efforts and outcomes at the institution, which included a [retention report](#), a [worksheet of retention strategies for instructors through classroom activities](#), and an [information sheet for students on how to be successful in their studies](#), which will support retention. Knowledge about retention efforts can then impact decision making about, for example, funding enhancements to classroom or lab spaces, approving or suspending programs, or evaluating the president's performance.

2C2 *The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.*

At monthly meetings and other meetings as necessary to conduct business required to come before the Board, the Board routinely deliberates and acts on motions that reflect its priorities to preserve and enhance the institution. The Board's priorities are articulated through their [authority and responsibilities](#), which are complemented by the institution's [mission and values statements](#), and the Board's [Code of Ethics](#), which articulate the behavioral and ethical expectations for their

deliberations.

With that foundation, here is an example of how the Board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution:

In 2019, the City Manager of Peosta, Iowa, inquired whether the college would consider [conveying a parcel of college property to the city for the purpose of building community housing](#). The development would provide housing adjacent to campus which would benefit students and future enrollment, as well as support a community partner in their strategic efforts. At the 16MAR2020 board meeting college administration [presented an update](#) on the housing discussion with the City. Over the next month, the college president communicated with each Board member individually to hear [their concerns and questions](#), which were then taken into consideration when drafting the real estate agreement and covenants. At the [20APR2020 board meeting](#), the Board deliberated on whether to move forward with a public hearing to convey the land and voted unanimously to do so. At a [special meeting on 05MAY2020](#), the board held a public hearing and continued deliberations before voting unanimously to convey the land, thus preserving and enhancing the institution through expanding the services and resources that will support students and future enrollment efforts.

2C3 *The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.*

The Board follows the Code of Iowa and Board policy for reviewing the reasonable and relevant interests of internal and external constituents as it makes decisions on behalf of the college. Section 21.3, Code of Iowa ([Open Meetings Law](#)) ensures that the public is notified about the Board meeting time, location, and agenda. The Board encourages its citizens to offer their advice and counsel on matters of policy, administration, and other items of public concern affecting the college as detailed in [Board Policy 105: Governance - Meetings of the Board](#), which outlines processes for oral and written communications to the Board.

The Board also solicits input and feedback from citizens when appropriate. For example, in August, 2017, the Board was asked to [approve a contract](#) with Enterprise to manage its car fleet, which was a significant change to the current fleet management model, where cars were purchased, serviced, and sold through local partners within the district. The Board asked how the college could continue to work with local partners and declined to act on the proposal. In October 2017, the Vice President of Finance and Administration (VP) [reported](#) to the Board that he had spoken with a local dealer about public bidding for a fleet vehicle lease and that the college would announce a request for proposals (RFP). In December 2017, the VP [explained](#) the results of the RFP and how the proposal terms compared to the Enterprise agreement and asked for the Board's approval on the Enterprise contract. The Board asked the VP to inquire with local partners one more time about their ability to meet specific terms of the Enterprise agreement and asked the VP to bring the item back the next month. In January 2018, the VP [reported](#) on the outcome of his inquiries, at which time the Board understood the internal and external interests and were positioned to act on the original motion.

2C4 *The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties.*

The Board articulates their responsibility to preserve its independence from undue influence on the part of other interests and parties in several ways. Upon public election to the office of District Director (Trustee), the Trustees are required by state code to swear an [oath of office](#) which specifically references expectations for their impartiality in the discharge of duties on behalf of the college. The oath is further supported by [Board Policy 106: Governance - Code of Ethics for Directors](#), which expects Trustees to insure against conflicts of interest. [Board Policy 601: Business and Operational Procedures - Guiding Principles](#) reiterates the responsibility of the Trustees to avoid conflicts of interest and to follow appropriate processes or abstain from participation to avoid such a conflict.

Since Board policies provide the guidance and direction in the development of college administrative policies, conflicts of interest are defined in the [Employee Handbook](#) as "use of your position with the College for financial gain will be considered a conflict of interest and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including discharge." Examples include, but are not limited to: "personal use of College information to which you have access; soliciting students or employees for financial gain; acting as an agent or dealer for the sale of materials, services, equipment, etc. to the College; or outside employment involving use of the College's time, materials, facilities, equipment, supplies, logo, etc."

2C5 *The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.*

Board policy demonstrates that the Board delegates both day-to-day management of the college and academic matters to administration and faculty, respectively.

In [Board policy 102: Governance - Overview](#), the President is identified as the Chief Administrative Officer of the college. [Board policy 108: Governance - President](#) defines the role of President as having responsibility for initiating, guiding, and directing activities necessary to fulfill the mission of the college, which is to provide in-demand education and training focused on improving lives, driving business success, and advancing community vitality. The President's [contract](#), which is signed by the President and Board Chair, further defines those activities as: "The President shall have charge of the administration of NICC under the direction of the Board. The President shall have such powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board or by law. Subject to the approval of the Board, the President shall direct and assign faculty and other employees of NICC; shall organize, reorganize, and arrange the administrative and supervisory staff, including instruction and business affairs, as best serves the interest of NICC; shall select all personnel; shall from time to time suggest regulations, rules, procedures, and policies deemed necessary for the well-ordering of NICC, and in general perform all duties incident to the office of President and such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board from time to time." As evidence of their delegation of administration authority to the President, [Board policy 106: Governance - Code of Ethics for Directors](#) directs Board members "to confine Board actions to policy determination, planning, overall approval and evaluation, and maintaining the fiscal stability of the College."

While the President has been delegated the administrative authority for organizing the administration and direction of faculty and instruction, Board policy articulates the conditions, and therefore establishes the expectation at the institutional governance level, that faculty (instructors) oversee academic matters at the college. Policies that reflect this expectation include a definition of programs, degrees, and educational program practices ([Board Policy 501: Instruction - Education](#)

[Program](#) and [502: Instruction - Educational Programs Practices](#)), guidance on instruction activities, including topics such as teaching controversial issues and student course load requirements ([Board Policy 503: Instruction - Instruction Activities](#)), the right to freedom of speech and expression ([Board Policy 206: Administration - Freedom of Speech and Expression](#)), being available to students ([Board Policy 504: Instruction - Educational Programs Related Consideration](#)), and participation in the Quality Faculty Plan ([Board Policy 307: Human Resources - Quality Faculty Plan](#)).

Sources

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- ADM_2017 Board Minutes August (page number 2)
- ADM_2017 Board Minutes December
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- ADM_2C.4_Employee Handbook Conflict of Interest
- ADM_2C.4_Employee Handbook Conflict of Interest (page number 38)
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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

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

[The Academic Freedom policy](#) was developed in June 2014 by a faculty committee utilizing the [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) as defined by the American Association of University Professors and Association of American Colleges. The policy identifies the rights and responsibilities for the faculty member and the student.

The Academic Freedom Policy has been moved to a standing agenda item on the Faculty Labor Management agenda. This will ensure time for faculty and administration dialogue regarding faculty rights and responsibilities within the changing educational environment of statewide initiatives to use open education resources, the development of master online courses, and the expectation for alignment of common learning assessments across all delivery methods for each course.

[Board Policy 206 Freedom of Speech and Expression](#) was developed and instituted based on the [White Executive Order](#) (21MAR2019) and [Iowa Governor Kim Reynold's letter](#) approving Senate File 274 (27MAR2019).

The college establishes this policy to protect speech and expression as well as to comply with the laws of the State of Iowa and the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. For instance:

- The primary function of an institution of higher education is the discovery, improvement, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge by means of research, teaching, discussion, and debate. As a result, NICC strives to ensure the fullest degree of intellectual freedom and free expression allowed.
- The proper role of the college is to encourage diversity of thoughts, ideas, and opinions and to encourage the peaceful, respectful, and safe exercise of First Amendment rights.
- It is not the proper role of the college to shield individuals from speech protected by the First Amendment, which may include ideas and opinions the individual finds unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive.
- Students and faculty have the freedom to discuss any problem that presents itself, assemble, and engage in spontaneous expressive activity on campus, subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions that are consistent with established First Amendment principle.
- Likewise, all invited speakers and the outdoor areas of campus are public forums that are open to the same terms and reasonable restrictions.

Sources

- COM_2D_Freedom of Expression White House Executive Order
- COM_2D_Iowa Speech and Expression SF274_GovLetter
- COM_2D_Board Policy 206 Freedom of Speech and Expression
- LSS 1940 Statement
- LSS Academic Freedom

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Argument

2E1 *Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior, and fiscal accountability.*

The [Institution Review Board Charter and Standard Operating Procedures](#) (2007) provides guidelines for institutional research requests.

- [Full Review Form](#)
- [Expedited Review Form](#)
- [Exempt Protocol Form](#)

The animals utilized by the Large Animal Veterinary Technician program are protected under the [Animal Welfare Act](#) (AWA). In accordance with AWA regulations, the college has appointed an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) to develop policies for the [humane care and use](#) of the animals. The [composition of the IACUC Committee](#) is in accordance with federal regulations. [Concerns or questions](#) related to the care of the animals are to be reported to the IACUC. The college is subject to annual, unannounced [compliance inspections](#) by the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Inspection Service.

Research at the college is primarily connected to the agriculture programs. As a founding member of the [Community College Alliance in Agriculture Advisory \(C2A3\)](#), the college partners with the United State Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Services (USDA-NRCS) to conduct applied research on soil health. In spring 2020, the college entered into a [four year contract](#) with USDA-NRCS to conduct applied research on the NICC farm evaluating soil health related to cover crop rotation. The NRCS team assisted with the soil sample extractions to ensure sample validity and testing reliability.

2E2 *The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.*

All new students are invited to [New Student Orientation](#). During this orientation, students network

with the Learning Center, Writing Center, Library, and TRIO staff to enhance their awareness of the available supports. Incoming students with less than one term of transferable college credit are required to enroll in the [College Experience](#) course. Through this course, students are again engaged in activities that acclimate them to the Learning Center, Writing Center, and Library.

The faculty employ multiple forms of assessment: projects, writing exercises, and presentations to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice. For example, the students enrolled in:

- [Engineering Design and Development](#) do extensive research prior to developing a prototype.
- [Composition II](#) are required to submit a research paper. Composition II is a "research writing course [which] analyzes writing as a process with emphasis on developing persuasive, evaluative, analytical, investigative, research, and documentation skills." To help meet the students where their need is, faculty and support staff are available throughout the student's writing process to assist in gathering research, documentation skills, and writing production. Composition II classrooms and learning spaces are built with collaborative opportunities, like peer-review, 1:1 writing conferences with the instructor, and informative presentations from the Learning Center, Library, and other support services, for students to engage in research and learn scholarly practices.
- [College Experience](#) present personal vision board for their final assignment.

Faculty are encouraged to review criteria related to plagiarism and copyright laws in relevant courses and inform students that the [Turnitin Plagiarism Checker](#) is used by faculty to monitor written plagiarism and cheating.

The [Honorlock](#) online authentication and proctoring service ensures testing is completed by the identified student. Honorlock requires students to [self-authenticate](#) before and during all exams. Students are monitored and recorded during exams by Honorlock. The instructor is notified if there is suspicion of cheating and is allowed to view the recording to judge the alleged offense. At this time, no fees for proctoring or authentication are passed on to students.

Pre-nursing students are required to reach a benchmark score on the Nursing HESI exam to enter into the program. When the college closed to the public in response to COVID-19, the exams became accessible online through the [Proctor U](#) testing and proctoring platform. Proctor U uses live proctors via video cam to observe the students who are testing which maintains the academic integrity of the exams and ensures the authenticity of student work.

2E3 *The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.*

Students learn about research techniques and the value of evaluating information for accuracy and quality in several ways at NICC. The librarians attend all [new student orientations](#) and provide an overview of the resources and information related to the ethical use of information. Topics such as plagiarism, copyright laws, and open educational resources are covered. The [Library Research Guide](#), located on the Library website, contains specific pages on [plagiarism](#) and [copyright](#) in addition to topics such as citation assistance, starting research, and database navigation. The [Library Research web page](#), provides extensive resources to assist students in all stages of the research process.

Instructors design their courses to promote critical thinking which includes the ability to locate, interpret and use information specific to their discipline. Librarians conduct [research instruction sessions](#) in class or one-on-one upon request and cover topics such as: general library resources, online library supports, the general research process, accessing information in periodicals using databases or indexes, and how to evaluate the information found. The sessions conclude with information about using information ethically. The librarians [survey classes](#) to determine if the students learn a skill they will use and if they feel the sessions were valuable. The [responses](#) indicate that NICC teaches students basic research skills using library resources and that the students realize the instruction is beneficial and contributes to their academic and professional career success and support the [co-curricular learning outcomes are met](#).

2E4 *The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.*

The standards of academic honesty and integrity applies to honesty and ethical conduct in all academic activities, including but not limited to classwork, labs, clinical field, practicum, or co-op assignments. Faculty are strongly encouraged to include a [statement in the course syllabus](#) regarding the action that will be taken if violations of academic honesty or integrity occur within the course.

If a faculty or staff member has sufficient information that an alleged violation of the academic integrity standards has occurred, an [Academic Integrity Report](#) is completed in the [Maxient](#) program and forwarded to the immediate dean/supervisor for review. The Maxient program is a behavioral management software program that is used to submit and review student behaviors that warrant attention. This software is used for multiple student behavior reports, and is effective in that the college is able to identify frequency of a student's violations, the type and number of cases, and the types of resolutions and/or sanction.

The [Academic Integrity](#) policy is aligned to follow the same procedural guidelines as the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and outlines the specific rights and responsibilities of students, staff, and faculty. If a student is found responsible for a violation of academic standards, any sanction will align with what is stated in the course syllabus or course guide and be in alignment with college, program or course expectations.

Sources

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- LSS 2E Academic Integrity policy
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- LSS 2E C2A3 MOU 10-4-17
- LSS 2E CTELAVT002 Complaint Policy
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- LSS 2E Honorlock Contract

- LSS 2E IACUC General Compliance Inspections Info
- LSS 2E IACUC Membership Summary
- LSS 2E LAVT Student Policy and Procedure Manual
- LSS 2E Maxient Academic Integrity Report
- LSS 2E Maxient Screen Shot
- LSS 2E Proctor U
- LSS 2E Student Code of Conduct
- LSS 2E Turnitin Screenshot
- LSS 2E1 NICC Soil Health NRCS Project Proposal
- LSS 2E3 ENG105 Composition I
- LSS 2E3 ENG106 Composition II
- LSS 2E3 Library Co-Curricular Learning Outcomes
- LSS 2E3 Library Copyright page
- LSS 2E3 Library Plagiarism page
- LSS 2E3 Library Research Guide
- LSS 2E3 Library Resource Survey
- LSS 2E3 Library web page
- LSS 2E3 Number of classes attending Library Review
- LSS 2E3 SDV179 The College Experience
- LSS 2E3 SURVEY RESULTS
- LSS ExemptProtocolForm
- LSS ExpeditedReviewForm
- LSS FullReviewForm
- LSS NICC IRB Charter Final
- LSS Orientation Agenda

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

NICC acts with integrity. The Board of Trustees accepts its public powers from the State of Iowa and the constituents who elect them. Board members delegate the management and academic functions of the college to the president and consequently to the faculty and staff. The ethical policies and practices adopted by the Board and departments present evidence that the college operates with integrity in financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions.

The college has established and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. The college demonstrates that it presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to its public community. NICC is committed to freedom of expression and an environment dedicated to teaching, learning, and the pursuit of knowledge and truth.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Argument

3A1 *Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.*

NICC employs systematic processes to ensure programs and courses remain relevant and student outcomes are aligned to the credential awarded. These processes include: the ongoing **review of curriculum** in consultation with advisory members, a multi-step **Curriculum Committee review** process, **consultation with external partners** and **integration of authentic work-based experiences** into the educational path.

Review of Curriculum - Program curriculum review is an ongoing process vetted by program advisory boards and [informed by the Sector and Regional Planning Boards](#). [Program advisory boards](#) meet a minimum of twice a year to ensure alignment between education and workforce needs. Advisory members receive an orientation to the college and [program](#) and to their roles and responsibilities as an [advisory member](#). The work of the advisory boards is guided both in process and in content by the [Advisory Committee Charter](#). A standardized [advisory agenda template](#) ensures review of critical program elements which include: course guides, workforce data and needs, Sector and Regional Planning Board notes, graduate and employer survey responses, and certification pass rates. [Advisory minutes](#) reflect discussion and approval for proposed curriculum changes.

Advisory boards provide unique, time-sensitive feedback to ensure program outcomes are aligned to workforce needs. For example, nine members of the Carpentry and Construction Management Program met on 08OCT2019 to review all program outcomes and course guides. The [extensive conversation](#) resulted in the following decisions:

- Suspension of the [Carpentry diploma program](#)
- Suspension of the [Construction Business Management diploma program](#) (Peosta)
- Addition of the [Building Trades diploma program](#)

- Commitment of the business and industry partners to enter into an ["Earn and Learn"](#) agreement.

In 2018, the Engineering Technology program used the [Business and Industry Lean Training \(BILT\)](#) process to ensure alignment of curriculum to workforce needs. Through the BILT process, the key skills essential to the workforce were identified. An extensive review of curriculum highlighted numerous gaps, [resulting in extensive changes in courses and the overall program educational plan](#).

Curriculum Committee Review - Upon advisory approval of curriculum decisions, the program faculty member(s) complete a [Curriculum Application form](#) explaining the proposed program and/or course modification(s) and [addressing the impact of the proposed curricular changes on other academic programs at the college](#). The [Curriculum Committee Guide](#) ensures quality and consistency in this process. In addition, course guides reflecting the changes or the new course are completed and submitted in this step. The [course guide](#) is a common document that evidences the educational learning outcomes (ELO) for all sections of the course regardless of the mode of delivery (face-to-face, online, hybrid), the faculty member teaching the course (dual enrollment, adjunct, full-time), the location of the course (campus, center), and course schedule (8 weeks, 16 weeks). [Course Guide Template Instructions](#) assist the faculty in the development of the course guides. Program advisory committees review course guides throughout the five year program review cycle.

In response to the HLC 2016 Comprehensive Quality Review Report (CQR) and informed by the work of the CLASS team through the HLC Assessment Academy, a [Comprehensive Assessment Plan](#) was initiated. During the initial implementation in 2017, the [Celebrating Learning and Student Success](#) (CLASS) assessment team was charged with the review of course guides submitted for curriculum review. This process ensured the inclusion and alignment of assessments, and the commonality of course experience. A [rubric template](#) was developed to enhance user understanding and ensure a consistent and a replicable process. The [completed rubric feedback](#) was then shared with the faculty who submitted the course guides. If the rubric criteria was not met, the faculty member(s) were required to revise the course guide and resubmit for review. This new review step continued as all current course guides were transitioned to the [new course guide template](#).

In 2018, the AVPLSS assumed all reviews of course guide criteria, which included an analysis of the course assessments related to [Bloom's taxonomy](#). [Notes and suggestions for edits](#) were maintained in the versioning process of Google docs for review by the faculty. Committee members were apprised of the recommended or completed changes at the curriculum meeting. Ideally, all recommendations made by the AVPLSS in Google docs were addressed by the faculty member prior to the curriculum meeting. Frequent delays in committee approval occurred when this was not done. To ensure the review and modification of submitted materials was done in a timely manner, the review process was enhanced in 2019. Coaching sessions, with the AVPLSS and the faculty member(s) submitting the curriculum materials that did not meet the criteria, were conducted. During these sessions, the AVPLSS and the faculty member(s) revised the materials. The modified materials were then uploaded to a Google curriculum folder. This change in process improved course review consistency and enhanced faculty comprehension of the relationship between assessment and course outcomes.

Submitted curriculum applications are also reviewed by the Director of Registration and Retention to identify the impact that the proposed changes would have on program course pre- and co-requisites and program sequencing. This review provides the opportunity for advising feedback and ensures

timely student notification of upcoming educational plan changes. Approved curriculum proposals are then placed on the upcoming [Curriculum Committee agenda](#). The faculty submitting the proposal are asked to attend the meeting to address any committee questions.

The [Curriculum Committee](#) (see 4A4) is composed of district-wide faculty representing the CTE and Liberal Arts programming, the academic deans, the Registrar, and the Vice President of Learning and Student Success. The AVPLSS, an instructional designer, and representatives from the CLASS team serve on the committee as ex-officio members. This diverse committee representation ensures curricular needs and program rigor is maintained. The Curriculum Committee reviews all curricular changes to ensure curriculum is relevant and programs are aligned with the college mission. In-depth committee discussions regarding the Bloom's taxonomy of course outcomes, the planned assessments to validate that course outcomes are met, and the placement of general education courses in a program's educational plan, ensure student learning and course rigor and relevancy are upheld. Upon committee approval, the changes are submitted to the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) for state approval. Approved curriculum changes are effective for the upcoming academic year which allows time for the college catalog, internal program information, and the state curriculum management system to be updated. NICC is transitioning to [Curriculog](#), a more transparent and efficient curriculum management system which seamlessly interacts with our online catalog.

Consultation with external partners - Collaboration with external partners ensures academic programs are relevant to business and industry. [Sector Partnership Boards](#) are increasingly recognized as an effective method for aligning education, economic, and workforce development systems to address industry-identified labor market needs. Sector partnerships are comprised of industries with shared needs, as well as various education, workforce, economic, and community organizations in supportive roles. These partnerships develop and continuously evaluate goals, policies, and service-delivery strategies to meet the needs of employers in a given sector. In [FY19](#), 836 external partners contributed at 33 meetings across the district. Sector board [recommendations](#) are shared with the deans group to discuss when applicable at the CTE advisory meetings.

In 2018, the [Regional Career and Technical Education Partnership Boards](#) (RPB) were established per Iowa Code (section 279.61) to plan for the efficient and effective delivery of high-quality secondary CTE programming across the district. The RPB is jointly convened in each region by the community college president and the area education agency (AEA) chief. The secondary school districts are the nucleus of each Regional CTE Planning Partnership, with the bulk of the planning to be done by [secondary school district personnel with support from other stakeholders, including community college personnel, workforce and economic development specialists, intermediary network contacts, and business and industry representatives](#). Recommendations from the RPB are shared during the program advisory meetings.

Iowa has long been a national leader in articulation and transfer credit policy development. This has occurred through cooperative efforts between faculty and staff in Iowa's Regent universities and community colleges. These efforts include:

- The [Liaison Advisory Committee on Transfer Students \(LACTS\)](#), formed in 1972, has been instrumental in fostering good relationships and forging the eight statewide agreements that serve as a foundation for the transfer of credit. The VPLSS and academic deans participate in the [annual LACTS meeting](#) where changes in agreement are discussed and approved.
- A statewide [Transfer Major Steering Committee](#) ensures the seamless credit transfer from the community college to regent universities. College representatives participate in discipline

specific discussions to establish the agreements. A representative from the college serves the core steering committee. NICC offers 15 [transfer majors](#).

- Annual meetings occur with faculty and advisors to develop and maintain [80+ transfer agreements](#).
- The [reverse credit transfer partnership](#) with the three Iowa regent universities facilitates the transfer of credits back to one of Iowa's community colleges for the purpose of providing the opportunity for a transfer student to obtain a community college degree after transfer.
- Accredited programs meet the standards set by external accreditation agencies specific to the program of study. [Eleven programs](#) are accredited, which includes accreditation by the [National Alliance Concurrent Enrollment Programs](#).
- Several programs have additional program standards established by outside accrediting agencies. For example, the Cosmetology program is required to meet the curriculum [requirements](#) established by Iowa Board of Cosmetology, and the Early Childhood Education program is required to meet the National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards for Initial Early Childhood Professional Preparation.

[Authentic work-based learning \(WBL\) experiences](#) are critical for students to learn the program of study. As students progress in their post-secondary program, [progressive work-based learning](#) activities such as: projects, internship, field experience, clinical, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship provide real work experiences to ensure successful transition into the career field. [Eighty-one percent](#) of all career and technical diplomas and AAS programs have integrated formal work-based learning requirements into their curriculum. In response to the [Future Ready Iowa initiative](#), all CTE programs integrate required WBL experiences into the program [educational plan](#).

3A2 *The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.*

Differentiated learning outcomes are identified for *each* program of study, *each* course, and for *all* graduates of the college. The differentiated learning goals and how they are made transparent to the student are:

- [Program Learning Outcomes](#) (PLO) identify the outcomes identified for *every* program of study (certificate, diploma, and degree).
- [Education Learning Outcomes](#) (ELO) identify the outcomes identified for *each* course within the program of study. ELOs are listed under 8.0 in the course guide.
- [Common Learning Outcomes](#) (CLO) are identified for *each* course in the syllabus and course guide.

[Course Guides](#) identify the units of instruction taught in every section of the course, and identify the Bloom's cognitive level of mastery for every learning outcome students are expected to achieve through the identified instructional methodologies. The [course syllabus](#) operationalizes the course guide and evidences aligned CLO and ELO assessments for every section of the course taught. Faculty submit a syllabus for every class at the start of each term. The syllabi [are reviewed](#) for alignment to the course guide, transparency of student learning outcomes, and adherence to the [template criteria](#). This process assures each student in every course has the needed information for course success, and ensures consistency of required information and facilitates ease of student perusal.

Every student has access to the course [syllabus](#) in the Brightspace learning management system (LMS). The syllabus identifies the common learning outcome (CLO) for the course, and includes a course calendar that evidences the PLO, ELO, and CLO for each assessment.

The LMS shows the ELO and CLO relationships between the embedded assessments with the [rubrics](#) or tools utilized for measurement. As new courses are entered into the LMS or existing courses updated, the Department of Instructional Innovation and Design (DIID) team utilizes a [Course Alignment Plan](#) to ensure that course content is in alignment with the course guide, outcomes, and college policies and standards. A Brightspace competency tool is in the pilot phase, with a planned implementation for CTE programs starting fall 2021. This tool maps the identified PLO, ELO, and CLO directly to each course assessment. Research is underway to determine how to apply this tool in programs such as Associate of Arts, where students pick courses to fulfill general education requirements.

The program of study [curriculum map](#) provides a depiction of the relationship between all courses in the program (core and general education) and the PLO. Program courses are listed in the typical order of student experience with the correlated Bloom's level of cognition identified. Curriculum maps provide a tool to analyze general education course placement in the program as well as the progression of cognitive thinking. In 2018, the [nine aspects of industry](#) as related to each program course was added to the CTE curriculum maps. Curriculum maps provide a dynamic overview of the differentiated outcomes of the program and are accessible to the internal community through the Assessment Google page or the LSS Google drive.

In response to the HLC 2016 CQR, program learning outcomes (PLO) are identified for *all* programs of study, educational learning outcomes (ELO) and a common learning outcome (CLO) are identified in *each* course. Students enrolled in each program of study are required to meet the identified program PLO, course ELO, and embedded college CLO to ensure they are well-prepared to enter the workforce or transfer to another institution of higher education upon graduation. The course guide and course syllabus available to all students for every course ensures transparency of the ELO and CLO outcomes. Currently, faculty share the PLO with students in a variety of ways that include: list on the course syllabus, refer to a program list, or share within LMS course content. The incorporation of the LMS competency tool will enhance the articulation and differentiation of all student learning outcomes and their relationship to the individual course assessments.

3A3. *The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).*

In response to the HLC 2016 CQR, several processes have been implemented and/or enhanced to evidence program quality and ensure learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations. These processes include: **a three year faculty on-boarding plan, an annual program percentage review per location, enhancements for online delivery, discipline and department meetings to align student learning assessments, and a variety of evaluation tools.**

Three year faculty on-boarding plan - All instructors, regardless of faculty status, must meet the [Iowa Community College Guidelines for Faculty Qualifications](#) and the college [Quality Faculty Plan](#) (QFP). The minimum hiring credentials and QFP [professional development expectations](#) ensure that *all* faculty are qualified and understand the program quality and learning

goals in the field they are hired. Upon hire, **all** faculty participate in a new faculty orientation where the teaching expectations are shared with emphasis on meeting the course guide ELO, developing a complete course syllabus, and ensuring the course assessments are completed. In addition, the relationship between the PLO, ELO, and CLO is presented, and the [assessment of student learning is reinforced](#) as a key responsibility for all faculty members. The [Faculty Guide](#) is introduced as the reference for the overall expectations that **all** faculty are required to meet. Key tools linked to the Faculty Guide are the [course guide template instructions](#), the [syllabus template guide](#), and the [Assessment site](#). All formal on-boarding events are [videotaped](#) to provide a resource for questions or for faculty on boarding later in the semester.

During the first three years after hire (probationary period), each faculty member is required to complete required [professional development activities](#) to ensure a common understanding of the LMS and classroom pedagogy (see 3C5). The mandatory [Faculty 101](#) online orientation module (see 3C5) provides a review of the initial on boarding information.

Formal classroom evaluations, conducted by the academic Dean or Assistant Dean provide additional opportunities to validate course quality and provide individualized feedback. New full-time faculty are observed each term during the first three years of employment. New adjuncts (which includes all part-time faculty) are observed once in their first term of teaching and annually during the first three years (evaluation protocol).

The faculty teaching through the [Concurrent Enrollment Partnership](#) (CEP) are expected to meet all college standards as outlined in the Faculty Guide and the [CEP Instructor Handbook](#). In addition, faculty liaison visits, conducted by on-campus faculty who teach the concurrent course, are scheduled the year after the dean visit. Faculty-liaison class visits and course reviews are an additional mechanism to ensure college courses offered through High School Partnerships are aligned in rigor with the on-campus offerings. In addition, these visits promote team collegiality among the faculty teaching the course and provide the opportunity to share resources to improve course and program quality. Additional visits may be scheduled at the dean's or the faculty liaison's discretion. The faculty liaison role is included in the [full-time faculty job description](#).

Annual program percentage review - In order to ensure each concurrent partner site has adequate support and resources to maintain the quality standards set forth, NICC annually monitors all sites for growth ([Site Analysis and Monitoring Policy](#)). Sites that exceed 50% of a program of study necessitates applying for the HLC "additional location" designation ([2019-2020 Southern District audit](#)) and submitting a "Substantive Change" form. In 2018, NICC received approval for 12 new additional location applications. A request for four [new additional location applications](#) was submitted in August 2020.

Enhancements for online delivery - Faculty teaching in an online format receive additional guidelines to ensure the [quality of online course delivery](#). For example, all faculty are required to have their course room available (course guide, syllabus, week 1 content with dates) to students one week prior to the start of the term in the LMS. Additional guidelines, ensuring the [quality of course content and design](#) and a [Course Credit Hour Equivalency tool](#) ensures credit hour requirements are met. In spring 2020, the campus was closed as a result of COVID-19 and all courses moved online for the rest of the semester. At that time, 30% of the faculty had not taught in an online format. Online mentors were assigned per faculty request and the college instructional design team worked closely with individual faculty member to move course content to Brightspace. The online processes and tools, coupled with Brightspace LMS training were essential tools for all faculty. As the college

moves forward, all faculty are now expected to load all classroom content into the LMS regardless of course delivery method to ensure consistency in student information and access. A summary of the work done to enhance the LMS and online delivery is [attached](#).

Discipline and department meetings - CTE faculty have a variety of opportunities to network within their program group through department meetings, advisory boards, [program reviews](#), and accreditation meetings. Arts and Science faculty are larger in number and do not have similar opportunities for networking. Since 2018, [discipline specific \(Science, Math, Humanities, Communication, and Social Science\) reviews](#), and [discipline meetings](#) have been bringing together arts and science faculty to discuss course philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, resources, common assignments, and assessments. This structure has led to increased informal networking outside of the designated meetings. In addition, all faculty receive department updates through their academic dean.

Evaluation tools - The following tools are used to analyze student outcomes related to methods of delivery and at various locations.

- Annual [course performance data by teaching methodology](#) is reviewed by the Learning and Student Success team, the Student Enrollment Management Committee, and the Retention Committee. This data indicates a consistently higher success rate for concurrent students as compared to traditional students in all course methodologies.
- The data dashboard illustrating [course performance by delivery method and faculty](#) was created this past year. Highly confidential, this dashboard allows viewers to analyze individual student and faculty data related to all teaching methods. The academic deans view this data to identify gaps in success rates and outlying faculty success rates.
- Annual assessment dashboards depict the course proficiency of direct, summative, and indirect measures of same course offerings as compared to the institutional level. For example, the [2017-18 Site Dashboard for Cascade High School](#), provides retrospective, dis-aggregated data for the proficiency level for each assessment area as compared to the institutional proficiency level. A framework for analysis of this data for various teams is under development.
- Program outcomes, under construction for FY 19/20, will provide a broader view of student success in each course PLO.

Program and course quality and learning goals are consistent regardless of the mode of delivery (face-to-face, hybrid, online), location for delivery (campus, high school center, online) or faculty status (full-time, part-time, adjunct). A variety of methods (orientation, videos, manuals, policies, and templates) are used to promote consistency and quality in the classroom. Data dashboards that provide evidence of students meeting learning goals for courses and programs offered through a variety of delivery methods and at various locations are consistent throughout the district.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Argument

3B1 *The general education program is appropriate and NICC articulates general education requirements.*

Workforce need and transfer agreements inform what is **appropriate** for students and NICC **articulates** how those needs are attained.

Appropriate - NICC provides [in-demand education](#) to its students which results in meeting industry needs within the communities in our district. A comprehensive community college, NICC offers 20 [diploma](#) programs, 9 [certificates](#) and 4 degrees ([AA](#), [AS](#), [AAS](#), and [AGS](#)) which includes [15 transfer majors](#). To attain the appropriate level of quality education that is promised in the college mission, faculty used the [General Education Philosophy Statement](#) as a guide to develop four [Common Learning Outcomes](#) (CLO) that every student should possess upon completing a program of study. The four CLOs are [Critical Thinking, Communicate Effectively, Lifelong Learning, and Diversity](#)

The four CLOs serve as the foundation for general education and are essential outcomes that prepare each student to assume a productive role as a citizen, to understand and function successfully in the modern world, and to prepare for lifelong learning. CLO attainment operationalizes the college mission by improving the student's life, and by enhancing graduate success, which improves community vitality. CLOs are measured in terms of learner outcomes. These areas are part of the program assessment process (see 3B2) and support student success in both transfer and career/technical programs.

The [Associate in Arts](#) (AA), [Associate in Science](#) (AS), and [Associate of Applied Science](#) and [Diploma](#) degrees require [coursework](#) in general education that supplements the specific program learning outcomes that the college believes every student should possess upon graduation. The primary common learning outcome is identified for each course to ensure the commonality of student

experience and evidenced in 6.2 of the [course guide](#). Program [curriculum maps](#) demonstrate inclusion of all four CLO's.

CTE advisory committees include [Arts and Science faculty](#) who provide feedback on the relevancy of general education courses related to the CTE area. The CTE advisory committees annually [evaluate](#) the applicability of the CLO to the program area.

Degree transfer coursework is informed and aligned with the statewide [LACTS](#) and [Transfer Major agreements](#) (see 3A1). The [Community College Transfer Report](#) (see 2B2) provides data that validates the preparedness of the community college transfer student. For example, [the first year grade point average of a NICC transfer student to one of the three regent universities is comparable to all first year community college transfer students. After the first year, 86% of the AAS, 88% of the AA and 89% of the AS transfer students are retained.](#)

Articulation - NICC articulates the purpose, content, and learning outcomes of general education. The CLOs are aligned with the college mission, vision, values, and goals and define the expectations of a Northeast Iowa Community College education. The CLOs provide the benchmarks against which the college holds itself accountable with performance indicators measured and evaluated using common rubrics.

The [four CLOs](#), and the [General Education Philosophy Statement](#) are stated in the college catalog. The [primary CLO](#) for each course is identified on 60% of the course guides and every course syllabus. As the college converts to the Curriculog curriculum system, all course guides will be complete (Fall 2021). Every [course calendar](#) denotes the CLO being developed in every unit in that class. The program [curriculum map](#) illustrates the courses related to each CLO and validates the four CLOs are met in each program of study. [The course guides and corresponding syllabus and program map show these relationships.](#)

The result of these efforts and processes ensure that every graduate receives a broad college learning experience that will assist them in acquiring general knowledge, skills, insights, and sensitivity needed to function as an educated person in the contemporary world. Data from assessment efforts is compiled into [dashboards](#) which are used to inform improvement to general education, process, and curriculum. [Training videos](#) to assist with dashboard analysis will be available in Fall 2020. During the last CQR, the team noted a need for greater oversight in verifying general education being attained by students. While NICC has certainly improved this process by adding it to curriculum maps, with standing agenda items for advisory boards, and through making it part of program reviews, the data dashboards will allow deans and faculty to isolate specific classes and identify detailed, contextual areas for improvement or even replication.

3B2 *The general education framework was developed with (and accepts input from) internal and external partners to impart broad knowledge every graduate should attain.*

The **development** of the general education framework involves many constituencies dedicated to **impacting broad knowledge** to students.

Development - The general education framework provides breadth to the college learning experience; it is the foundation behind the practical applications that are measured through CLO assessments. This process developed over a two year period.

- First, feedback was obtained from the college community and program advisory groups to identify the [four CLOs](#) before the 2016 HLC visit.
- The 2016 HLC feedback led to the formation of [CLO subcommittees charged](#) with the task of developing the rubrics and processes to evaluate student CLO attainment. Led by a faculty member and an administrative champion, the sub-committees are composed of faculty and staff from representative areas of the college to ensure the academic and student committees (i.e. CLASS, LSS, Curriculum, iMPACT) remained informed.
- The sub-committees meet four times a year with reports submitted to the AVPLSS.
- The AVPLSS ensures timelines are met and that the CLO committee work informs the work of the [Celebrating Learning and Student Success](#) (CLASS) team. The CLASS team is composed of faculty across the district who are willing to lead college-wide assessment efforts. Under the guidance of the AVPLSS, the original CLASS team members attended the [HLC Assessment Academy](#).
- [Quarterly newsletters](#) keep the college community informed of assessment efforts.
- [The Assessment Handbook](#) was developed to provide a user friendly faculty reference.

Advisory boards include at least one faculty representative from general education, an advisor, a student, and industry professionals to strengthen the integration of the general education core throughout the program curriculum. Student learning outcome attainment is evaluated in the fall and spring. The effectiveness of the program curriculum in assisting a student in CLO development is [evaluated annually](#) by each advisory member. [Graduate surveys](#), [employer surveys](#) and feedback from Sector boards and the Regional Planning board (see 3A1) inform program CLO assessments.

Imparting broad knowledge - In 2018, with input from advisory boards, employer surveys, alumni surveys, and other research, the CLO subcommittees reviewed and revised the CLO (if necessary) prior to the identification of performance indicators. The [performance indicators were then used to create a common rubric](#). The CLO rubric ensures consistent criteria for the evaluation of student attainment of the broad knowledge and intellectual concepts. [Dashboards](#) evidence the proficiency of general education/CLO attainment through direct, summative, and indirect assessments.

The four CLOs evidence the broad knowledge and skills that every graduate should possess to meet the [strategic plan goal](#): "Provide education that builds in-demand skills leading to employment or Associates of Arts/Associates of Science college transfer degrees." Representative CLO subcommittees, advisory and sector boards, and program assessment review processes ensure ongoing collaboration between business and industry partners and general education and CTE faculty.

3B3 *The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.*

Educational recognition and affirmation of human and cultural diversity is operationalized in the CLO "Diversity," and [Diversity](#) is a [PLO](#) for ten programs, including the Associate of Arts General Education degree. The most frequent measures assessing the CLO Diversity and PLO Diversity occur in the College Experience course. First time, degree seeking students with less than 12 college credits upon admission are required to enroll in [The College Experience](#) course during their first term at NICC. Students focus on goal setting and decision-making skills, along with the advancement of personal skills that relate directly to success in college and beyond. [Two units in this course](#) - "Healthy Lifestyle and Safe Personal Relationships" and "Appreciation for the Value of

Human Differences" - directly support the college core value of respect. Student growth becomes evident through the [vision board](#) capstone project, which requires each student depict the actions they plan to take to reach their personal goals in health and wellness (physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual), relationships (self, family and others), and their current and future contributions to society. The presentation capstone day becomes a [unique celebration of each student's individuality, diversity, and worth](#). The College Experience course meets and measures the [CLO Diversity](#). The [curriculum map](#) evidences the PLO inclusion in the programs. College Experience students are encouraged to [join the student life iMPACT group](#) to foster citizenship, service, and leadership skills through extra- and co-curricular activities.

Other various extra- and co-curricular activities are provided and facilitated with opportunities for students to grow and engage in a multicultural world. For example:

- The annual [Martin Luther King Jr. event](#) provides valuable education and opportunities for students to interact with others from diverse backgrounds as well as providing an important co-curricular function. It is sponsored by the Student Life Department for students from both the Peosta and Calmar campuses.
- Public speakers and voices are invited to campuses and centers. [David Zach](#), an activist and human trafficking abolitionist, has shared his personal account as an undercover operative with the abolitionist group. Through stories, Mr. Zach illustrates how ordinary human beings can make an impact on freedom and justice in the world. This event expanded student's awareness of current cultural and societal events broadening their view of their role in society.
- The iMPACT (see 1C1) students participate in an annual service trip during Spring Break. The trip consists of a week of volunteering opportunities which is blended with visits to the sights and cultural features of the communities being served. Recent groups have traveled to Memphis, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, Nashville, Washington D.C, Boston and Houston, where they have provided assistance in homeless shelters, after-school programs, medical supply collections, food distribution centers, and community gardens. [The 2020 trip served in Phoenix, AZ](#).
- The college partnership with [NAPE](#) (see 1C2) has provided increased awareness and understanding of the ways to improve access, equity, and diversity in nontraditional occupations and STEM fields. The lessons learned through the NAPE offerings have increased a faculty member's ability to [create a classroom environment](#) that recognizes and values human and cultural diversity.
- An [Equity Scorecard](#) has been developed to guide the work of the Student Enrollment Management Committee.
- All career and technical programs are required to integrate work-based learning into the educational plan. Work-based experiences, such as internships, field experience, and pre-apprenticeships, engage students in the multicultural world of work. Program curriculum must prepare students with the skills to engage professionally in culturally diverse environments. For example, the ["Build Dubuque"](#) initiative was formed through a partnership between the college, Opportunity Dubuque, Dubuque Works, Four Mounds, Gronen Properties, and the City of Dubuque. Build Dubuque brings credit and non-credit certificate students together to work at a restoration job site in Dubuque's Northend

neighborhood. Students quickly recognize the importance of learning from and working with peers from various cultural, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Further evidence of the institutional commitment to assist students in the understanding of concepts within the context of human and cultural diversity is clear in the [student course evaluation](#). Of the 831 classes surveyed in Spring 2019, students selected the "[high frequency](#)" rating (4.16) that faculty had "Helped students to interpret subject matter from diverse perspectives." In addition, the student's [agreed \(a mean of 3.96\)](#) that they made progress on this objective.

Respect, a core value of the college, entails the recognition and affirmation of the human and cultural diversity of the community members. Diversity, a CLO for each student, evidences the college's commitment to provide each student with the growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.

3B4 *The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge.*

The [Quality Faculty Plan](#) outlines the [required credentialing requirements and coursework which is to be completed within the first three years of hire](#) and the CEU requirements for re-certification. Discussed in depth in 3C5, the required coursework ensures each faculty member possesses the knowledge and skills to be effective in the classroom, to provide goals for their professional development and engage as a leader within the college. The QFP [recredentialing guidelines](#) award CEU's for scholarship, creative work, and discovery of knowledge. [Faculty development funds](#) are available to support individual faculty pursuits that meet CEU guidelines.

Faculty engagement in scholarship, creative work, and discovery of knowledge directly impacts the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The college prides itself on providing opportunities that foster creative work and the discovery of knowledge. For example:

- [Realizing Potential with Growth Mindset](#) program - Over 200 faculty have participated in this program offered by NAPE (see 1C2). Through this interactive workshop, faculty understand mindset and where it comes from, understand why mindset is important, practice developing micro-affirmations to encourage a growth mindset, and increase self-efficacy, which promotes a growth mindset in their teaching.
- **Entrepreneurial Mindset** - In partnership with the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) and the Iowa Center of Practice (ICOP) Initiative, nine faculty were certified in spring 2020 to deliver the NACCE Entrepreneurial Mindset [curriculum](#) at NICC. This curriculum will be offered to faculty on campus and to students (credit and non-credit) through developed coursework. Faculty will review the curriculum to ensure entrepreneurial concepts are integrated into program curriculum where appropriate.
- **Industry Certifications** - Through a partnership with SNAP-ON tools and the National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3), CTE faculty are engaged in courses to offer [formal certificates](#) to students in multi-meter and precision measurement. CTE faculty have engaged with additional business and industry partners, such as the American Welding Society (AWS), [to obtain certifications relevant to their program area](#).

In celebration of the scholarly and creative professional endeavors of our faculty, the college puts forward an annual recommendation for the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees *Outstanding Faculty award*. This award is given to one community college faculty member that meets a variety of criteria including scholarship, creativity, and community service. Nine college faculty have received this award with two awardees in the last five years; [Susan Troy](#) (2018) and [Carla Heathcote](#) (2020).

In traditional Arts and Science courses, faculty routinely integrate activities that develop experiences for students to engage in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information, while developing skills adaptable to changing environments. For example, a student may gather information for a research paper, analyze the information to support a point of view, and communicate the argument in written or oral format. Students enrolled in a laboratory science course are required to conduct hands-on activities for exploration and inquiry in various experiments. Many other courses in mathematics, humanities, and social science expose students to creative work and inquiry necessary to develop essential skills and knowledge.

CTE programs require students to engage in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information specific to the CTE discipline area. For example, students in an automotive program are required to collect information regarding the automotive function, analyze and identify the repair, write a repair order, and provide the customer with a repair invoice. A student enrolled in a health program is required to collect pertinent data to the area of specialization, analyze the findings, and communicate the information through charting to team members.

NICC students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and discovery of knowledge in various ways. Examples are provided for students enrolled in the following programs.

- *Graphic Arts* - Students staff the [NICC Creates!](#) cooperative and provide design and marketing services to NICC students and non-profit organizations.
- *Engineering Technology* - Students develop [3D renderings for businesses](#).
- *Computer Analyst* - Networking Administration and Tech Support - work in teams to identify and create a networking application, device, or solution for a capstone project. Internal and external community members are invited to a [spring showcase](#) where the teams present their work. Students often receive job offers at this event.
- *Agronomy and Crop Science* - The college partners with the USDA-NRCS to conduct [applied research on the NICC farm](#) to evaluate soil health related to cover crop rotation. Students participate with soil sample extractions, run basic soil tests, and participate in field days to share knowledge with producers.

The results of the [2019 CCSSE report](#) show significant gains were made in the percent of students who responded “quite a bit” or “very much” when asked whether their coursework and emphasized the following growth:

- Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations increased from 53% in 2017 to 65% in 2019.
- Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory increased from 63% in 2017 to 70% in 2019.
- Making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods

increased from 48% in 2017 to 56% in 2019.

- The percentage of students who reported that they never “worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations” dropped from 11% to 6%, while the percentage of students responding “quite a bit” or “very much” when asked whether the college encourages them to spend significant amounts of time studying rose by 2% and is now at 77%.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3C1 NICC works to ensure that the faculty and staff reflects human diversity in context with the mission and constituencies. NICC uses a hiring processes that encourages diversity.

Northeast Iowa Community College considers diversity vital to its educational mission, and therefore, vital to its employee population. Recognizing that race, ethnicity, religion, culture, social class, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and physical or mental capability are all facets of diversity, the college has created a talent search process that allows equitable opportunities for all employment applicants.

The talent search and recruitment process at NICC begins with the creation of positions and job descriptions that meet the mission, vision, values and strategic priorities of the college. As positions become open, a collaborative review of the job description and position justification occurs between department heads and human resources, based on guidance in the [Talent Search and Hiring Process](#). Job descriptions are based on mission-driven values, relevant day-to-day responsibilities and departmental goals. Local, regional and national search efforts are used to advertise in a comprehensive way. The level of search depends on the specific position. The Human Resources staff utilizes web based advertising including Indeed.com, LinkedIn, and when advantageous, the Chronicle of Higher Education to reach the most diverse and qualified pool of applicants.

NICC partners with Iowa Workforce Development, the Dubuque Community Foundation, and local, regional, and national human resources organizations to foster an atmosphere of equity and diversity in the employee population. Engaging in educational opportunities, such as equity training sponsored by the Community Foundation of Dubuque, builds a better understanding of diversity and

equity in a community with small diverse populations; thus, meeting the commitment to the residents of the eight counties (Allamakee, Howard, Winneshiek, Chickasaw, Fayette, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque) to educate and employ a qualified workforce, NICC partners with local businesses, creating educational opportunities and employment opportunities.

The Human Resources staff offers guidance to search committees and supervisors to provide consistency through a hiring process that ensures equity in applicant screening and candidate review. The search committees are representative of the district. The [PeopleAdmin](#) online application system allows candidates to apply for open positions and allows the search committees to easily review all candidates. Filling positions which have responsibility to sector boards, community organizations, and/or businesses include external community members to assure the best candidate is chosen. Our center staff members are engaged in the communities they serve and provide helpful feedback in candidate selection.

3C2 NICC has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out the roles of the faculty.

[The college has a student faculty ratio of 13:1 an average class size of 14, with 72% of credit hours taught by full time faculty. The average tenure for faculty is 12 years,](#) and this results in a strong understanding of the curriculum in the classroom and college participation outside of the classroom. The following data validates that student needs are met with these ratios.

IDEA Ratings of Student Instruction Survey (Spring, 2019)

- [The Instructor encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class \(e.g., office visits, phone calls, email\) Mean score of 4.06 \(0 - 5 scale\) for 831 classes](#)

[The Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(Spring, 2019\)](#)

- In 2017, NICC was consistent with other medium colleges in the Student-Faculty Interaction category. The 2019 findings show great gains in this category and is considered a significant strength, both in comparison to other medium colleges as well as to the Iowa consortium.
- Gains were made in the decreased percentage of students who responded “never” when asked how often they did the following during the current year:
 - Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor (8% in 2017 down to 3% in 2019).
 - Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class (48% in 2017 down to 38% in 2019).
 - Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework (62% in 2017 down to 57% in 2019).
 - More students reported talking often or very often with an instructor about career plans. (46% in 2019, up from 39% in 2017)

[The Survey of Entering Student Engagement \(Fall, 2018\)](#) shows the NICC mean was consistently higher than the mean of the comparative medium colleges and the SENSE cohort group.

- Discuss an assignment or grade with an instructor (NICC mean of 2.13, compared to medium college mean of 2.13 and cohort mean of 2.04).
- Ask for help from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to a class (NICC mean

- of 2.42, compared to medium college mean of 2.34 and cohort mean of 2.33).
- Receive prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on performance (NICC mean of 2.42, compared to medium college mean of 2.35 and cohort mean of 2.34).
 - Discuss ideas from readings or classes with instructors outside of class (NICC mean of 1.71, compared to medium college mean of 1.57 and cohort mean of 1.57).

The [faculty job description](#) outlines roles and responsibilities related to teaching, scholarship, and service and expects that all faculty members are active in these areas. The [full-time faculty job description](#) delineates a service component wherein every full-time faculty member are asked to serve on a college committee or student organization. Faculty participation leads to committees with greater representation and ensures the faculty voice is heard. In 2018, the college designated a common hour to facilitate faculty availability for department meetings, professional development opportunities, discipline meetings, and committee meetings which provided a designated time for faculty, staff, and student engagement.

The [Calculation of Faculty Workload policy](#) and the [faculty workload guidelines](#) are aligned with the Iowa Code 281.24.5 (see 2A and 2B) and the HEA bargaining agreement. The workload for arts and science faculty is calculated on credit hours. A full-time arts and science workload is 15 hours per semester of teaching. Arts and science faculty may accept 7 additional credits per semester for overload pay. Career and technical faculty teaching non-transfer level coursework receive workloads based on contact hour with the student through scheduled teaching, lab, clinical/COOP, or advising experiences. The CTE contact hour stated in Iowa Code is an average of 30 contact hours/week of work. Through bargaining, the college CTE contact range is 20 - 23 contact hour average/week of work. CTE faculty can accept additional contact hours assignments for overload pay up to 32 contact hours per week. A 35 hour work week is the minimal expectation for faculty to meet their scheduled and additional responsibilities. The standard faculty contract is 173 days; 160 teaching days and 13 days for activities such as; preparation, professional development (see 3C5), and convocation. [Release time](#) is provided for Program Directors of accredited programs with additional responsibilities. In [2019, a review of Iowa community college CTE workloads](#) determined the NICC loading formula to be lower than the Iowa peer institutions. The workload policy and guidelines are accessible in the [Faculty Guide](#).

3C3 *All instructors are appropriately qualified.*

Faculty members whose primary responsibility is teaching, including full-time, part-time, adjunct, dual credit, and temporary faculty, are required to meet the HLC faculty qualification guidelines that are carried out through Iowa Code section [260C.48](#). [The Iowa Community Colleges Guideline for Faculty Qualifications](#), created with input from the Iowa community college presidents, academic officers, and a faculty work group, outlines the graduate level coursework or documentation of academic or professional training to meet the minimum credit requirements to teach transfer level courses in the discipline. The masters and graduate degrees that require further analysis of the courses completed in the degree ensure relevancy to the discipline. Work experience and/or non-related teaching substitutions are also cited for specific transfer level CTE courses when applicable. These guidelines assist the college in the demonstration of consistent procedures and careful consideration of qualifications for all instructional faculty. NICC participates on the statewide committee which reviews recommendations for potential modifications to the guidelines. Upon committee approval, revisions and guidelines are released and published on the Iowa Department of

Education website.

The [Faculty Experience Evaluation for Hiring Policy](#) outlines the steps for review and documentation of the formal education (transcripts), work and teaching experience of a new hire. The [Faculty Credential, Education, Experience, and Credit Audit Information sheet](#), which is completed by the hiring supervisor and approved by the VPLSS, provides a mechanism to validate the new hire meets the minimum qualifications to teach arts and science or career and technical coursework. The evaluation also indicates if the new hire is able to teach transfer level coursework in the discipline. Approved audits are forwarded to Human Resources where they are scanned and archived.

The Dean's office collects the official transcripts for new hires within the first 30 days of employment. Upon transcript receipt, the Dean is required to verify the transcript validates the credentialing. The VPLSS office records all transcripts used for credentialing on the master faculty list and forwards recorded official transcripts to Human Resources for recording in Colleague, an electronic administrative information system. This multi-step review process, which requires a review of documentation at three administrative levels, ensuring college alignment with HLC faculty qualification guidelines. A report is generated bimonthly in the Human Resources office to audit transcript submissions. The Human Resources staff communicates with Deans and their respective administrative personnel to ensure the transcript collection process is completed.

NICC follows current HLC guidelines which set forth requisite academic credentials and experience required of faculty who teach all NICC courses, including those who teach dual-credit courses in local high schools. Ongoing education to ensure faculty remain qualified and grow in their discipline is described in 3C5.

3C4 *Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.*

The faculty-evaluation process is conducted to review a faculty member's performance related to the roles and responsibilities of teaching, scholarship, and service outlined in the [full-time](#) and [part-time](#) job descriptions. The process of faculty evaluation is outlined in the [Faculty Evaluation policy](#) and implemented through the [Professional Development and Evaluation Plan Toolkit](#). During the first three years of employment (probationary period), all full-time faculty receive two classroom observations from their dean, and meet annually with their dean for a performance review. Peer observations are conducted by the assigned mentor during the first two years. Part-time, adjunct, and dual credit faculty receive one classroom observation from their dean, and meet annually with their dean for a performance review during the probationary period. Upon completion of the probationary period, all faculty are evaluated every three years, which includes an observation and performance review, and additional evaluations are scheduled by their respective Dean as warranted.

All faculty are [required](#) to elicit student feedback in every course using the [IDEA Center "Student Ratings of Instruction."](#) The IDEA report provides individual instructor feedback on student perceptions of their growth in common learning outcome attainment, and the effectiveness of teaching in quantitative, qualitative, and summary forms. The IDEA reports are searchable and provide internal and external benchmarks for comparison, and allow for longitudinal analysis. All reports and associated data are shared with deans for inclusion and reflection in the evaluation process. Reports are generated and available to faculty after final grades are submitted.

Annually, the [IDEA data](#) is summarized for the college and used by the Quality Faculty Plan (QFP) Professional Development subcommittee (see 3C5) to inform professional development opportunities. For example, in 2017 students indicated that they didn't find faculty using collaborative learning as a high impact practice. This led to the creation of a [collaborative learning module](#), created by two faculty members with expertise and training in the subject which they then presented as a professional development offering during the common hour.

All faculty are evaluated according to the same guidelines and procedures as those in their classification group. Dual enrollment faculty are employed by the college as adjunct faculty and are evaluated as such. The evaluation of dual enrollment faculty is outlined in the [annual high school contract](#), reviewed during the orientation process conducted by the High School Partnerships Dean, and included in the [Concurrent Enrollment Partnership handbook](#). The [Faculty Development and Evaluation Toolkit](#) includes all components and forms used for the evaluation process such as: the [faculty on-boarding timeline](#); a [self-evaluation tool](#), and the evaluation forms for [face-to-face](#), [experiential](#), and [online](#) course delivery.

In response to the 2016 CQR, the Director of Online and Blended Learning, and the Director of High School Partnerships were promoted to Associate Deans with direct faculty supervision in 2017 and then into a dean role in July, 2020. In May, 2020, two Associate Dean positions were added; an Associate Dean of Arts and Science (Peosta campus), and an Associate Dean of Nursing (Calmar campus) to provide on-site faculty mentoring and supervision. All deans are involved in reviewing and approving the online teaching criteria. Four of the seven (57%) of the deans have taught online. The Dean of Online and Blended Learning department has now works with all deans to conduct online reviews and ensure consistency with the evaluation tool application. The [Dean Alignment](#) chart indicates the programs and number of faculty supervised (evaluated) in each department.

3C5 The institution *has processes and resources to assure that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.*

NICC maintains instructor currency in respective disciplines and teaching roles, in accordance with Iowa state regulations. Iowa Code section 260C.48(4) states that each community college in Iowa must establish a quality faculty committee consisting of instructors and administrators to develop and maintain a quality faculty plan (QFP) for hiring and developing quality faculty. The QFP faculty members are appointed by the Higher Education Association, the college's faculty-certified employee organization. The [QFP committee](#) must have equal representation from arts and sciences and career and technical faculty with no more than a simple majority of members of the same gender. The QFP committee includes three [subcommittees](#) with a faculty and administrative lead in each. The subcommittees and their charge include:

1. [Onboarding of New Faculty](#) (Orientation/Mentoring) - Facilitates a two-part faculty orientation process, a general orientation to the college and a targeted orientation with the academic department Dean. In addition, the committee oversees the [faculty mentoring process](#).
2. [Professional Development](#) - Facilitates the creation and offering of professional development opportunities in conjunction with other college groups as appropriate.
3. [Credentialing and Compliance](#) - Ensures the QFP provides a mechanism for faculty to meet federal, state, and external agency credentialing requirements.

[Seven competencies of a quality faculty member](#) are identified by the QFP committee to guide professional development opportunities.

Upon hire, all faculty receive a [general orientation](#) to the college and a [department specific orientation](#). Documentation of each topic reviewed is made on the [Faculty Orientation Checklist](#) to ensure each faculty member receives all pertinent information. The completed checklist is sent to Human Resources for filing in the electronic faculty file. The new faculty member is assigned a mentor by their supervisor to assist them throughout their first years of teaching. Full-time faculty are assigned formal mentors who have received training on mentoring, and agree to meet [designated mentoring activities](#). Formal mentors receive a stipend for each faculty mentored each term. Part-time and adjunct faculty typically are assigned an informal mentor who is knowledgeable in their area of teaching. If more support is needed, a formal mentor can be assigned.

In 2018, a three year professional development plan was initiated to ensure all faculty possessed the basic expertise in course pedagogy, assessment of student learning, and course design in the learning management system. The three year professional on-boarding plan includes the following courses:

- [Faculty 101](#): This course covers topics to acclimate a new instructor to teaching and the college. Topics include: the Quality Faculty Plan, syllabus template, attendance, grading, the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction, academic integrity, classroom Management, Disability Services, FERPA, and campus safety and security.
- [Faculty 102](#): This flex-paced, web-based training covers topics that include: the learning management system, essential elements of quality course design, effective practices in course delivery, how to design interactive course activities, and effective online assessments.
- [Faculty 103 “New Teacher Workshop”](#): This course is designed to strengthen a faculty member’s understanding of role of the Community College related to meeting the needs of the various learners, how to establish SMART goals, and provides an opportunity to analyze one’s perception versus teaching performance through a micro-teaching activity.
- [Faculty 104 “Teaching Methods”](#): This course explores the theories of learning related to teaching methods, learners, and learning climates. Models for effective teaching are shared along with best practices to integrate technology into the educational arena.
- [Faculty 105 “Leadership”](#): This course is designed to help faculty members familiarize themselves with and refine relevant leadership related competencies. Participants will navigate a sequence of offerings that include topics such as; the essentials of leadership, leading change, and situational leadership. A course pilot will be offered in fall 2020.

Upon completion of the on-boarding period, all faculty and counselors are required to submit six CEUs every five years as evidence of professional development for [re-certification](#).

Ongoing Professional Development - The college is committed to providing professional development opportunities for its members to improve skills and increase knowledge. A variety of faculty development opportunities are offered throughout the year. At the start of each term, professional development offerings are held in a variety of formats to expand faculty's knowledge in the assessment of student learning, new technology, and high impact practices. An annual faculty development day is held each October, that typically hosts NAPE training or interactive college

workshops on assessment, innovative teaching practices, or discipline specific training. Professional development offerings are held bi-monthly during the common hour and include topics such as; [assessment brown bags](#) or [work-based learning](#). In addition, the [NICC Professional Development Platform](#) hosts a variety of professional development opportunities for faculty including mandatory on-boarding courses, technology training, and the Safe College portal, in addition to archived training. New faculty are auto enrolled in mandatory training with a certificate awarded upon completion.

All faculty have access to professional development funds to offset costs for classes, conferences, and travel. The [Faculty Professional Development policy](#) outlines the process to apply for funds. A variety of funding sources are used to support faculty development; [district-wide faculty development funds](#) support are used primarily for arts and science requests, [Perkins V funds](#) support CTE requests, [HLC budget](#) supports assessment and HLC opportunities and the [general department budgets](#) support smaller requests. Dual enrollment instructors are notified through email notifications and personal invitations to on campus professional development opportunities.

[Discipline specific department meetings](#) provide the opportunity for networking and the sharing of high impact practices. Coordinated by the on-campus faculty department leads, discipline specific meetings bring full-time, adjunct, and dual enrolled faculty together to work on curriculum and student learning assessments. These meetings are scheduled annually but frequently occur more often. Faculty development funds provide a stipend to cover the replacement of the dual credit faculty in the high school when they attend these meetings. The High School Partnership Department [tracks required annual participation in discipline specific training](#) of concurrent instructors annually through Qualtrics.

Dual enrollment instructors also receive a peer visit from their faculty liaison in the second year of instruction and then once every three years after to facilitate department communication and ensure course alignment per the [High School Course Review policy LSS:HS:001](#).

The NICC QFP outlines a three year on-boarding plan and criteria for re-certification that applies to all faculty whose primary responsibility is teaching (full-time, part-time, adjunct, and dual enrolled). The five mandatory courses during the on-boarding period ensure that all faculty receive the foundational knowledge to be successful at the college and in the classroom. Formalized discipline specific meetings and peer visits strengthen collaboration among faculty housed at various locations. The professional development offerings through the college are available to all faculty. In addition, all faculty are eligible to receive professional development funds to offset the cost of activities.

3C6 Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

The [faculty job description](#) outlines several practices to promote faculty engagement with and accessibility to students. In addition, faculty are expected [to post and hold office hours](#): full-time faculty - 5 hours/week; part-time, adjunct, and dual enrolled - 2 hours/week. Included in the [class syllabus](#), this information along with the office location and best method to contact the instructor promotes student faculty engagement. At the start of each term, all faculty members submit their schedules (that include office hours both real and virtual) to their dean.

NICC faculty are accessible for student inquiry from interested high school students exploring careers through several events and relationships with local high school instructors. During the [college visit](#)

days in the 2019-2020 academic year, NICC faculty visited with 140 prospective students in Peosta and 243 prospective students in Calmar. Instructors also participated in several career events on and off-campus for over 800 junior high through high school aged students in the 2019-2020 academic year alone. [Annual career pathway days](#), industry specific events held in conjunction with local companies, and a large middle school career fair are examples of a few of the heavily attended and engaging opportunities for faculty to meet future students while providing information about their programs and related career opportunities in high demand, high wage occupations.

Faculty members network with students through a variety of formal and informal co-curricular activities (see 1C1). Career Technical Service Organizations such as the [Business Professionals of America](#) (BPA) and the [Iowa Professional Agriculture Student Organization](#) support instructor/student networking. Activities such as the [Garden Club](#) draw faculty, staff, and students together to plant, harvest, and share produce which fosters strong partnerships and collegiality.

Student input about faculty availability is captured in the [IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction](#) tool. For example, in spring of 2019 of the 831 sections surveyed, the mean response to the statement, "Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (e.g., office visits, phone calls, email)." was a 4.2 (on a 5 point scale). This indicated that students "strongly agreed" instructors made themselves available to students.

The results of the [2019 CCSSE](#) report show an NICC standardized benchmark score of 55.2 compared to an averaged benchmark score of 60.1 from the top 10% of the current three-year cohort. Whereas NICC is higher than the cohort average of 50, the college continues to identify high impact practices for student engagement. An example of this is found in the Faculty Presence and Student Engagement section of the [Quality Assurance of Course Delivery Policy](#) which states: "Faculty should respond to student inquiries within 24-48 hours."

3C7 *Staff members providing student support services are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.*

NICC professional staff providing student support services (Advising, Disability Services, Learning Center, Libraries, Student Life and TRIO Student Support Services) must meet a minimum of a bachelors degree for hiring consideration; many of the staff are also Master's prepared. Some examples of job descriptions for [advisors](#), [Instructional Specialist](#), and [disability services](#) are included.

On-boarding and professional development for staff includes, but is not limited to, training in student development theory, college processes, academic programming, technology and support services, and resources. NICC staff are also provided opportunities to meet with content experts and to job shadow with colleagues in other departments.

Several resources have been developed to train and keep staff current on college policies and procedures; one example is the [Advising Handbook](#). This handbook is used in the on-boarding process for both professional and faculty advisors. Additional examples are the [Faculty Disability Services Handbook](#) and [Student Disability Services Handbook](#) which are used as training resources for professional support staff to provide an overview of the rights and responsibilities that the college has in providing accommodations to qualified students, the process a student takes to apply for services, and how the college provides reasonable accommodations to students. These handbooks are reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Student support services staff have access to professional development for many topics. Various in-house opportunities are available for staff, such as participation in Faculty Development activities including National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) presentations on Micro-messaging, Growth Mindset, and Self-Efficacy and most have participated in Mental Health First Aid training. Staff also participate in external trainings related to their service areas. The college transitioned counseling staff to a licensed mental health counselor at the Calmar Campus approximately six years ago to meet the growing and diverse mental health needs of our student population. In 2019, the counseling position on the Peosta Campus also transitioned to a licensed mental health counselor. Each campus counselor must meet state licensure and governing body professional development requirements.

Advisors attend Career and Technical program Advisory Committee meetings in the fall and spring to hear about program updates, potential curriculum changes, employment opportunities, and wage information. Professional advisors maintain cohesive relationships with faculty advisors in specific program areas by meeting with them each spring so that current and consistent information is exchanged and provided to students. Professional advisors also attend Transfer Advising Workshops at Iowa four-year public (Regent) universities yearly to foster strong relationships as well as to receive important transfer program updates. Other transfer institution partners meet with advising staff as needed on campus to share updates and changes in programming, admission requirements, and other pertinent areas. Advising staff routinely participate in the Iowa Community College Student Services Association (ICSSA) annual conference where the specific advising sub-group is very active. Another example of professional development is evidenced in participation from staff at trainings sponsored by professional affiliate groups and state advisory groups for counselors, disability services coordinators, career coaches, library, learning center, and other professional support staff.

District-wide, departmental meetings are held monthly with all staff who are actively engaging with students in support service areas. These departmental meetings cover topics which include, but are not limited to: changes in policies and procedures, campus updates, curriculum updates, and enrollment and placement updates. During the Covid-19 pandemic response and campus closure, departmental meetings continued to be held online weekly at the onset and then adjusted throughout the semester to keep staff up-to-date on processes and to check in on their well-being.

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- LSS 3C5 Faculty 102 Outline
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3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

Argument

3D1 *The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.*

The Learning Centers, located on the Calmar, Dubuque, and Peosta campuses, [serve a variety of student needs](#). For example, the Calmar campus serves a high number of students in the agriculture and CTE programs; the Dubuque Center serves a more urban population, and has a high number of students seeking their High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED); and the Peosta campus, serves a majority of students seeking health related degrees and certifications.

In 2018, Accudemia, a computer based tracking system, was purchased to replace TutorTrac in order to more efficiently identify and support student needs. Accudemia provides a tracking tool to identify the student traffic by hour, day, week and/or by the type of service provided. Each student visit can now be assessed for trends in traffic, type of service provided, and surveyed for satisfaction and/or possible Learning Center improvements. The results from the collected data led the following changes in staffing or delivery of services:

- Calmar - instructional specialists travel to meet the students after their classes in the Agriculture building which is two miles off campus to serve agriculture and science students in an open lab format.
- Dubuque Center - an instructional specialist well versed in the unique needs of HSED students is available to provide instructional support preparing students for future enrollment in college-level courses.
- Peosta - a pool of professional nurses was added to the instructional staff to accommodate the growing nursing enrollment tutorial requests.

Off-campus tutoring has been available through [Smartthinking](#) since 2012, and Brainfuse since 2019. Both of these platforms provide academic support 24/7 for all enrolled NICC students. NICC is in the process of integrating [Upswing](#), an online tutoring, writing lab, and virtual text messaging program. In addition, an online advising platform assists with student engagement and retention. In response to the college closing during the COVID19 pandemic, NICC's Learning Centers responded quickly by transitioning from face to face tutoring to online synchronous tutoring sessions five days per week with daytime and evening hours. This individualized online format was

well received and will continue in addition to on-campus services post COVID19 restrictions.

In 2016, an academic coaching pilot program was initiated in the Learning Center to offer free academic 1:1 success coaching for students receiving accommodations. The Success Coach assists students in transitioning to college life, introduces them to campus academic supports, and helps them identify academic and social goals. Using a collaborative and solution focused case management approach, the coaches assist students in identifying the steps to reach their academic goals and in developing an individualized plan to overcome identified barriers. Students who have regularly engaged in coaching the program report the success coaching has been helpful by improving their self-confidence and academic performance. During the 2019-2020 academic year, 73 students (66% of students served by Disability Services), were served through academic coaching.

Another support for students is Care Calls. Initiated in 2013, staff and faculty make Care Calls during the first week of each semester to new students to welcome them to campus, answer questions, and make needed referrals. In response to COVID19, a second round of Care Calls was completed in March 2020 to over 1400 students to provide outreach to those who were impacted by disruption of campus services. Callers specifically surveyed students to see if they had any technology needs, academic concerns, as well as any personal needs such as food or housing. If a student identified a need, a referral was made to either campus or community resources. Through the [Care Calls](#), 23 students were provided technology and/or internet access to be able to complete courses that had moved online. In April, a third round of Care Calls was initiated for the dual enrolled students to identify their needs.

The [Student Crisis Fund](#) (SCF) assists students by providing emergency assistance to currently enrolled students who are unable to meet immediate, essential school-related expenses due to an unexpected crisis that threatens their continued enrollment at NICC. The SCF is an institutional initiative that is largely funded through donations from faculty, staff, and the NICC Foundation. Two annual fall fundraisers as well as several other special events during the year raise SCF funds. The [fall fundraising events](#) bring students and employees together to share in food, a silent auction, and other activities. This is used as co-curricular events for the students in the College Experience course.

While the SCF is funded largely through staff and faculty donations, additional community sponsored events have included the Dubuque Chamber Jingle Berry event, NICC Foundation Giving Drive, 100 Men Who Care donation, and other donations from community supporters. The SCF has raised over \$197,000.00 since the inception in 2007, and it has awarded \$164,913 to 527 students. [There is an end of term retention rate of 91.5% for students served through the SCF as compared to the college average retention rate of 78.3%.](#)

[The Spring 2019 CCSSE](#) results shows that although "support for learners" was a relative strength, this category continues to increase in percent of respondents who answered "quite a bit" or "very much" to the degree to which the college:

- Provides the support students need to help them succeed (increased from 77% in 2017 to 83% in 2019).
- Provides the financial support students need to afford their education (increased from 51% in 2017 to 58% in 2019).

[The Fall 2018 SENSE](#) results show the aggregated frequencies for the items on which the college

performed most favorably relative to the 2018 SENSE Cohort:

- 74.7% of NICC students strongly agreed or agreed to receiving adequate information about financial aid (compared with 53.6% of other students in the cohort).
- 63.2% of NICC students strongly agreed or agreed that a college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial aid (compared with 38.1% of other students in the cohort).
- 73.5% of NICC students strongly agreed or agreed that at least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name (compared with 49.7% of other students in the cohort).

NICC values service as we listen, identify, and respond to the needs and expectations of our students. Target efforts to improve the early connections with students through care calls, learning center supports, and financial aid outreach promotes student retention and success.

***3D2** The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.*

The college has a student advising process which includes being assigned to an **enrollment advisor**, a **multiple measure assessment course placement process**, and **integrated developmental supports**.

Enrollment advisors - All incoming students are assigned an enrollment advisor who has received cross-training in admission, placement, and financial aid processes in the college. This creates a "one-stop" model where each student receives a variety of college preparatory services. Students are assigned an enrollment advisor at the point of acceptance to the college. The enrollment advisor meets with the student and conducts a comprehensive needs assessment which includes: reviewing career plans and fit, a review of required placement exams and program admission requirements (2B1), review of high school transcripts, and an introduction to the financial aid process (2B1) and cost for the education (2B1). Various supports and references are shared with the student throughout this process:

- Program brochures, websites, and tool lists (2B1)
- Program costs and financial aid information (2B1)
- Admissions Procedures (2B1)
 - [NICC Placement Chart](#) - identifies the types of tests and measures used for placement in reading, writing, and math, the length of time the tests are valid; and assists in determining the level of placement into NICC courses and/or their prerequisites.
 - Testing [resource sheet](#) - easy read placement test per program list.
 - [ALEKS](#) math remediation and placement process.
 - Learning Center placement supports - test review support materials and tutor information.
- Program acceptance and orientation (2B1)

Multiple-measure course placement - In 2017, the college adopted multiple measures for course placement in the areas of writing and reading. Previously, students were required to complete three

assessments (reading, writing, and math) prior to acceptance to the college. In spring 2020, a college task force (math and writing faculty, advisors, and academic deans) was convened to review past student entrance and completion data and make placement recommendations. The task force recommended the addition of a minimal high school GPA and a C- or above in a specific high school course for placement in the related college writing or math courses. These recommendations were approved with revisions made to the [Placement Chart](#). Removing course placement assessments from the admissions process has reduced the number of students who complete unnecessary tests and allows staff to focus more on the academic ability of the student and better explain the need for the assessments.

Students who do not meet placement cut scores are encouraged to re-test to improve scores and are offered a variety of resources to help them which includes utilizing instructional support staff in the Learning Centers and the [website](#). Advising appointments when registration opens then incorporate placement discussions when reviewing program degree requirements and assisting students with course selection and registration.

All degree program students are required to meet with an enrollment advisor upon acceptance to the college. This process ensures a student understands and is prepared to meet the identified program requirements and coursework. In addition, an identified point of contact for the student assists them in navigation of the required preparatory instruction, learning supports, and financial aid processes to adequately prepare them for enrollment.

3D3 *The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.*

NICC mandates advising for all of its degree-seeking programs which means that students must meet with their advisor at least once a semester, prior to registering for the next semester. Advisors have a primary role of meeting with all incoming and current students to help with career planning, assist in choosing a program of study, explain degree requirements, help with transfer planning when needed, assist with the financial aid process, and facilitate registration for classes. Advisors also help students in the event they may experience academic difficulties by making appropriate referrals to academic support services.

NICC utilizes a blended advising model, employing nine full-time professional staff advisors (enrollment advisors), forty-eight faculty advisors from their program discipline areas, two full-time Trio advisors, one half-time staff at the Dubuque Center, and four Center Directors who assist in a part time role. Professional advisors work with students in specific program areas (for example, Health, Business, Advanced Manufacturing, Transfer), thus the college can ensure that those students are being advised by staff who are able to maintain expert information on those careers, programs, and degree requirements.

After a semester begins, new students are assigned a permanent advisor utilizing one of the staff listed above. Students in program specific areas, such as Auto Mechanics or Dental Assistant, are assigned to faculty advisors in those discipline areas. Where there are larger student enrollments, such as Nursing, faculty advisors are assigned to students in those program areas first and the excess are assigned to professional advisors in Student Services. AA and AS students are assigned to professional Student Services advisors and Trio advisors as these advisors are most able to stay up-to-date with transfer institution admission and program requirements. Those students who primarily attend at Centers are assigned to the Dubuque advisor or other Center Directors.

[The Fall 2018 SENSE](#) results show the college performed higher than the medium colleges "MC" and 2018 SENSE Cohort on the following areas:

- I was able to meet with an academic advisor at times convenient for me (NICC 4.26; MC 3.87; cohort 3.82).
- An advisor helped me to select a course of study, program, or major (NICC 4.14; MC 3.77; cohort 3.74).
- An advisor helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them (NICC 3.82; MC 3.41; cohort 3.39).
- An advisor helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester/quarter (NICC 4.36; MC 3.98; cohort 3.96).
- A college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school (work, children, dependents, etc.) to help me figure out how many courses to take (NICC 3.24; MC 2.98; cohort 2.92).

3D4 *The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).*

NICC maintains infrastructure and resources to support student learning. The two main campuses have library services and are fully staffed with learning centers, testing and assessment area, computer labs, classrooms, and specialized labs to support practices in career and technical programs. The NICC Centers provide support for local communities and offer classes and/or customized programs respective to the area of need expressed by the community. An example of this is the welding lab at the Cresco Center and a health lab at the Manchester Center.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meets twice a month to address strategic plan priorities which includes addressing relevant operations and facility infrastructure priorities. The [team composition](#) of the President, Vice President of Finance and Administration, Vice President of Learning and Student Success, Vice President of Business and Community Solutions, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Advancement, Associate Vice President of Operations, and the Executive Director of Human Resources represents all areas of the college which facilitates efficient planning and resolution of issues as they arise. In addition, this team reviews and updates the progress made on each strategic planning priority on a quarterly basis. The [Strategic Planning Scorecard](#) includes priorities that support infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning.

In 2019, the college district approved the continuation of bond levy support for 39 million dollars. The [84.16% majority vote](#) evidenced the support of our college district and the need to continue to invest in our infrastructure to meet the needs of our future students. The [approved projects](#) include: renovation of classroom and lab areas with improved study areas on the Peosta campus; a complete renovation of Max Clark Hall which houses health programming, business, and general education courses on the Calmar campus; and a variety of smaller projects.

Annually academic and community program managers assess equipment and software needs for the next fiscal year. Upon manager approval, the needs are reviewed and prioritized through collaboration between the Operations, Student Learning, and Finance offices. A variety of budget

sources are utilized for requests:

- [9 cent tax levy](#) - used for classroom and lab technology and the updating of equipment.
- [Perkins V](#) - used for identified CTE classroom and lab needs.
- [Accelerated Career Education](#) (ACE 260G) funds - used to support identified priority occupational areas.
- [Department funds](#) - used for routine program supplies and smaller equipment purchases.
- [Bond levy](#) - used for the identified bond projects.

Clear, intuitive, and reliable technology is essential for student learning and success. NICC provides unthrottled Internet speed web access to students, college visitors, community members, and employees. The college WiFi network is found in all areas where students learn and engage on all NICC campuses. NICC has made a large investment into classrooms and meeting spaces that have built in Zoom capabilities for a streamlined communication experience; twenty-four rooms are designed to connect across the district and four portable carts can be moved from room to room for greater flexibility. In response to COVID19 and the evolving factors that may prohibit a student from physically attending a class, the video platform [Panopto](#) was purchased this summer to facilitate classroom engagement on and off campus, to archive lectures and demonstrations in the LMS, and to enhance and organize video content. In addition, faculty teaching online have been given pro-zoom accounts. Students identified through the care calls (see 3D1) received technological supports (computers, web cams, internet access) supported by CARES Act funding.

Maintaining state-of-the-art, relevant program technology is key to prepare students for a technologically advanced workforce. In fall 2019 administrators and faculty toured Gateway Community College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, to tour a state-of-the-art lab created in partnership with the National Coalition of Community College Partnerships (NC3). Upon return to the college, a [three year plan](#) was drafted and approved. The first year projects, renovation of the [HVAC](#), [Industrial Maintenance](#), and the [PLC lab](#) (Residential/Industrial Electrician program) will be completed during the fall 2020 semester. This evidences the college's commitment to provide quality programming. In addition to major renovations, annual technology and equipment purchases ensure students are exposed to aligned workforce technology. Since the last HLC visit, purchases include amatrol trainers with online programs, welding simulator, and a Lely somatic cell count tester.

Various tools are available through the college web site to assist students in obtaining the information and tools to be successful. The [MyCampus](#) college portal is available to all college members and offers a search bar to connect a student with a vast array of online services and/or informational content. Information categories are intuitively sorted groupings of online resources that make it easy for users to find what they need in cases where a search isn't applicable. A [support chat feature](#), provided by the CIS Helpdesk staff, is also available. The Helpdesk is available and ready to assist all employees and students with technological support. The Helpdesk also serves walk-in customers as well as calling or emailing customers.

As more education and learning is delivered online, NICC recognizes and responds to the information security risks inherent in the online learning environment, specifically to the institution's digital information infrastructure. In response, NICC has invested many resources into our Information Security Program in order to ensure a secure and safe online learning environment. Most notably over the past three years, NICC has invested in a third-party security vendor, [Frsecure](#), to help lead us into a standards-based program to better protect and defend against information security incidents. Currently in the third year of the contract, Frsecure conducts a security assessment and provides an annual roadmap as well as ongoing virtual Chief Information

Security Officer services to augment the roadmap tasks being performed by NICC personnel. These services cost approximately \$31,000 each year. In addition, an Identity Management Platform by [PortalGuard](#) ensures security and user access control into the various systems the college provides.

Sources

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- LSS 3D1 Retention Rates
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- LSS 3D4 FRSQ 1471 Northeast Iowa Community College vCISO
- LSS 3D4 Helpdesk
- LSS 3D4 HVAC Lab
- LSS 3D4 Industrial Technology Lab
- LSS 3D4 MyCampus
- LSS 3D4 Org Chart 2017
- LSS 3D4 Panopto Contract
- LSS 3D4 Panopto Description
- LSS 3D4 SNAP-on 3 year plan
- LSS 3D4 Welding Budget

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

NICC offers the Associate of Arts degree, the Associate of Science degree, the Associate of Applied Science degree, the Associate of General Studies, and a variety of diploma and certificate programs all of which are appropriate to higher education. All programs have advisory boards that assure relevancy, currency, and quality. Personnel policies, procedures, and assessment programs provide guidance and structure and assure that the college has sufficient faculty and staff required for high quality programs and student services.

Through a curriculum developed and assessed by qualified faculty, students gain knowledge in critical thinking, communication, lifelong learning, and diversity. Curriculum is consistent wherever it is delivered, whether on campus, online, or in dual enrollment. The applied and co-curricular portions of the degree programs assure that students receive the necessary skills for success in both transfer and careers. Student Life offers a variety of programs and activities that compliment and reinforce degree and certificate programs.

At the last visit, questions about quality and dual enrollment were raised. Since then, on-boarding and training of all faculty (regardless of modality or location) has been implemented to ensure expectations for high quality education. Faculty evaluation has been expanded, improved, and implemented to enforce and support high expectations. Dual enrollment has been examined and now has articulated processes that align with on-campus and online faculty to ensure that curricular needs are uniform. Regular review of enrollment at all dual enrollment locations takes place to maintain oversight and designation ("additional location") as appropriate. Many changes have taken place and have improved both the quality and consistency of the offerings at NICC as well as the operation of the dual enrollment program. There is still room for improvement, such as more professional development, more discipline specific trainings, and more inclusion of dual enrollment and adjunct voices in curriculum development, but the advances made lay the foundation for these improvements and continued growth.

Processes to ensure courses taught are consistent and of quality regardless of mode or delivery have been implemented. ELOs for each course (Arts, Sciences, and CTE) are articulated through course guides used across the college and ensure the same course has the same learning objectives regardless of method or location of delivery. Faculty are required to use the course guides for the ELOs but have the freedom to determine how to measure the ELO, identify delivery materials, and develop syllabi (using the template). Faculty continue to engage with their peers who teach the same course to collaborate on embedded course assessments, rubrics, and proficiency levels. Data dashboards depicting CLO and PLO attainment will further this work. In addition, the continued work by the DIID team to standardize the LMS format, identify course PLO, CLO and ELO, and show the relationship between each learning outcome and assessment will continue to enhance the student and the faculty understanding of assessment related to program, course, and college learning outcomes.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

Argument

4A1 *The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.*

NICC has developed a systematic process to review and analyze the data related to all areas of an academic program to ensure the college offers an accessible, affordable, quality program to meet workforce and transfer needs. The program review process includes an annual key indicator program review ([AKPIR](#)) and a comprehensive program review ([CPR](#)) every five years.

The review of annual key program data relevant to program need, efficiency, and effectiveness was added to the [General Education Career and Technical Program Evaluation Procedure](#) in 2015 to ensure the timely evaluation of key data elements. This process informs faculty, advisory members, and administration of changing data elements and holds faculty accountable for the assessment of program data. The following key program indicators are reviewed annually:

- Employment outlook
- Enrollment trends
- Retention

- Completion
- Graduate data
- Program cost analysis
- Student, graduate, employer, and alumni feedback
- Advisory attendance
- IDEA survey response rate

Data elements are assigned a ranking of below satisfactory, satisfactory, or above satisfactory. Data elements that fall in the [below satisfactory range](#) require a [program improvement plan](#) to be developed by the academic dean and the faculty involved in the program. The VPLSS works with the academic dean to ensure resources are devoted to the plan implementation. The academic dean submits an [outcomes report](#) to the VPLSS the following year prior to the new AKPIR.

- [Annual Key Performance Data Template](#)
- [Key Performance Data Element Definitions](#)
- [Program AKPIR](#)
- [Summative AKPIR](#)

The AKPIR process trends data over a five year period which is beneficial in identifying subtle changes in trends and in analyzing the success of program initiatives. The [Program Sustainability Review](#) process is initiated for programs that need additional analysis for viability.

In accordance with [Iowa code \(258.4\)](#) each [CTE program conducts a comprehensive program review \(CPR\) every five years](#). In 2019, the college included the AA and AS program disciplines; [Math](#), Science, Social Science, Communication, and Humanities in this requirement. The CPR requires the review and analysis of program data such as: [enrollment](#), [completion](#), [program need](#), [persistence](#), [program cost](#), [assessment](#), and [workforce data](#). The data is collected systematically through a process that is both defined and consistent for every program of study using a [Program Review Template](#). Previous program action plans and advisory board input are also reviewed to ensure quality, sustainability, and responsiveness of the program.

Upon completion of the review, the faculty and academic program dean present their findings to the [Program Evaluation Team \(PET\)](#). During this meeting, recommendations to further the growth of the program are discussed and a formal action plan is developed. This valuable step in the process provides a forum to acknowledge improvements in the areas of focus and to collaborate with a cross-functional team to identify goals for the future. Whereas the AKPIR process addresses annual viability data, the CPR process is a celebration of the program strengths and a collaboration to invest in its future.

AKPIR data is [reviewed by the program advisory boards](#) on an annual basis along with CPR and program accreditation reports (when applicable). In addition, all program course guides are shared with the board on a five year rotation to ensure alignment with business and industry. Course changes are then submitted to the Curriculum Committee.

The assessment of student learning outcomes has been added to the second year of the five year program review cycle. In the first year of the cycle, the CPR is completed. In the following year, the program faculty are required to re-review their previous [embedded assessments](#) and rubrics to ensure validity, measurability, and alignment with the intended outcomes. This review step was added to assess and improve upon previous work, ensuring each course provides three unique embedded assessments which are direct, summative, and measurable. Every course will then have four unique

measures (IDEA provides an indirect measure). In addition to this step, all faculty will have training on how to analyze the [PLO and CLO dashboards](#) and the [Course Performance by Delivery Method](#) data studio report in September, 2020. Annual assessment indicators will be added to the AKPIR to ensure the assessment of student learning is an ongoing process and a key factor in determining program changes.

The systematic processes, AKPIR, CPR, advisory review of data, educational plans and course guides, and annual program action plans with follow-up evaluation ensure the college offers an accessible, affordable, quality program to meet workforce and transfer needs. The incorporation of assessment dashboard data into the annual review process will continue to strengthen the program evaluation process.

4A2 *The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.*

NICC is committed to the quality and integrity of the credits that it transcripts. NICC has made a commitment to student learning and assessment and supports the granting of credit for prior learning (CPL) in accordance with the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Standards of Assessment. The Registrar ensures a thorough assessment of each student's formal and informal prior training and experience and awards academic credit for college-level knowledge and skills a student has gained outside of a classroom, including employment/work experience, professional certification, non-credit courses, volunteer and civic activities, travel, and hobbies. The college appoints a qualified staff person to evaluate all military credit.

The [college catalog](#) outlines the specific requirements for the transfer of credit in the following areas;

- [Course transfers](#)
- [High school articulation](#)
- [NICC non-credit to credit transfer](#)
- [CPL business and training entities](#)
- [Nationally recognized proficiency examinations](#)
- [Course examinations designed by NICC faculty](#)
- [Credit for military experience](#)
- [Credit for life \(portfolio skills assessment\)](#)

A summary of this information is found on the admissions web page under ["Ways to earn college transfer credit."](#)

The approval of credit is done in alignment with a variety of responsible third parties. In addition to following the recommended CAEL Standards of Assessment, the college transfers in applicable coursework from accredited colleges and universities and recognizes the following standardized proficiency examinations that include:

- Advanced Placement (AP)
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DDST) or (DANTES)

- Excelsior Examinations
- New York Foreign Language Proficiency (UExcel Exams) or (NYUFLP)

Credit and non-credit program faculty work together to develop pathways between non-credit Career Pathway Certificates and credit. Upon dean verification that all credit course outcomes are met and credit course seat time is met or exceeded in the non-credit offering, the approved offerings are added to the [NICC non-credit to credit transfer matrix](#) that is found on the transfer credit webpage. [Individual skill completions](#) are documented by the faculty member, approved by the academic dean, and forwarded to the Registrar for credit award.

In 2018, a veterans consultant was hired to assist with the development of military to college pathways. Discussion with the Iowa Community College certifying military officials determined many colleges were undertaking this work, but few program pathways had been developed. Over a period of six month members of the academic team (VPLSS, Director of Enrollment and Registration, and CTE deans) worked with the military consultant to review course outcomes, the American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations, the on-file joint service transcripts, and the additional training related to nine army Military Occupational Specialities (MOS). [Educational plans identifying the potential credits for acceptance](#) (based on transcript submission and acceptance) were then developed in four program areas. The work in this area is ongoing.

Students are entering the college with a variety of informal and formal learning. The college is committed to ensuring the quality and rigor of all credits awarded and has developed processes and partnerships to ensure student learning outcomes are met or exceeded for transcribed work.

4A3 *The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.*

The [Credit for Prior Learning](#) policy identifies process and criteria to award credit in the areas listed in 4A2. The [Credit for Life Experience policy](#) identifies the specific criteria for portfolio development and the need for alignment with the NICC course outcomes to award credit. A [Credit for Life Experience Appeal](#) policy affords students the opportunity make portfolio revisions and resubmit for a re-review. There are multiple reviewers of submitted information to ensure alignment with policies:

- faculty assess alignment with course outcomes;
- the program dean reviews materials and must approve;
- the VPLSS approves;
- the Registrar confirms all criteria are met prior to awarding the submitted information for credit award.

The VPLSS addresses any questions throughout the process. Upon awarding of credit, the approved materials are scanned and added to the student's folder.

4A4 *The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to*

its higher education curriculum.

All courses that have a pre-requisite are clearly identified in the [catalog](#) (eg. page 125, *AUT 204*) and on the registration portal. The Curriculum Committee approves all course and program creations, modifications, and deletions. New courses that require a pre-requisite must document the prerequisite on the [course curriculum form](#). Audits are completed to ensure impact has been received from all program areas potentially impacted by course modifications that will result in a pre-requisite change upon approval. Validating the pre-requisite supports the success in the associated program course is essential. The analysis of pre-requisite and course grades and completion rates in the CPR often leads to in-depth cross-disciplinary discussions to ensure sequential competencies. Academic advisors counsel students regarding pre-requisite course requirements, including developmental coursework.

The Curriculum Committee [composition](#) ensures cross-departmental collaboration between program faculty, assessment team members, student service personnel, and academic administrators to discuss the impact of the proposals on the rigor and student learning outcomes. Curriculum requests are required to be presented and [approved by their program advisory boards](#) prior to submission which ensures curriculum that is rigorous and relevant to workforce and transfer needs.

All students, regardless of the location, modality, or instructor, adhere to the same learning outcomes and same course guide for the multiple sections of the same course. Aligned course assessments with a common evaluation tool are reflected in the course syllabus and provide a baseline to compare student learning outcomes. At the start of each semester, faculty submit their syllabi for each course to the dean, who then reviews each syllabus for adherence to the course guide and the [syllabus template](#).

[PLO and CLO dashboards](#), available for every program and for each dual enrollment partner, provide an overview of CLO and PLO outcomes related to proficiency levels. Site dashboards, depicting two years of data are now available for the faculty, advisory committees, and deans to assess the student learning outcome success. Site dashboards provide an in-depth assessment of student learning outcome mastery versus end of course grades, and allow the dean to review the success or failure of students meeting learning outcomes. A process to guide the effective utilization of the dashboards during the AKPIR process is under development, which will include documented program meetings and additional faculty development to address gaps in student performance.

Ensuring the quality and rigor of all courses starts before an offer is extended to a faculty member, through an [evaluation of credentials](#) where every hire is held to the same standard (see 3C2). Upon hire, deans meet individually with every new faculty to discuss expectations and review items on the [orientation checklist](#). All faculty are on-boarded over a three year process (see 3C5) to acculturate them to college expectations and processes, with every effort made to provide virtual access to events in order to accommodate schedules and geography. For example, the monthly Assessment Brown Bag discussions were moved from face-to-face to online Zoom meetings that were recorded and uploaded to the Assessment Google site for later review. Discipline meetings are held on a bi-annual basis for faculty to review data related to student learning, discuss grading, curriculum, classroom concerns, and assessments. Led by a full-time faculty lead, all faculty (full-time, part-time regular, adjunct, and concurrent faculty) are encouraged to attend.

The integrity of the curriculum is also evaluated through classroom observations; all faculty receive regular classroom observation from their supervising dean. The quality of the faculty teaching is

evaluated by the dean utilizing a specific tool for the teaching methodology including face to face, online, or experiential delivery. The faculty evaluation forms were developed by the deans jointly with an inter-rater reliability study utilized to norm the use of the tools as well as to ensure the rigor and quality expectations are mirrored from one discipline, modality, and location to another. All supervising deans have attended on-line training. In addition, dual enrolled faculty receive peer evaluations and site visits from current full-time faculty to help ensure alignment with the college.

The college is committed to ensuring the quality of its dual enrollment offerings. Annual Principal/Counselor meetings are held to ensure understanding of course alignment, rigor, and processes. All faculty are invited to annual discipline-specific faculty development, in partnership with the Area Education Association (AEA). In 2018, the Director of High School Partnerships was promoted to Associate Dean of High School Partnerships to facilitate formal supervision and guidance of dual enrolled faculty. The Associate Dean has the authority and responsibility to observe and evaluate performance of dual enrollment faculty, enforce the [Concurrent Enrollment contract](#) and [Concurrent Enrollment Partnership Handbook](#), and ensure the dual enrollment courses are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to the on-campus curriculum. The handbook also outlines processes in place for the [termination](#) of a faculty member unable to meet the rigor and quality standards of NICC. The same evaluation process, tools, and schedules are applied to dual enrolled faculty. The [VPLSS office maintains a data base](#) to ensure all faculty requirements, transcript submission, on-boarding courses, and evaluations are completed in a timely manner.

In response to the HLC 2016 CQR, the Instructional Innovation and Design department has [progressively implemented processes, guidelines and templates](#) to ensure consistency in online and hybrid teaching content within the LMS. These guidelines and policies are vetted and approved by the LSS team. In 2017, seasoned faculty who had taught and exhibited a high level of competency in the online environment were approached to teach in the Z-degree program. The Z-degree faculty met with IIAD as a team to establish Z-degree best practices and learn about open educational resources "OERs". These discussions assisted in established the foundation of high impact online practices as they were informed by faculty.

Pre-COVID19, the IIAD was in the process of conducting audits for all faculty teaching in the the online environment to ensure consistency in LMS course layout and processes. As issues were noted such as limited course content or posted policies not in alignment with policy, the IIAD Dean worked with the supervising faculty dean for resolution. These audits were suspended in spring 2019 when all courses were moved online due to COVID19 to assist the new online faculty in moving course content to the LMS. The "Online and Blended Learning" department was changed to IIAD in the spring, 2019, in recognition of the need for all faculty to utilize the LMS for courses regardless of the method of delivery. COVID19 provided the unanticipated benefit of engaging all faculty into the functionality of the LMS.

All teaching faculty, regardless of classification, location of course delivery, or methodology of course delivery, are held to the same standards for hiring, on-boarding, evaluation, and faculty development. Faculty development opportunities are available for all faculty with recorded sessions available through the college professional development site. Discipline specific meetings have strengthened continuity in course delivery, expectations, and assessments. Data dashboards provide greater in-depth assessment of PLO and CLO outcomes related to established proficiency timelines. The incorporation of dashboard analysis into the AKPIR process, with guidelines to ensure critical review, will continue to validate that all courses, including dual credit, are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement.

4A5 *The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.*

A variety of [programs are required](#) to meet state, organization or accreditation standards in order to be offered by the college. The Automotive Technology, Practical Nursing, and Associate Degree Nursing programs are recognized as meeting the standards for [voluntary accreditation](#) of the listed organizations. In addition to maintaining HLC accreditation and IDOE accreditation for its programs, the concurrent enrollment program is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP).

The following programs require accreditation approval to be offered:

- Dental Assisting
- Health Information Technology
- Large Animal Veterinary Technician
- Medical Assistant
- Nursing Associate Degree
- Nursing Practical
- Paramedic
- Radiologic Technology
- Respiratory Care

The following programs are required to meet state or association standards in order to be offered:

- Cosmetology (State of Iowa)
- Early Childhood (National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards for Initial Early Childhood Professional Preparation
- Industrial Electrician (qualifies for Iowa and Minnesota apprenticeship programs)

Voluntary accreditation, considered a hallmark of excellence, is maintained in the following programs:

- Automotive Technology
- Nursing Associate Degree
- Nursing Practical

4A6 *The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.*

All graduates receive a [six-month post-graduation survey](#) to identify employment status, pay scale information, or continuing education status, and to obtain feedback related to attainment of the four CLOs. 98% of survey respondents who graduated in 2018 reported that they had achieved their educational objective, and 95% agreed or strongly agreed that they had developed the ability to think critically and to apply knowledge and skills to life. The [summarized graduate survey results](#) for specific indicators are shared with the following committees:

- Program Advisory
- Student Enrollment Management

- Retention
- 4 CLO subcommittees
- LSS team

Graduate survey data informs college processes and initiatives. For example, student employment wage data is compared to the community college state wage outcome data published in the [IDOE Education Outcomes report](#) to determine college alignment with median wage data by program and degree level. This helps inform program and advisory discussions and ensures wage information is correct on program web pages.

Graduate board pass-rates are evaluated annually for all programs that require a state or national examination to enter into the workforce. Although an indirect measure, board pass rates, directly influence the ongoing analysis of curriculum and direct assessment measures in a program. For example; The 2016 HIT board pass rate was 63%, which was below the national allowable threshold of 69%. Upon analysis, the faculty and dean identified that those at risk for failure were the students who completed the HIT program over a prolonged length of time (6 - 8 years). In 2017, a recommendation requiring students to complete the HIT core courses in three years was made and approved by the advisory board. Since implementation of this policy, national board exam scores have remained above the required accreditation threshold. In 2019, NICC's program completers national board pass rate was 83%, a 20% increase since full implementation of this new policy.

[Employer surveys](#) are sent to students to employed graduates who then forward to their manager to complete and return. [Collated employer survey information](#) is shared at the faculty, dean and advisory level. The dean follows up directly with identified employer concerns.

The enrollment services teams evaluates the following data elements according to the established benchmarks on the graduate survey:

Question - "The majority of graduates will report receiving clear and concise communications"

Benchmark - 80 - 90%

Results - FA18 - 73%; SP19 - 74%; SU19 -76%

Action - Continue to analyze the customer services experience and preferred modes of communication for students."

Question - "Graduates are satisfied with their NICC experience."

Benchmark - 90%

Results - Satisfaction Rates FA18 - 89%; SP19 - 92%; SU19 -87%

Action - Continue to analyze the comprehensive student experience.

NICC strives to provide quality education for all students through the systematic processes that include: credit for prior learning, alignment of dual credit courses and program reviews (annual, comprehensive and accreditation). Graduate surveys are used to inform program initiatives and validate a graduate's entry into the workforce or pursuit of further education.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Argument

4B1 *The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and co-curricular offerings.*

NICC's [Comprehensive Assessment Plan](#) provides a clear and detailed description of the process for effective assessment of the common (institution), program, and the course learning outcomes. The plan is put into action through the [Assessment Handbook](#) which provides detailed expectations and process for specific assessment efforts. The following processes evidence faculty and student understanding of the CLO, ELO, and PLO student learning outcomes:

- Every course has a Course Guide that identifies the [primary common learning outcome](#) (6.2) and the [educational learning outcomes](#) (ELO) common to every section of that course (8.0).
- Every [syllabus](#) identifies the *primary* CLO in "course information," with *all* CLO supported in the class are evidenced in the "calendar."
- The [Course Guide and the syllabus](#) is uploaded to the LMS in every class for ease of student access.
- Every program of study has [program learning outcomes](#) (PLO) and a curriculum map ([Curriculum Map examples](#)) unique to that credential.

Faculty members conduct multiple assessments to measure learning *directly and indirectly* in their courses. Through collaborative processes (see 3A1, 3A2), faculty who teach the same course are expected to adopt aligned [direct and summative](#) course assessments. All CLO (institutional goals) are measured using a common rubric ([CLO rubrics 1-4](#)). The IDEA survey serves as the indirect assessment for all courses. The aligned four assessments - direct, summative, CLO, and indirect - provide benchmark data that informs student achievement, regardless of course location or delivery method. The direct assessment processes are *embedded* into the Brightspace (LMS) course content. As online courses are entered into the LMS or existing courses updated, the Instructional Innovation and Design team utilizes a [Course Alignment Plan](#) to ensure that course content is in alignment with the course guide, outcomes, and college policies and standards. This process will then start for all courses in fall, 2020.

[Program maps](#) depict the relationship between the PLO and the graduated levels of thinking (Bloom's taxonomy) in the sequential arrangement of courses within the educational plan. In addition, the maps demonstrate the integration of CLO and work-based learning into the program. Although co-

curricular activities may be included on the program map, they are typically evidenced in the course syllabus.

Co-curricular activities tend to be in the internal or external NICC community largely due to the fact the college offers limited organized sports. Co-curricular assessment is conducted in [five co-curricular areas](#). All co-curricular activities have [unique outcomes, assessment measures/methods \(data source\), success thresholds, analysis of the data collected, and action being taken on the analysis](#).

Tentative [levels of proficiency](#) were set and coded into the LMS for all courses in fall 2017, with beginning assessment dashboards created. In fall 2020, two years of assessment data depicting student PLO and CLO attainment according to identified proficiency levels is available for review. Processes to assist with data analysis are under development.

An in-depth explanation of the activities and timeline to establish the processes above are included in the [Interim Monitoring Report \(6/27/18\)](#). The college has made multiple investments to ensure that student learning outcomes are identified, mapped, and assessed, which includes the creation of multiple positions to lead and work on assessment (Associate Vice President of Learning and Student Success, Brightspace Programmer, faculty assessment team members), and we have purchased the Brightspace "Learning Outcome Assessment" add on for the LMS. Responsibilities include embedding and programming assessment into the LMS, preparing and presenting annual assessment dashboards, developing and maintaining an internal (and centralized) website that houses all assessment efforts, and maintaining communication and education of faculty on assessment.

Since the 2016 HLC visit, the college has implemented a [comprehensive assessment plan](#). These efforts established the foundational processes to ensure a common understanding of assessment, the seamless identification of CLO, ELO, and PLO, the integration of student learning outcomes into program maps, and enhanced disciplinary and cross-disciplinary engagement in student learning. The growth in these areas is a testament to a shift in the college assessment culture.

4B2 *The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.*

PLO and CLO data dashboards (direct measures) - In response to the 2016 HLC CQR, program and course faculty worked to create common embedded assessments and rubrics to evaluate student learning. Rubrics are used to assess the level of proficiency a student attained on an embedded assessment. Student achievement data is aggregated through the LMS and fed into the data dashboards. Annual assessment dashboards depict the course proficiency of direct, summative, and indirect measures of same course offerings as compared to the institutional level. For example, the 2017-18 [Site Dashboard for Cascade High School](#), provides retrospective, dis-aggregated data for the proficiency level for each assessment area as compared to the institutional proficiency level. This data was reviewed by the academic team (2019) to primarily inform data collection and dashboard transparency processes. Two year PLO and CLO (direct) assessment dashboards are available now available (fall 2020).

The PLO and CLO data dashboards are utilized by the four CLO teams who assess college and program CLO attainment. In addition, advisory members provide feedback regarding program effectiveness in CLO attainment through an [annual survey](#). In October 2018, a [faculty summit](#) was held to re-review the CLOs and performance indicators. Through [affinity mapping](#) it was determined

the CLO definitions and rubrics continued to be relevant.

Every section of every class *indirectly* assesses students using a "student rating of instruction" survey. NICC offers these surveys electronically and anonymously to every student: for 16 week classes the survey is open during the last two weeks of the term and all classes in shorter terms are surveyed during the last week of the term. [Every student in every](#) class is given the opportunity to provide feedback; [831 sections were surveyed spring 2019](#), on their perception of personal growth in common learning outcomes, effectiveness of teaching methods, and the learning environment of the class. Results generate both individual and institutional reports allowing for comparison within the college as well as externally to hundreds of other institutions. Mean [NICC scores exceed those of the IDEA database in Spring 2019](#). Faculty participation in IDEA is mandatory and noted on every [syllabus](#), and part of the syllabus template required for every class. In the same section, students are told that they are *expected* to participate as well. The [faculty](#) and [dean](#) receive summary reports each semester for review. IDEA reports are not used for formal faculty evaluation. Rather, they guide performance evaluation discussions. The [IDEA response](#) rate is an annual AKPIR indicator; response rates below 50% require an action plan.

Additional evidence to support the use of assessment information to improve student learning includes:

- The [Course Performance by Delivery Method](#) data studio illustrates course performance by delivery method and faculty was created this past year. Highly confidential, this dashboard allows viewers to analyze individual student and faculty data related to all teaching methods. Annual course performance data by teaching methodology is reviewed by the LSS team, the Student Enrollment Management Committee, and the Retention Committee. For example, the FY19 AY data showed 92.8% of concurrent students passed their enrolled course (C- or above) as compared to 78.8% passing rate for all enrolled students. In addition, 71.5% of the concurrent students were enrolled in a face-to-face course as compared to 67.2% of all students in the college were enrolled in a face-to-face course. This finding supports continued success of concurrent students throughout the spring 2020 COVID-19 transition to online learning mid-semester.
- Deans review the studio data to identify gaps in student success rates among individual faculty members teaching the same course. For example, the pass rate for all students taking the face-to-face BIO:168 class with four full-time faculty members indicated 50%, 51.2%, 59.2%, 59.3% respectfully. This assisted the dean in guiding the science discussions toward reviewing direct assessments, ensuring aligned rubric application, course pre-requisites and high impact class engagement practices.

To ensure data is informing actions, assessment is a formal part of the annual AKPIR. In November 2020, processes for the evaluation and the application of the PLO and CLO dashboards will be integrated into the AKPIR, to ensure faculty review these dashboards annually and establish action plans to continually enhance student learning outcomes. The assessment of student learning is embedded in the five-year CPR. [During year one of the cycle](#), all elements of assessment are reviewed and, where warranted, revised. Year one identifies the actions a program takes based on the data attained in the previous five year period. It also requires that each program update all assessment tools (course Blooms levels, PLO, curriculum maps, embedded assessments). At the completion of the five year comprehensive program review, faculty complete an action plan for their program on areas they and the review team have identified as needing improvement. Through the process of program review, aggregate assessment data is reviewed and shared with advisory boards to

determine if students are achieving the desired learning outcomes through the program curriculum. Action plans are developed, and upon implementation, the assessment loop is closed until the next AKPIR cycle.

Co-curricular areas use data to improve efforts. For example, the Learning Center found the use of [a nursing tutor substantially increased the learning for at-risk students](#). As a result, the Learning Center has taken action (*pg. 10*) to increase student access to tutors and is working with the nursing faculty to refer at-risk students to tutors. Results of this analysis were shared in a [faculty professional offering](#) and at a [statewide conference](#) with external peers.

The college has made progress in the evaluation of student learning. The availability of direct measure (PLO and CLO) dashboards, has enhanced the data available for review. Faculty training in fall 2020 will enhance the value of this information. Integration of the dashboards into the AKPIR will ensure the annual review of these direct measures. The Course Performance by Delivery Method data studio provides a wealth of data related to each student, faculty member, course method, and location. The academic team is in the process of determining the best way to share this with faculty to ensure the conversation remains centered on student learning versus faculty differences.

4B3 *The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional, and other relevant staff members.* [Faculty leads](#) are assigned to each course and facilitate discipline-specific and/or course-specific discussions which include: course placement, assessments and rubrics, grade norming, curriculum and textbooks. Formal group meetings are held bi-annually with informal collaboration on an as needed basis. [Discipline-specific meetings](#) often lead to cross-disciplinary and course discussions. For example, course SDV: The College Experience, had identified *Apply Knowledge and Skills to Life*, as the primary CLO for the course. A variety of questions arose through the discipline meetings questioning why the CLO Value Self and Others was not the identified CLO. The [LSS team then met with the course faculty](#) and upon reviewing the ELO determined the CLO was correct. A second example is the math faculty meeting working directly with the CTE faculty to integrate cross-disciplinary assessments in the Technical Math course to enhance student learning outcomes.

Faculty and staff in co-curricular areas (Learning Center, Library, Student Life, Disability Services, Enrollment Services, and Career Services) received initial training on co-curricular assessment. Each area then identified two [student learning goals](#) for annual evaluation. This process strengthened the collaboration between faculty and staff in the mission to ensure student learning. CLO committees have representation from across the college. In addition, [staff advisors serve on the program advisory committees](#) in their respective areas. The college community has embraced collaborative partnerships to ensure student learning outcomes are achieved. To further this work, a co-curricular team will attend the upcoming HLC online training and then share the lessons learned with the college community.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

4C1 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.

The College maintains a college-wide [Retention Committee](#) whose membership consists of representatives from faculty and staff across the district. The committee meets monthly during the Fall and Spring semesters. The role of the Retention Committee is to analyze retention, persistence, and completion trends for the College.

The following retention goals (using IPEDs definitions) have been identified by the Retention Committee:

- 60% retention or completion from Fall to Fall.
- Graduation rate of 40%.
- High school yield rate of 18%.

At the time of 2016 HLC visit, the college retention goal was 70% (12% from the reported rate). The goal was readjusted to be ambitious but attainable, as the number of part-time, non-degree seeking students continued to rise. Various strategies have been implemented to increase student awareness of the benefits of degree completion: intrusive advising, degree audit, concurrent transcript audits with follow-up student/parent degree information, reverse transfer options, and web page degree earnings. Several resource materials were developed to outline ways to assist with student success, one for new faculty and one for new students. The student piece describes top tips for students to be successful. The other item, designed for [faculty](#), outlines ways they can facilitate student engagement in the classroom. Faculty are given their resource at the New Faculty Orientation and students at their New Student Orientation. The student success [tips](#) are also a resource within the Brightspace Orientation that was developed in 2018.

Annual retention and completion rates are reviewed by the Strategic Enrollment Management committee as well as the Retention Committee, faculty, staff, academic deans, and the VPLSS. Specific retention and completion trends are also shared with the College community in a variety of ways: [Friday Takeout](#); on a shared Google Drive under Institutional Research; and in [The Blue Book](#) publication.

4C2 The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.

A [five year trend](#) of retention and graduation is maintained for fall entering cohorts, both new and transfer-in students. The report indicates fairly consistent percentages over the last five year period in first-term, fall to spring, and fall to fall retention. The report also shows a significant (4%) increase in the 3-year graduation rate for all students over the last five years and an even larger increase in the full-time degree-seeking population.

At the program level, the [Annual Key Program Indicator report](#) shares enrollment counts by program as well as retention and wage outlook. These reports are closely reviewed by faculty and academic deans annually and during five-year program evaluations to guide decisions for the future.

The [high school yield report](#) shows the percentage of high school seniors who enroll at NICC directly from high school as being 13.2, compared to the previous year of 12.2. Where students participate in our high school Career Learning Link (CLL) program, results are much higher (18.4%) which attests to the success of this enhanced student engagement program and partnership with high schools. The highest yield rate of students enrolling directly from high school was in 2013 at 16.4%.

Recently, the College developed a Data Task Force which is further analyzing disaggregated student enrollment and retention data. The [Fall to Spring Data Studio](#), which compares data over a three-year period (Fall 2017 through Fall 2019) resulted in the identification of two targeted at-risk student groups to focus retention efforts on for the upcoming Fall 2020 semester: new Associate of Arts (AA) students enrolled in 100% online courses; and new Pre-Nursing students (those working on admission prerequisite requirements) who are enrolled in less than full-time credits. This data studio is also being used to help guide enrollment projections and forecasting for future Spring semesters, by determining the number of new versus continuing students who enroll into the Spring semester following Fall.

4C3 The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

Several measures of student performance are generated by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR). Student retention and graduation rate measures for fall first-time entering cohorts are published in the [five-year retention and graduation report](#). A more detailed breakout of fall-to-fall retention by key indicators is published in the [disaggregated](#) retention report. In addition to the static reports, the OIR has developed interactive "Data Studios" that enable additional customized analysis and investigation of performance outcomes at the course and program level with disaggregation by course delivery method. A wealth of data is available in the form of dashboards and interactive Google Data Studios. The [Retention/Completion Studio](#) provides the 4-year graduation rate by first term demographic and academic indicators, while the [Program Review](#) Studio provides course success by course, program, delivery method, and more.

The OIR submits data annually for participation in the national Voluntary Framework for Accountability Survey(VFA), which generates [two](#) and [six](#)-year outcomes for distinct fall entering cohorts. The VFA [six year progress summary](#) for students who enroll in developmental level courses gives a critical, upper-level view at the status and progress of students in the developmental pipeline.

Extensive tables providing [education outcomes](#) for graduates within the past five years are generated by the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) from data submitted by OIR combined with Iowa Workforce data. These tables contain continuing education, employment, and wage outcomes sorted by several key indicators including program, degree level, industry cluster, and more. The link contains examples of the tables provided for graduates in 2017. An interactive data site is maintained by IDOE and is accessible to all employees. [Examples](#) of available data include summary indicators for all graduates as well as 5-year wage growth by program. Information sourced from these tables informs and influences the college's actions to increase retention, persistence, and program completion.

The Retention Committee utilizes the available data in a variety of ways. For example, the consistent lag in retention rates for entering students who completed less than 50% of their first term credits led to a more in-depth review of student course records, revealing that the completion of even a single course in a student's first term has a significant positive impact on retention and graduation rates. This discovery led to the "Care Calls Initiative", an effort to contact each and every new student by phone early in the term to reinforce knowledge of support services and to assist with other questions or needs.

In addition, the data sources are used to search for correlations, monitor outcomes, and learn from experience. For example, "Z-Degree" course offerings, which use open education resources to eliminate the cost of textbooks, were developed and launched by the department of Online and Blended Learning (OBL). The development and launch of "Z-degree" courses was based, in part, on student responses to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), where finances were reported as the most likely factor that could cause a student to withdraw. The Z-Course interactive site allows one to compare course success rates by course, faculty, concurrent status, advisor, and more. The OBL staff use the interactive site to measure the effectiveness of the Z-Degree course offerings by comparing course success rates with other delivery modalities.

Because the College and the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) and Retention Committees recognize that improvements can always be made with retention and completion rates, a number of student success [strategies](#) have been implemented over recent academic years.

In addition, beginning summer of 2020, a statewide Student Success/Retention work-alike group from the Iowa Community Colleges and the Department of Education formed to network and share and discuss best practices and initiatives being used across the state. NICC is represented by the Director of Registration and Retention. Group members agreed to meet on a quarterly basis and established a Google-drive folder for [shared resources](#).

4C4 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.)

NICC utilizes the IPEDS definitions to measure student retention, persistence and completion of programs. In 2016, the college joined the [Voluntary Framework of Accountability](#) to gain two year disaggregated outcome measures for the following areas:

- [Developmental Math need and progress](#)
- [Developmental English need and progress](#)
- [Two year Outcomes/Progress by Race/Ethnic](#)

Sources

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

NICC comprehensively monitors the quality of its educational programs and services. There are regular program reviews, clear policies on transcription of credits, and focused scrutiny of course rigor, of learning resources, and of faculty qualifications. The college offers specialized accreditation for appropriate programs and continuously evaluates the success of graduates.

The College has effective processes for assessment of student learning. Educational programs are assessed annually and reviewed every five years. Faculty have oversight of curriculum and are the primary assessors of student learning. The College's commitment to educational improvement is evidenced by its proactive work in retention, persistence, and completion.

At the time of the last visit, assessment of student learning lacked a cohesive, consistent and comprehensive approach. At present, there are learning outcomes established for every course, program, and the institution (general education). Learning outcomes are presented transparently on every syllabus and course guide for students to see and acknowledge. Every section of every class is expected to participate in evaluating common embedded assessments in every course which are seamlessly integrated into the learning management system. Direct and indirect assessment provides insight into the progress students make toward achieving proficiency in the established learning outcomes. A centralized assessment website allows access to all materials related to the assessment work, data, and related professional development. In the four years since the last visit, all of this has been developed and successfully implemented.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Argument

5A1. *Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—through planning, policies, and procedures.*

NICC relies on shared governance to engage internal constituencies in planning, policies, and procedures that guide and govern college operations, services, and programs. Some examples reflecting the breadth of shared governance at the institution include:

- **College Senate:** Comprised of [15 members representing faculty, support staff, professional non-bargaining staff, and students](#) from across the college's district, the mission of the Senate is to "promote open communication and to facilitate the participation of all members of the college community in a collaborative process for governance of the institution to achieve the college vision and mission." Demonstrations of shared governance include [Senate participation in a college-wide committee](#) to assist with planning activities following an extension of a \$39,000,000 bond levy in September 2018, and providing input for the NICC Employee Handbook at the [October 2019](#) and [November 2019](#) meetings. The Senate chair serves on the President's Cabinet, providing cross-governance representation.
 - [Collective Bargaining Agreement between Northeast Iowa Community College and the Northeast Iowa Community College Higher Education Association \(2020-2025\)](#)
 - [Collective Bargaining Agreement between Northeast Iowa Community College and the Northeast Iowa Community College Staff Support Association \(2020-2025\)](#)
- **Labor Management Teams:** The Northeast Iowa Community College Higher Education

Association (HEA) Labor Management Team (LMT) was created to bring representatives of the HEA and the college administration together to address and discuss policy and procedural issues on behalf of the faculty. The HEA LMT consists of faculty from each end of the district and from each division (CTE, Arts & Sciences), the VPLSS, the Vice President "VP" of Finance and Administration, the Executive Director of Human Resources, and the Associate Director of Human Resources. The LMT meets monthly throughout the academic year and works to resolve non-contract related issues. Discussions connected to contract level issues are moved noted for collective bargaining. [Ground rules](#) are established, reviewed, and agreed upon at the outset of each academic year.

The Northeast Iowa Community College Support Staff Association (SSA) LMT was created to provide a venue to address and discuss employment issues on behalf of the hourly employees.

The SSA LMT is represented by a district wide group of full time and part time support staff employees, including maintenance, custodial, and administrative support. The college administration is represented by the Vice President of Finance and Administration, the Executive Director of Human Resources, the Associate Director of Human Resources and the Associate Vice President of Operations (AVPO). The SSA LMT meets monthly throughout the year. [Ground rules](#) are established, reviewed, and agreed upon at the outset of each academic year.

Pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 20, there are two collective bargaining units defined at NICC: the NICC Higher Education Association and the NICC Support Staff Association. As the contracts dictate, and as bargaining sessions are scheduled, the Interest Bases Bargaining teams are confirmed and preparation for bargaining begins as appropriate. The [HEA](#) and [SSA](#) ground rules evidence the college's commitment to conduct interest-based bargaining.

- [Premium Equivalent Committee](#): The Premium Equivalent Committee (PEC) was created to gain feedback and recommendations for benefits offered through the college. The committee meets 4-6 times during the academic year, as necessary and is comprised of faculty, support staff, professional non-bargaining staff, and college leadership. Representatives from the college's benefits provider, Group Benefit Partners, present data and analysis on the progress of the college's insurance programs.
- **Sustainability Committee**: The Sustainability Committee, comprised of support staff, professional non-bargaining staff, and faculty is [charged](#) with identifying and assessing opportunities to promote resource conservation and waste and energy reduction. While it has been challenging to rely on consistent student commitment to serve on the committee, students are engaged on an ad hoc basis, such as performing [lightbulb audits](#) that have been used by the AVPO to establish the conversion to LED light bulbs and ongoing installation of vacancy and occupancy sensors. In spring 2019, the committee drafted a [new five-year Sustainability Plan](#) and shared it with other governing bodies for their input, including the [College Senate](#) and [Cabinet](#).

5A2 *The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.*

Administration at the college uses data to reach informed decisions for the best interests of the institution and its constituents. Below are examples from different areas of the college that

demonstrate data-informed decision making.

- In Human Resources, data is used to ensure good decisions are made for effective recruitment and retention practices. In 2018, NICC signed a contract with PayFactors, a cloud-based compensation management software that provides [relevant and timely wage and salary information](#). Data from the system is used in setting [wage and salary guidelines](#). Additional compensation data is acquired from public sources and surveys. Likewise, benefit survey data has been used to determine the benefits most likely to help recruit and retain employees, while remaining affordable.
- In the Computer Information Systems (CIS) department, data was used to select and replace an outdated telecommunications system. By understanding [current trends](#) in the field and our [internal issues and opportunities](#) the CIS team was able to identify [requirements for a new system](#), including improved dialing, directory, routing, transferring, voicemail functionality, robust reporting, and mobility options for phones. Once the issues, opportunities, and requirements were identified, the CIS staff was able to [analyze a variety of telecommunication platforms](#) and select one that met the college's needs. The value of using data to reach an informed decision was realized when the campuses and service locations closed as a result of COVID-19 health and safety concerns. The previous system was not designed for remote work, and all work would have needed to be completed using voicemail systems and personal phones. As a result of the new phone system, all incoming calls from students and external constituents, as well as among staff, came in seamlessly and were managed using web-based applications, which would have been impossible with the previous system.
- Iowa's community colleges have partnered with the Iowa Department of Education to use the [Voluntary Framework for Accountability](#) (VFA), as a measure of community college effectiveness. The VFA data provides internal, inter-college, and state-wide comparisons and benchmarks in three categories: credit Student Progress and Outcomes; credit and noncredit CTE, and Adult Basic Education. For example, after a review of VFA data, a pilot study incorporating one credit hour of developmental education into the 3 credit ENG 105: Composition I course was initiated in fall 2016. This model was developed to mainstream students into college level coursework with additional supports designed to meet course requirements and program interests. Students not receiving an ACT score of 19 or an Accuplacer Writeplacer score of 6 on admission testing were strongly encouraged to enroll in this extended course. The students in the 3+1 pilot group had a [higher course grade average and course completion rate](#) than the traditional ENG:105 students and the national average challenging the notion that a pre-admission score is more important than persistence and engagement in the classroom.
- In another example, voters in the college's district approved the continuation of a public bond in September 2018, of which a significant portion was committed to renovations of the main building on the Peosta campus, which houses classrooms, labs, meeting rooms, student and retail service areas, and office spaces. The architects and administration gathered two years of room utilization reports ([e.g. fall 2018 quantitative, fall 2019 quantitative, room size documentation](#)) and captured staff and [faculty](#) needs and preferences to reflect current trends in instruction and work environments. As a result, [design plans](#) include many classrooms and meeting spaces that are adaptable by instruction, technology, and group size, making us better able to meet the needs of internal and external constituents.

5A3 *The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective collaborative structures.*

In accordance with legislation passed in 2002 and Iowa Code 260C.36, the college appoints a [Quality Faculty Plan Committee](#) (QFP) for the purpose of developing and administering a plan to hire and develop quality faculty. The QFP [committee must have equal representatives of arts and sciences and career and technical faculty from each campus with no more than a simple majority of members of the same gender](#). All faculty representatives must be appointed or approved by the Northeast Iowa Community College Higher Education Association (NICC-HEA). A faculty chair and co-chair (representing CTE and Arts and Sciences) alternate yearly according to a schedule established by the Iowa Department of Education.

[Three subcommittees](#) exist within the QFP committee:

1. The [Onboarding](#) sub-committee facilitates a two-part faculty orientation process, including a general orientation to the college and a targeted orientation with the academic department Dean or designee. The onboarding sub-committee also oversees the [faculty mentoring process](#).
2. The [Professional Development](#) sub-committee facilitates the creation and offering of professional development opportunities. Upon review of resources and feedback, the subcommittee provides an annual professional development agenda.
3. The [Compliance](#) sub-committee ensures that the Quality Faculty Plan provides a mechanism for faculty to meet federal, state, and external agency credentialing requirements.

In 2018, the Iowa legislature passed a bill which changed bargaining parameters. In response, the college bargaining included only the [mandatory bargaining topics as identified by the HEA](#), with permissive contract language moved to the [Employee Handbook](#) or [Faculty Guide](#). In the fall of 2019, a new employee handbook was drafted and shared by the Human Resources office. The college provided a [feedback form](#) to collect questions and comments from the SSA LMT and HEA LMT, College Senate, the supervisor group, and Cabinet. [Suggestions](#) were reviewed and incorporated as appropriate. The new handbook was made available to the college in February, 2020. At the same time, the LMT provided recommendations for the Faculty Handbook. These recommendations were incorporated, with the handbook renamed a "guide" to avoid confusion and placed on the [college website](#) for easier accessibility.

The [LSS team](#), composed of the LSS, academic deans, the Dean of Student Development, Director of Registration and Retention, and the Registrar, meet weekly to ensure academic processes are efficient. A key function of this team is to establish academic policies and procedures. The diverse representation of the LSS team ensures feedback from key academic areas and provides avenues for direct feedback from the faculty, advisors, and staff. For example, an LSS discussion topic was the potential need for a common grading scale to increase the validity of student learning outcome assessment in same courses. A review of the Iowa community colleges and the district high schools determined no institution utilized a common grading scale. The faculty were then engaged in the discussion with a survey sent out. The [survey results](#) did not support the faculty belief that a common grading scale ensured learning outcome uniformity. Rather, the faculty identified the importance of rubrics outlining the benchmarks for completion. Therefore, the college did not move to a common grading scale.

[College Senate](#), representing all areas of the college and including students from each campus, provides feedback on broad academic processes. For example, the feedback from College Senate was

key to initiating the 2018 bi-weekly open hour across the district.

All Advisory Committees include advisors, high school representatives, faculty, and students on their [roster](#) to ensure representative program policy and procedure decisions.

The QFP, College Senate, program Advisory Committees and the LSS team are formal committees utilized to establish academic requirements, policies, and processes. The committees and group team members ensure representative from the faculty, staff, and students.

Sources

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Argument

5B1 Northeast Iowa Community College has qualified and trained operation staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

NICC Operations maintains a network of campuses and centers, systems and processes, and equipment and users spanning the district. This network includes campuses at Calmar and Peosta, and centers at Cresco, Dubuque, New Hampton, Manchester, Oelwein and Waukon. [Operations](#) is led by the Associate Vice President of Operations (AVPO), who is a member of cabinet. The AVPO oversees all functions related to infrastructure, maintenance and custodial, and auxiliary services such as the child care centers, college bookstore, and the campus cafeterias in Calmar and Peosta. Operations staff job descriptions identify the specific skill sets required for each position. The Operations team partners with human resources, administrative and computer information systems and staff to ensure an efficient, productive, and safe learning environment across the district. As staff are hired, they engage in a half-day [NICC Staff 101 - Orientation Workshop](#), on the job training with a supervisor and team members, as well as training through the [SafeColleges](#) online training system. Employee skill development is also provided through monthly staff development training conducted over zoom and taped and archived in the college [professional development site](#). Training has been conducted on a variety of topics such as; Micolab, Google, and professional emails.

In spring 2020, the college moved to a district wide phone system to provide a one number connection to the college. Ring Groups composed of district wide staff within select divisions of the college receive and route incoming calls enhancing [customer service](#). The system has added functionality features such as the ability to log in remotely and answer calls on the device being used and data collection regarding call volume and on call time which improve staff access and workload balance. A phone implementation team was established for set up, training, and evaluation of the system. Training was implemented district wide and continues as new employees join the college. Evaluations of the system are done every six months with ongoing reporting, analysis, and trouble shooting.

NICC employs an 11 member [Computer Information Systems Department](#) (CIS) who are qualified in managing and maintaining all technology related systems across the institution. Three staff members are available to respond to questions or requests regarding any NICC-owned technology from any NICC student or employee. In addition, the NICC Helpdesk is available to provide assistance via

phone call, chat message, email, and through an on-call phone message for after-hours support. Through 2019, the Helpdesk received 12,913 requests - 8,557 by phone, 671 by chat (started in September), 3,632 by email.

NICC technology infrastructure is a key component to supporting the users of our network. The college has made a significant investment in the amount of Internet bandwidth available to our users to improve access. The three main campuses have a 1 Gigabit circuit (3 Gigabits total) supplied by the Iowa Communications Network for internet use, which is currently sufficient for program needs. Employees are able to securely connect through a virtual desktop through the Internet allowing them the ability to work from any location provided they have web access. This has been especially helpful in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

Employing qualified, trained operations staff is essential to the efficiency of college operations. Processes are in place to ensure staff are well-prepared for their responsibilities. Solid infrastructure facilitates better instruction, improves student outcomes, and student persistence. The [bond levy projects](#) will continue to improve infrastructure, enhance security, update technology, and create innovative and collaborative learning spaces.

5B2 The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.

NICC's overall mission is to provide in-demand education and training focused on improving lives, driving business success, and advancing community vitality. In order to be responsive and a premier source for in-demand education and workforce training, [strategic goals and priorities](#) were established in four areas; our people, our organization, our finances, and our consumers. The [Senior Leadership Team "SLT"](#), all college Cabinet members, provides input and support meet the college mission and strategic priorities. The STL is responsible for the creation and evaluation of the strategic plan; [evaluating the progress of each goal on a quarterly basis](#). The goals and priorities are reviewed annually and as needed related to unforeseen events such as COVID-19 to ensure they remain relevant and realistic. Key priority initiatives are discussed below.

Our People

The strength of an organization is found in the talent and attributes of its members. To continue to move the college forward, it is essential to build a strong, collaborative team that is creative, forward thinking, solution-oriented, and respectful of the individuality and diversity of its members. In 2018, a Director of Organizational Development was appointed to initiate training for staff, faculty, and students within the organization. For example, staff members in good professional standing may elect to participate in the [NICC Staff 102 - Leadership Certificate Program and NICC Staff 103 - Leadership Capstone Program](#). These year-long professional development trajectories are offered by invitation only to college employees who personify the NICC Mission Statement, exemplify its core values and are professionally situated so as to significantly contribute to the accomplishment of both short- and long-range organizational goals.

Our Consumer

The ability to offer high quality, innovative, affordable, and responsive programming is essential to meet workforce and transfer needs of our students. Through a state-wide community college grant,

NICC is working to identify engaging initiatives that focus on providing opportunities to students from low-income families, students of color, and students who are first in their families to go to college. The [Guided Pathway](#) initiative involves a systematic redesign of the student experience from initial connection with NICC. Essential to the framework of this model are changes to program structure to provide designed part-time enrollment, new practices, and assessments for student intake along with support services and enhanced instructional methods. This model simplifies the student decision-making and allows NICC to provide predictable schedules so students complete programs more efficiently. In conjunction with faculty and advisors, [career/program pathways](#) have been enhanced to clearly identify career paths, aid in program selection, and build an academic plan with milestones for completion. NICC has completed the first year of our two-year Guided Pathway grant and can report [success in a variety of areas](#).

Our Organization

The college strives to foster an environment that's collaborative, resilient, and nimble. The [\\$39 million bond levy support](#) will provide the resources necessary to fund the implementation of the master facilities plan and expansion of technology infrastructure which are two of NICC's strategies to accomplish the goal of "Organization." The [Master Facilities Plan](#) addresses deferred maintenance issues and capital renewal needs including the renovation of the Peosta main campus, Max Clark Hall, Town Clock Center, and Dubuque Center. Three noteworthy technological expansions funded by the bond levy are the district wide phone system, additional servers, and an upgraded wireless network.

Our Finances

Success of the strategic plan is reliant on effective budgeting and planning. The finance goal is "to formulate financial strategies that are resilient to market and economic tensions." As described in 5B3, the college has adopted a two-year budgeting process which, in addition to the SLT, involves budget managers from multiple college departments. Budget managers have engaged this process, reviewing their budgets, requesting and justifying proposed increases along with providing budget decreases. The SLT was formed to focus strictly on operations. Position requests are vetted through this team in order to control the largest portion of our budget, payroll costs, and ensure they remain in line with revenues. The college continues to look for ways to diversify its revenues including strengthening its partnerships with K-12 school districts and private colleges.

5B3 Northeast Iowa Community College has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and monitoring its finances.

The college adopted a two-year [budgeting process](#) that provides for a future year budget and a second year budget forecast. Budget managers are assigned to provide budget input for their respective departments. Budget development timelines are created for both [budget managers](#) and [Cabinet](#). Budget managers work with their respective Vice President in July and August to develop their budgets. In September and October, the finance department compiles the budget managers' information and forwards to the Senior Leadership Team for review. It is then distributed to the full cabinet for discussion, modification, and approval. In November and December, the Finance Department establishes the [certified budget](#) for the next fiscal year and brings it to the Cabinet for discussion. The certified budget serves two purposes: 1) it sets the spending limits for each of the college's funds, and 2) it sets the property tax rates to be levied by the county auditors. The certified

budget for the next fiscal year is then [presented](#) to the Board of Trustees and a public hearing is set at the January board meeting. [NICC's Board of Trustees takes action](#) on the proposed annual budget for the following fiscal year at its February board meetings. The final adopted budget is filed by the Board Secretary to the controlling county auditor and with the Iowa Department of Education by March 31. The Iowa State Board of Education must review and approve or return the proposed budgets by June 1 per Iowa Code 260C.17.

NICC has several processes in place to monitor its finances. A [monthly budget to actuals](#) analytics report is provided to the SLT and included in the monthly Board of Trustees's financial reports. This report indicates the revenues and expenses related to the forecast and facilitates budgetary adjustments throughout the year. This is a significant aid in keeping the college on financial track. The finance department and senior management review the report mid-year and discuss any re-forecasting needs of the current year budget. The Board of Trustees are provided with detailed [financial statements](#) along with a [list of paid claims](#) for review at their monthly board meeting. Budget managers have access to [Colleague financials](#) and are able to view in detail their expenses for the current year and previous years. Budget managers also have the capability to run financial reports for their department in [WebAdvisor](#) and [Colleague](#).

In August 2018, NICC was notified that our institution was referred to a Financial Panel for review after reporting low composite scores in the 2017 and 2018 institutional updates. NICC was required to submit a [Financial Monitoring Report](#) along with additional financial documents indicating the strategies to improve the financial health of the institution. Upon HLC review, no further reports were required.

Like many institutions, NICC has experienced declines in credit enrollment over the past several years. The college has adjusted its [tuition and fees](#) annually to help offset these declines. The college also has a strong [Business and Community Solutions \(BCS\) division](#) that provides substantial income to the college through its certificate programs and contracted business training. This includes training funded by the Iowa New Jobs Training program (260E and 260F). The college also developed strong partnerships with the K-12 schools in our district which has resulted in continued increase in tuition revenue through [concurrent enrollment](#).

Several strategies connected to expenses were put in place to address the challenges NICC was experiencing. In FY16, salary and benefits accounted for 84.4% of the operating expenditures. The institution recognized the need to address these rising costs and implemented the following initiatives:

- A reorganization of the college structure was completed that included: combining divisions, reduction of department staff, consolidated work activities, and elimination of one vice president cabinet position.
- Implementation of two early retirement programs: FY2016 and FY2019.
- The creation of a master scheduling system to ensure programs fit into common schedules and shared courses are filled to capacity.
- Modification of the compensation structure for faculty and adjunct faculty resulting in more predictable expenses and ensuring a reasonable margin on its offerings.
- Incorporation of a revised healthcare program and implementation of a health savings account plan in FY2020.

These initiatives have resulted in a 16% decline in [salary and benefit expenditures](#) from FY2016 to FY2019.

With revenue remaining fairly stable and the significant reduction in payroll costs, the institution's CFI has increased from the 2018 institutional update.

- 2018 CFI – .89
- 2019 CFI – 2.13
- 2020 CFI – 3.64

As this information details, NICC has a well-developed process in place to budget and monitor our finances, with measurable and meaningful returns which are already positively impacting operations.

***5B4** Northeast Iowa Community College fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.*

NICC's financial situation is stable and continues to improve. The institution's growing reserves, reliable revenue sources, and efforts to control rising operating costs attest to the strength of its financial status. NICC's [financial position report](#) provides a complete view of the overall growth of the institution. Within the last five years, the college has grown its reserves from \$37 million in FY2015 to \$47 million in FY2019; this translates to an increase of nearly 24%. These reserves serve as a financial buffer when enrollments and state support fluctuate and provide funds for capital improvements and new strategic initiatives.

Revenues - NICC's [revenue](#) stream is primarily made up of three sources: tuition and fees, property taxes, and state funding.

Tuition and Fees - Tuition and fees accounted for 24% of our overall revenue budget in FY19 and 48% of our unrestricted general fund revenue budget. Even though declining credit enrollment remains a challenge for the college, annual adjustments to our [tuition and fee rates](#) have helped offset the revenue reduction resulting from the enrollment decline while allowing us to remain [competitive with other community colleges](#). In addition, as an effort to increase enrollment, the college has been refining its student management process to improve earlier connections with the students and complete more personalized outreach at key times during the enrollment cycle. We are also launching a comprehensive and multi-faceted non-attendance process and reducing financial barriers with improved scholarship programs including [Golden Ticket](#), [Comeback](#), and [Opportunity](#).

The college has a strong non-credit division, Business and Community Solutions (BCS), which provides a consistent [annual tuition income](#) from business and industry certificate and customized trainings. Over the past five years, BCS accounted for 15% to 17% of the annual tuition revenue in the unrestricted general fund.

The college's High School Relations division has built excellent working partnerships with the K-12 school districts. Over the past five years, tuition revenue from concurrent enrollments accounts for 9% to 14% of the [annual tuition revenue](#) in the unrestricted general fund.

Property Tax - The property tax levy has proven to be a reliable revenue stream for the college, accounting for 13% of the total revenue in FY 2019. The [property tax base](#) for the college, which is the fourth largest among the Iowa community colleges, continues to exhibit steady growth. The property tax levy is used to support the college's unrestricted general fund, restricted general fund, and plant fund. In the unrestricted general fund, the levy is used to support general operations of the college and accounts for 8% of the revenues. In the restricted general fund, the levy is used to

support other operational costs such as equipment purchases, property and liability insurance, unemployment costs, and early retirement costs. In the plant fund, it supports maintenance and improvement of college facilities, utilities, rental of facilities, and certificate principal and interest payments.

State Funding - [State funding](#) has remained fairly consistent over the last four years. State general aid accounts for 33% of the unrestricted general fund revenue. In addition, the State of Iowa also provides other funding such as Workforce Training & Economic Development funds which provide financing for new CTE program innovation, development, and capacity building, GAP tuition which provides funding for need-based tuition assistance to qualified applicants to complete certificate training programs for in-demand occupations, and ACE Infrastructure funds which provide funding for capital projects at the community colleges which benefit accelerated career education programs.

Other Revenues - General Obligation Bond Levy - In 2018, the voters in our district passed a [\\$39 million bond levy](#) which will allow the college to make needed [renovations and updates](#) throughout our 5,056 square mile district. The college identified four major priorities: educational programming and services, infrastructure, security, and technology. The [planned renovation](#) of the Peosta main campus and Max Clark Hall in Calmar are the largest projects budgeted at \$21.5 million and \$3.2 million respectively. Both renovations will focus on student collaboration and learning. The Peosta campus will undergo a complete renovation of the building center that focuses on student support functions and learning areas. Student support will include integrated student support services from admissions to advising; this includes expanded learning and testing centers, student collaboration areas, and classrooms designed to be flexible for diverse learning opportunities through the use of movable furnishings and interactive technology. The Max Clark Hall building has not experienced a complete renovation since its original construction in 1970. Health, business, and general education programming areas will be updated that will support the technology and learning of students. Classroom updates will include real-time video conferencing with faculty and students. The goal of the projects is to design classrooms that will meet the increased demands of changing technology in the learning environment.

Outside Contributions - The NICC Foundation is one source of revenue that continues to grow. The Foundation is a component unit of the college, organized for the sole purpose of raising, managing, and distributing resources to support the mission of the college. Over the past five years the Foundation has contributed an average of [\\$255,000 annually to the college for scholarships](#).

In 2017, the NICC Foundation developed the [President's Circle](#) to provide unrestricted funds to achieve the college's strategic goals by supporting objectives that directly impact the expansion and future development of programs and scholarships to ensure a quality education is accessible to all. Their original goal was 50 founding members with each contributing a minimum of \$5,000 over a five year span. By 2018, they had surpassed that goal and increased it to 100 founding members and \$1 million. As of December 2019, the President's Circle has raised \$882,453 from 77 founding members. The President's Circle is currently supporting two new initiatives: the [Golden Ticket](#) and Success Model. The Golden Ticket allows founding members to award a scholarship up to \$1,000 to any individual who meets certain criteria. The Success Model involves success coaches working with students to help them make more informed decisions regarding their college and career choices. The [Campaign for Excellence](#) was a campaign that ran from 2012 to 2015 and raised \$11,420,918 along with the President's Circle and [positive investment returns](#) have grown the Foundation's net assets from \$3,477,262 in FY 2015 to \$4,729,068 in FY 2019.

The Business Community Solutions division of NICC has been fortunate to receive substantial

contributions from business partners to support farm safety training. In 1997, NICC partnered with the National Safety Council to construct the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS) on the NICC Peosta campus. NECAS offers safety education and proactive programs to help prevent incidents that affect agribusiness safety and welfare. Over the past five years, NECAS has raised [\\$360,370](#) in support of Grain Bin Safety week. The funds were used to raise visibility about grain bin safety and award 111 grain rescue tubes along with trainings to fire departments in [26 states](#). NECAS raised an additional [\\$191,500](#) in support of National Farm Safety and Health week. These dollars were used to place [advertisements](#) in *Successful Farmer* and *Progressive Farmer* magazines as well as host AgChat on twitter to discuss agriculture safety. NECAS has been expanding its reach by developing partnerships with colleges and other educational centers across the country and we anticipate their stable revenue to continue as the demand for agriculture safety training grows. At their December 2019 board meeting, the NECAS Executive Board approved constructing a second grain rescue trailer and hiring an additional full time safety/rescue trainer.

Grants - NICC was awarded [\\$1,098,140](#) in grants in FY2019. The grants received support staff positions, scholarships, and special projects.

Expenses - Decisions on the allocation of fiscal resources through the budget process (see 5B3) are developed by the division and department budget managers in keeping with the [priorities](#) of the college. Based upon these agreed priorities, deans/directors and staff with budget responsibility prepare their budget recommendations that are ultimately reviewed and approved by cabinet.

NICC recognizes that our resources and revenue streams are limited and must be properly managed through prudent financial stewardship in order to see future growth and capability. In keeping with NICC's mission of providing in-demand education and training, [70% of the college's FY19 general fund budget](#) was assigned to academic programs, customized workforce training programs, and student support services.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

Argument

5C1 *The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes, and affiliated centers.*

The strategic planning process aligns with the college mission and priorities to provide the overarching mechanism that guides the allocation of resources. The two-year budgeting process (see 5B3) supports the strategic plan. The [SLT](#) representing [all divisions of the college](#) and possessing [diverse administrative expertise](#), serves as the administrative decision making body in the college. The SLT provides the final input regarding [resource allocation](#) and assures alignment with the college mission and strategic priorities.

In 2018, [budgets were established](#) for all campus centers as an additional campus site per HLC. These budgets provide clear evidence of center resource allocation and expenditures related to off-campus sites.

In spring 2020, the strategic plan was reviewed by the SLT to ensure all priorities were achievable for the upcoming academic year and actions for implementation were reasonable on account of potential COVID-19 restrictions. Budget managers have reviewed and re-revised the current and projected budgets taking into account smaller and more frequent lab class needs and travel limitations. The college has benefited from adding online services for students and various classroom technologies supported by [CARES ACT funds](#) which will continue to serve off-campus students beyond COVID-19.

For FY2020 the fiscal resources (see 5B4) of the college were allocated as follows:

- Faculty salaries were 30% of [total general fund expenditures](#).
- 70% of the general fund budget was assigned to academic programs, customized workforce training programs, and student support services.

5C2 *The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.*

Academic programs (credit and non-credit) are the key product of the an educational institution. In 2017, NICC had 68 credit programs. In recognition of evolving workforce needs for new program initiatives, the fact that students are seeking a variety of program options and delivery methods, and some of the programs were no longer in demand, the following questions were raised:

1. *What programs does NICC want to be known for?* -- A review of program [enrollment trends](#) and [workforce](#) data determined the Calmar campus is known for its Agricultural, Health, and Business programming, and the Peosta campus is know for its Advanced Manufacturing, Industrial Technology, Health, and Business programming. In addition, the data confirmed these are in-demand occupations.
2. *What actions on the part of the college will support and grow these program offerings in addition to other academic co-curricular offerings at the college?* -- These questions or "items" for discussion are then added to the monthly business planning meeting agenda.

The following examples illustrate the linkage between the processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

Example 1 -- Do we enhance our intentional outreach to high schools to increase student numbers and credit hour enrollment in the PICC funding (60% of credit cost) knowing that we might have to increase faculty if courses are full which leads to the potential need to hire part-time contract staff to support the pathways for high schools?

Assessment of Student Learning - Several items were brought into this discussion which included:

- [Participation in College Credit "PICC" enrollment spreadsheet](#)
- [SEM KPI indicators](#)
- Enrollment requests from area high-schools
- [Career Academy Guidelines](#)
- [HS Yield Report](#)
- [Dual-enrollment transfer rates and success](#)

An additional request was made to obtain PICC graduate success data.

Evaluation of Operations - Data that supported the discussion included:

- [Campus-based enrollment reports](#)
- [2018-2019 Calmar program fill-rate](#)
- [Maximal course loads](#)
- Impact of bond levy projects in CTE program area

Planning and Budgeting - A review of our fiscal resources and responsibilities included:

- Iowa CTE legislation and Future Ready Iowa Supports focus on CTE programs
- Projected expenses related to faculty and supplies
- Projected Enrollment needed to cover additional classes and sections
- Task force implemented to identify specific academies

Decision - The college is currently in the process of enhancing three current academies on the Calmar campus.

Example 2 -- Should NICC incorporate collegiate athletics into its programming? It became apparent in the early stages of this discussion that NICC would benefit from an expert consultant provide an in-depth assessment of the benefits and risks related to this initiative. In October 2019, the college contracted with David Bahl, a retiring Athletic Director to conduct an [athletic feasibility study](#) for the college. In March 2020, Mr. Bahl submitted the study and a proposal for the three-year implementation of recommended collegiate sports programming for the college.

Assessment of Student Learning - Data that supported the discussion included:

- [A literature review of the impact of athletics on the educational experience](#)
- [Interviews with NICC Sports Shooting Intramural Coaches](#)
- [Academic success of the NICC Sports Shooting students](#)
- [Discussions with surrounding colleges to identify their data regarding student success](#)

Evaluation of Operations - The following actions and data supported this discussion:

- [Hiring a consultant](#) to evaluate the college district, high school programming within the district, and current and potential partnerships to develop
- [Sports Shooting Team survey](#)
- [Collegiate sport interest survey](#)
- Reviewing current NICC Sports Shooting practices, costs, areas for improvement
- Review of housing across the district
- Review of potential partnerships
- [Evaluation by CIS](#) of the computers required for an E-sports program
- [Formal meeting](#) on proposal with David Bahl
- Discussion of timing and college ability to meet academic supports in lieu of COVID-19

Planning and Budgeting - A review of our fiscal resources and responsibilities included:

- Numerous discussions occurred with the South Winnesheik High School
- [NICC approved a housing development](#) adjacent to the Peosta campus
- Review of [anticipated revenue](#) and program closures related to COVID-19 became relevant to the discussion
- Numerous reviews of current and projected college budgets

Decision - The initiation of collegiate athletics is deferred for a multitude of reasons surrounding COVID-19: enrollment fluctuations, evolving sports closures, travel for recruiting, and the need for the college to remain focused on meeting the needs of our current students.

5C3 *The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.*

In addition to the feedback provided by the shared governance organizations (see 5A1), there are a variety of opportunities for faculty and staff to share their perspective, thus influencing the planning processes of the college. Some examples include:

- The President shares his vision with the college community during the fall and spring

[convocation](#). The college community receives a [follow-up survey](#) to provide feedback to the information and format.

- An annual [All College Day](#), is held each spring to bring the college community together to build community, to allow for the [sharing of ideas](#), and to provide personal and professional growth experiences. Past themes of All College Day include strategic initiatives, fostering innovation, team building, process improvement, and diversity.
- Presidential forums are held on each campus to provide updates and solicit employee feedback.
- COVID-19 faculty updates led by the President and the Pandemic Response Team provided information related to the [upcoming academic year](#), engaged faculty in [classroom technology trainings](#), and responded to questions.

Formal survey processes have been used to gather data from a wider constituent group. In 2016, the college contracted with the University of Northern Iowa to have an [environmental scan](#) completed in 2017. The results provided perspectives of both internal and external constituent groups and guided the college planning process for AY2017-2019. In spring 2020, Student Services conducted a [survey](#) to identify current and high school student feedback regarding course schedules and formal collegiate sports (see 5C2). Annual surveys such as graduate, advisory board, and employer, in addition to course surveys, (credit and non-credit) provide valuable feedback to the college. The recent addition of the [Community Local Needs Assessment \(CLNA\)](#), required for Perkins V grant funding, has enlisted feedback on CTE programming from an [extensive list of constituent groups](#).

5C4 *The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.*

The planning and budgeting process incorporates a regular review of institutional financial capacity based on changes in the revenue and expense categories that account for the majority of financial activity. On the revenue side is tuition and state funding, which is in turn driven by both enrollment and changes in state funding. On the expense side, employee salaries and benefits, are also driven in part by enrollment and programs, and occasionally, by state funding. The cabinet reviews enrollment projections and forecasts in combination with budget requests in order to determine cost of living salary increases and changes in student tuition and fees. A [multi-year budgeting process](#) is used to collaboratively assess the college revenue expectations and set budget expenses accordingly. A [certified budget](#) approved by the Board of Trustees is then submitted to the state. Quarterly and [Year-End](#) reports are generated by the Business and Community Solutions (BCS) division of the college and reviewed by all BCS staff for review of outcomes and progress toward [benchmarks](#). An [internal audit](#) is conducted annually to assess the college's financial condition and to ensure financial integrity and compliance.

Each year, administrative cabinet members review market and operational conditions affecting the current year budget. If necessary, a re-forecast of the current year budget may be completed. The college continuously reviews processes, and the operating environment for cost and efficiency measures. Examples are adopting a print management system, LED replacement of florescent bulbs, integrated phone system, moving the college's enterprise system in-house, implementing a strategic early retirement plan. In addition, all open positions are fully vetted to determine need, alternative structure for replacement, and internal capability assessment before the on-boarding process is initiated.

5C5 *Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements,*

demographic shifts, globalization, the economy, and state support.

The Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Committee meets regularly and reviews enrollment trends and projections. The committee has innovated [recruitment techniques](#) to drive up enrollment by offering tuition discounts to stop-out students, and is running targeted mailing campaigns based on prior enrollment data. The [SEM key process indicators](#) are used to assess outcomes.

The local economy is considered in the planning processes through a review of the greatest labor shortages in the region. The annual [Skills Gap Report](#) contains a wealth of information on changes in regional demographics and greatest regional [employment needs](#), and is used to review data for potential programs. A [2020-2021 plan](#) to add academic programs to the college was approved by the Business Planning Committee through the process outlined in 5C3.

In order to maintain institutional sustainability and to anticipate and plan for change, the President's Cabinet regularly accesses several sources of information to stay abreast of industrial, population, and academic trends. Some of those sources include:

- [Iowa Department of Education K-12 enrollment tables](#)
- [Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce](#)
- [Gates Foundation](#)
- [Northeast Iowa Skills Gap Report.](#)

The President and legislative liaison invest a significant amount of time educating legislators each spring about enrollment patterns, community needs, and the impact of community colleges to lobby for additional funding from the department of education.

5C6 *The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.*

The college has implemented a variety of systematic strategies to improve its operations and student outcomes which include:

Two-year budget process - As described in 5B3, NICC participates in a two-year budget process requiring each budget manager to establish an upcoming budget and forecast the budget for an additional year. Budget managers are required to analyze the over and under expenditures from the past fiscal year prior to the creation of the new budgets. This process requires a higher level of analysis of all factors impacting budgetary responsibility and holds the budget manager to a higher level of accountability versus the past practice (2017) where a manager assumed oversight of a budget that was "rolled over" from year to year.

Equipment maintenance program - In 2019, the physical plant area responded to a need for improvement in the tracking and maintenance of equipment by initiating the use of a software program that stores data on all major equipment used to support building operations. Staff are now able to track scheduled maintenance needs as well as repairs and repair costs for each piece of equipment. This allows the college to anticipate end-of-life cycles and to budget for the replacement of retired items.

Supply procurement - In efforts to promote efficiency, a review of ordering practices at the Peosta campus was initiated in 2016. The tracking of expenses at the campus was difficult as most items

were consolidated under one budget code. In 2017, line item budgets were created which allowed the separation of custodial supplies from other supplies on campus. The campus evaluated current products used, and in 2019 standardized the purchasing of high volume items such as paper towels, toilet paper, and hand soap and implemented standardized fixtures for paper supplies and products. Because of monitoring costs in custodial and materials supplies, expenses for the campus decreased to \$33,065 in FY19 from a high of \$85,210 in FY15.

Conservation measures - The college has initiated efforts to conserve energy usage through the transition to LED lighting. Currently, two buildings at the Calmar campus have been converted and portions of other buildings. At the Peosta campus, the Peosta daycare was converted to solar energy, the labs in IT have been converted and additional conversions will take place with the renovation. Exterior lights at Calmar are complete and several areas in Peosta. In partnership with the NRCS (see 3B4) a [conservation plan for the college farm](#) has been created to compliment the [current conservation practices](#).

Supervisor and leader training - In 2018, the Human Resources staff called together supervisors and key leaders for education and discussion sessions on a monthly basis. Topics include new and existing policy and procedure review, use of technology, training related to managing staff, strategic planning progress, and college updates. Supervisors are encouraged to bring topics for future discussion and share best practices in their area. Guest speakers from Finance, Payroll, and Computer Information Systems have provided education in addition to the Human Resources staff.

Business model framework - Under the guidance of the President, the SLT moved to a data based problem solving model for the Business planning meetings. An [agenda template](#) was introduced with discussion items categorized, supporting materials attached, and the presenter and time frame identified. In addition, the summary of the opportunities and decisions from the discussion along with the budgetary implications are listed in 5C3. This framework has enhanced the quality of the meetings and allows for transparency regarding the factors that were reviewed for each decision. The "[Strategy Screen](#)" and "[6 Hats](#)" are two other decision making models the team has incorporated.

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

NICC allocates its resources, structures its organization, and develops processes to fulfill the college's mission, to maintain and advance the quality of educational offerings, and to respond to future challenges and opportunities. NICC prides itself on the principles of collaboration and effective leadership. All stakeholders, including the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty and staff, students, the public, and business and industry are invited to participate in the college's planning and decision-making. The college's organizational structure further emphasizes open communication and a sense of inclusion as the college shapes its future.

NICC has addressed concerns regarding finances and the the recent challenges as a result of COVID-19, with thoughtful, measured, and forward-thinking responses that will sustain the college now and in the future. Progress still needs to be made, but foundational efforts to create a sustainable and growing institution are in place and situate the college for success.

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