



CHASING EXCELLENCE.
Together **WE RISE.**



**NORTHEAST IOWA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Strategic Planning Team

Dave Dahms

President

Anna Berns

Executive Director of Advancement

Amy Gaffney

Vice President of Student Services

Heather Groth

*Executive Assistant to the President
and Board Secretary*

Shea Herbst

*Executive Director of Marketing
and Communications*

Connie Kuennen

Executive Director of Human Resources

Amy Lasack

*Vice President,
Business and Community Solutions*

Kathleen Nacos-Burds

Vice President of Teaching and Learning

Lexi Wagner

Vice President, Finance and Administration

Verrick Foust

College Senate, President

Matt Simon

Science Faculty

Eileen Schlawin

Administrative Assistant

Zoe Ament

Student

LaTosha Calhoun

Student

Josiah Schadle

Student

Bill Holland

President, JB Holland

Nic Hockenberry

*Director of Workforce Programming
Greater Dubuque Development Corporation*

Shannon Brenner

Instructional Designer

Olivia Chase

Payroll Coordinator

MJ Dachelet

*Executive Director, Department of Instructional
Innovation and Design*

Amy Green

*Director of Sales and Training,
Business and Community Solutions*

Travis Hunt

Learning Management System Administrator

Jordan O'Connell

Instructional Designer

Kristi Strief

Executive Director of Enrollment Management

Greg Willging

*Director of Economic Development,
Business and Community Solutions*

Erin Shaw

Strategic Planning Project Manager



Dear Colleagues and Community Members,

At Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC), we know that our mission to empower learners and strengthen communities is more than a statement. It's a daily

commitment to our students and our region. Every class and every conversation helps move that mission forward.

This strategic plan is both a reflection of where we are and a vision for where we're going. It was shaped through thoughtful input from faculty, staff, students, and community partners, and it represents a shared understanding of what matters most in the years ahead.

With this plan, we say we're doing the **REAL** work by focusing on four Strategic Priorities: **Revitalize Our Culture, Empower Learners, Amplify Community Partnerships and Lead with Intention.** These priorities are not abstract. They are grounded in the work we already do and the work we aspire to do better. From academic programs to student support, from operations to outreach, this plan belongs to all of us.

Our vision for the future is ambitious, but it is also clear: we will lead with intention and be forward-thinking in shaping and delivering education and workforce solutions. We will stay rooted in our **RISE** values (*Respect, Innovate, Serve and Engage*) and we will build on the strengths that make NICC a vital part of our communities.

Thank you for your role in helping bring this plan to life. Your work matters. Your voice matters. Together, we rise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Dahms".

Dave Dahms
President, Northeast Iowa Community College

Executive Summary

The Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) 2025-28 Strategic Plan is the culmination of a comprehensive, 10-month process dedicated to shaping a bold and responsive future for our students and the communities we serve. The plan outlines a clear and actionable roadmap, developed through an intentionally inclusive and iterative process that engaged a broad spectrum of internal and external stakeholders.

It began in September 2024, with the Strategic Planning Team gathering input and ideas to identify what matters most for the future of NICC. This started with a series of on-campus listening sessions involving 87 faculty, staff and students, along with 44 online form submissions. This was followed by ten community listening sessions attended by 63 regional partners, employers and community members, as well as 46 online survey responses. Alongside these conversations, the team reviewed data through an environmental scan that highlighted key regional, economic and educational trends.

The insights gathered directly informed the drafting and refinement of the College's updated mission, vision and values, as well as four college-wide strategic priorities. Every stage of the process emphasized transparency and collaboration, highlighted by "Feedback February," a month-long public comment period that generated valuable input and led to meaningful revisions.

The resulting plan is a direct reflection of our community's collective voice. Formally approved by the NICC Board of Trustees on April 22, 2025 with an additional objective amendment approved on June 16, 2025 the 2025-28 Strategic Plan is designed to be a living document that guides decision-making and resource allocation. The final phase of the process focused on operationalizing this vision by defining shared organizational goals, key measures, departmental goals and activities to track our progress and ensure accountability.

The 2025-28 Strategic Plan positions NICC to lead with intention, innovate with purpose and continue its vital role as a catalyst for growth, opportunity and success throughout northeast Iowa. We extend our deepest gratitude to every individual who contributed their time and perspective to this essential endeavor.

View the full strategic plan and progress updates.

► nicc.edu/strategicplan



Mission, Vision & Values



MISSION

Northeast Iowa Community College empowers learners and strengthens communities through accessible, high-quality, innovative education and training.



VISION

Northeast Iowa Community College will lead with intention and be forward-thinking in shaping and delivering education and workforce solutions.

R

RESPECT — We value diverse perspectives and demonstrate consideration for one another, fostering trust, collaboration and accountability.

I

INNOVATE — We embrace creative solutions and forward-thinking strategies to excel in a changing world.

S

SERVE — We listen and engage across our College and community, addressing needs and expectations while committing to sustainability in environmental, social and economic practices.

E

ENGAGE — We prioritize clarity and open communication to build trust and foster meaningful connections.

Strategic Plan Timeline

From September 2024 to June 2025, Northeast Iowa Community College engaged in an inclusive and iterative process to develop its 2025-28 Strategic Plan. This timeline documents the key milestones and extensive stakeholder engagement that shaped the future of the College.



Foundation & Information Gathering (September – November 2024)

September 2024

The Strategic Planning Team, composed of representatives from across the College and two business partners, held its inaugural meeting to establish the process and timeline.

Three key subcommittees were formed to guide the work: Environmental Scan; Stakeholder Input; and Mission, Vision and Values.

On-Campus Listening Sessions for faculty, staff and students began, kicking off the critical internal stakeholder feedback process.

October 2024

On-Campus Listening Sessions concluded, successfully engaging 80 faculty/staff and 7 students across multiple sessions, supplemented by 44 online submissions.

The Strategic Planning Team analyzed the raw feedback from these internal sessions to develop the first draft of strategic priorities.

Ten Community Listening Sessions were launched across the district, inviting external stakeholders—including K-12 partners, business leaders and community members—to provide input on the draft priorities.

November 2024

The Community Listening Sessions concluded, with 63 community members attending in person and 46 providing feedback through an online form.

The Strategic Planning Team synthesized feedback from all internal and external listening sessions to refine and reduce the initial set of strategic priorities.

The Mission, Vision and Values Subcommittee began its formal analysis of stakeholder feedback, while the Environmental Scan Subcommittee compiled and reviewed data on external trends and factors.

Raw data from the On-Campus Listening Sessions was shared with the Board of Trustees and made accessible to all faculty, staff and students to ensure transparency.

**PHASE
2**

Drafting & Refinement (*December 2024 – February 2025*)

December 2024

The Environmental Scan Subcommittee presented its comprehensive findings to the Strategic Planning Team, providing critical context for the plan.

Informed by the scan and stakeholder feedback, the Team further refined the strategic priorities from the initial seven down to four.

A new Wordsmithing Subcommittee was formed to help polish the language of the proposed priorities.

January 2025

Progress updates were formally presented to the NICC Board of Trustees and the wider college community.

Raw data from the Community Listening Sessions was shared with the Board of Trustees and made accessible to all faculty, staff and students, continuing the commitment to a transparent process.

The Strategic Planning Team reviewed refined proposals for the Mission, Vision and Values and the Strategic Priorities.

February 2025

"Feedback February," a month-long campaign, was launched to gather broad input on the full draft plan.

Engagement was extensive, including virtual sessions and online forms that captured feedback from dozens of employees, students and community members, as well as presentations to key leadership and governance groups.

Based on this comprehensive feedback, the Strategic Planning Team reached a consensus and finalized the proposed Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Priorities.

**PHASE
3**

Alignment & Finalization (*March – June 2025*)

March 2025

The focus shifted to implementation. Cabinet members began working with their respective areas to develop departmental goals and activities that align with the new Strategic Priorities.

April 2025

The NICC Board of Trustees formally approved the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan and the updated Mission, Vision and Values on April 22.

May 2025

Draft departmental goals and activities from all areas of the college were compiled for a comprehensive review, ensuring alignment across the institution.

June 2025

College leadership met at a Cabinet retreat to define Shared Organizational Goals and identify Key Measures — college-wide Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track the plan's success.

In a final iterative step responding to strategic discussions, an objective focused on financial sustainability was added to the plan. This addition to the 2025-28 Strategic Plan was formally approved by the Board of Trustees on June 16.

2025-28 Strategic Priorities, Objectives & Key Measures



STRATEGIC PRIORITY **Revitalize Our Culture**

Achieve an environment that values collaboration, trust, growth, development and community.

Objective: Grow employee engagement through enhanced communication, professional development and a culture of connection.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Increase the NICC Gallup Engagement Mean on the next Gallup Survey
- ✓ Increase the Leadership Communication Mean on the next Gallup Survey

Objective: Boost operational efficiency by fostering stronger cross-departmental collaboration and utilizing creative solutions to streamline processes and eliminate redundancies.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Maintain payroll and benefits at a proportion of total revenue
- ✓ Track the annual number of cross-departmental initiatives focused on streamlining processes and eliminating redundancies





STRATEGIC PRIORITY
Empower Learners

Deliver high-quality, dynamic experiences to support persistence, achievement and well-being.

Objective: Optimize academic program offerings and expand dynamic educational pathways to meet student and industry needs.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Increase the matriculation of non-credit Career Pathway Certificate (CPC) students to credit programming
- ✓ Increase the enrollment rate of district high school seniors to NICC in the fall post-high school graduation
- ✓ Increase the number of students who graduated from NICC and found employment during the year following graduation
- ✓ Increase the retention rate of full-time, first-time degree/certificate seeking students
- ✓ Increase the retention rate of part-time, first-time degree/certificate seeking students

Objective: Enhance student engagement outside of the classroom.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Improve Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) Engagement score for Student-Faculty Interaction
- ✓ Increase the number of students who participate in Student Services events (e.g. *Student Life, Career Fairs, Emerging Leaders, Spring Break Service Trip and New Student Orientation*).

Objective: Ensure current and future learner needs are met through wraparound support services.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Improve Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) Academic and Social Support Network standardized benchmark score
- ✓ Increase the number of students who respond "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to "My school has the support services to help me address my financial situation"
- ✓ Increase the number of degree-seeking students receiving Foundation-specific awards (excluding Athletic scholarships or other external scholarships)



STRATEGIC PRIORITY
Amplify Community Partnerships

Cultivate strong relationships to respond to workforce demands and enhance community vitality.

Objective: Intentionally engage and collaborate with employers, community entities and educational organizations.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Increase the number of partnerships with employers, community entities and educational organizations

Objective: Cultivate a sense of belonging and connection from first impression through a lifetime of engagement.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Increase the number of alumni engaged/re-engaged
- ✓ Increase the number of students who respond "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to "The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome."



STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Lead with Intention

Make innovative, future-ready and data-informed decisions that harness our strengths to sustain the college.

Objective: Integrate a data warehouse into decision-making as the mechanism for transparent, reliable and accessible data.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Increase the number of strategic data users accessing Edify software each year
- ✓ Complete the development of the Financial Sustainability Accelerator by June 30, 2026

Objective: Align a comprehensive marketing and recruitment strategy with the College and budget priorities, ensuring integration and responsible use of resources.

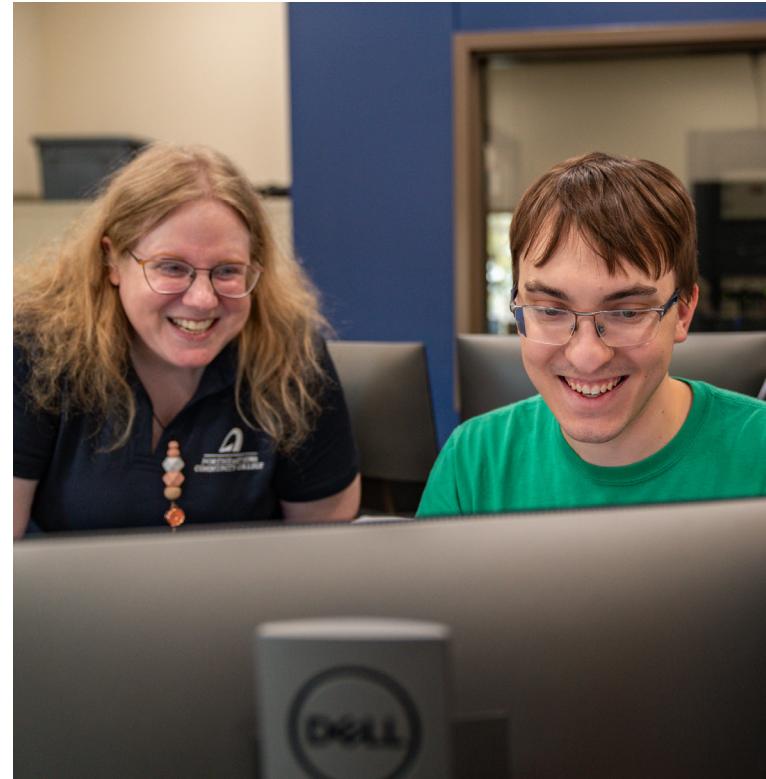
Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Student Recruitment Efficiency - Determine the marketing and recruitment costs to acquire a credit student by June 30, 2026

Objective: Use data to guide resource allocation, align budgeting with strategic priorities and enhance the financial sustainability of the college.

Key Measures (college-wide KPIs):

- ✓ Maintain a Composite Financial Index (CFI) of 3.0 or higher
- ✓ Maintain a Moody's bond credit rating of Aa1 each year



We will be known for a culture of trust and connectedness, where collaboration replaces silos.

Data will drive our decisions.

Our vibrant campuses will offer seamless, customized learning for a diverse student body, while business partnerships ensure workforce success.



Northeast Iowa Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

It is the policy of Northeast Iowa Community College not to discriminate in its programs, activities, or employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, creed, religion, and actual or potential family, parental or marital status. View the full policy at nicc.edu/nondiscrimination.

All information is accurate at time of publication and is subject to change without notice. | 02.2026_GD.MKT.PRES.StrategicPlan.Report