



## 2008-2010 Strategic Plan FIRST-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

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The Northwest College *2008-2010 Strategic Plan* recently concluded its first of two years. The plan's 24 strategic goals—which include both quantitative and qualitative goals within six priorities—have provided an effective guide for institutional decision-making and resource allocation.

This progress report provides details regarding the level of achievement of each of the strategic goals. Included are baseline data (where appropriate), first-year data, and analyses. The analyses are not intended to be comprehensive; rather, the objective is to provide a brief explanation and/or context for the statistics associated with the strategic goals.

The companion document to this report is the *Strategic Plan: Implementation and Tracking Plan (with First-Year Data)*. The *Implementation and Tracking Plan* contains most of the information in this report (e.g., baseline data, first-year goal, first-year data), but also provides information on second-year goals and key personnel responsible for achieving goals.

Overall, the College met or exceeded targets for the great majority of the strategic goals. Nearly all enrollment numbers (i.e., part-time students, distance education, concurrent enrollment program, total FTE, and minority students) exceeded the respective goal. Additionally, most of the retention numbers also increased. Given the importance of retaining students and given the high statistics NWC typically demonstrates relative to retention, these were some of the most positive first-year outcomes.

### I. ACCESS

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#### 1.1. Increase the number of part-time students by 1% per year

*Baseline data:* 596 students

*First-year goal:* 602 students

*First-year data:* 726 students (22% increase)

*Analysis:* The modest first-year strategic goal was significantly surpassed. Strong enrollment numbers in the concurrent enrollment program (see Strategic Goal 3.1) aided the increase.

#### 1.2. Implement the new scholarship plan and assess its impact on year-to-year retention

*Baseline data:* 2008-09 scholarship plan

*First-year goal:* Implement new Trapper Scholarship Program

*First-year data:* Trapper Scholarship Program implemented

*Analysis:* NWC successfully implemented the Trapper Scholarship program in Fall 2009 with a total 2009-10 budget of \$973,405, including \$471,485 from the NWC Foundation. In addition, an online scholarship application system—Scholarship Tracking and Review System (STARS)—was implemented in Fall 2009, following two years of research and pilot-testing. For Fall 2009, 624 students received financial assistance through the Trapper

Scholarship program, an increase of 38% from the 451 students who had received similar scholarships the previous year.

**1.3. Develop two new instructional degree and/or certificate programs to expand technical and transfer options**

*First-year goal:* Two new degree or certificate programs

*First-year data:* Nine new programs begun

*Analysis:* The new programs initiated by Fall 2009 were the following: A.A.-Criminal Justice, A.A.-Film Production, A.A.-Screenwriting, A.A.S.-Radio Production, A.A.S.-Television Production, Advanced Welding Technology Certificate, Horse Owner Basic Hoof Care Certificate, Professional Farrier Certificate, and Comprehensive Skills Certificate in Radio Production.

**1.4. Increase distance education FTE enrollment by 2% per year**

*Baseline data:* 185 FTE

*First-year goal:* 189 FTE

*First-year data:* 270.6 FTE (46% increase)

*Analysis:* Distance education continues to be one of the College's largest enrollment-growth areas. The large increase was driven primarily by enrollment in online courses; enrollment in compressed-video courses decreased slightly. The expanded course access serves on- and off-campus NWC students as well as students who are primarily enrolled at other colleges and universities.

## **2. SUPPORT**

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**2.1. Actively collaborate with the NWC Foundation to fully use the Legislature's new appropriation in the "Wyoming Community College Endowment Challenge Program"**

*Baseline data:* \$6.5 million raised for endowment challenge program

*First-year goal:* Additional \$1.3 million raised

*First-year data:* \$829,645 raised

*Analysis:* The NWC Foundation achieved a remarkable milestone on June 30, 2009, the close of the five-year "Toward New Vistas" fundraising campaign. The campaign raised \$9,136,177, exceeding the initial goal of \$6 million by 52% and the updated goal of \$8 million by 14%.

**2.2. Create a plan during FY 09 prior to a campaign for public funds for an Applied Science and Technology Building, student center, and related facilities**

*First-year goal:* Board decision; implement plan

*First-year data:* No action due to state economy

*Analysis:* Although the Applied Science and Technology Building is the 2nd-ranked priority in the Facilities Master Plan, the worsening economic conditions have created a less-than-optimal time to pursue public funding. However, in the absence of a new classroom building, the College has continued to renovate and update current instructional spaces (e.g., Nursing Building, Fagerberg Building room 25, Photography Lab, etc.).

**2.3. Develop a phased approach to implementing the Facilities Master Plan priorities to facilitate new program development and services to students**

*Baseline data:* Existing Facilities Master Plan (FMP)

*First-year goal:* Review & revise FMP into phases

*First-year data:* Simpson Hall expansion completed; five other FMP projects initiated

*Analysis:* The Simpson Hall expansion—part of the 1st-ranked priority project in the FMP—was completed on time and under budget in the summer of 2009. In addition, five projects from the FMP were initiated during the Strategic Plan’s first year: Hinckley Library expansion (included in the 4th-ranked FMP project), creation of a sound and recording studio in the Nelson Performing Arts Center (modification of the 10th-ranked project), Orendorff Building entrance remodel (modification of the 3rd-ranked project), creation of new athletic fields (included in the 1st-ranked project), and Equine Center expansion (included in the 5th-ranked project).

#### **2.4. Develop and implement a college-wide professional development plan**

*First-year goal:* Develop plan

*First-year data:* Initial change to evaluation system initiated; next phase of plan creation to occur in FY10

*Analysis:* During the Strategic Plan’s first year, the administration decided to implement a new performance evaluation system, which is being piloted with senior administrators before being utilized with all staff next year. The new system has a professional development component, which, when collected and analyzed, could provide the basis for a college-wide professional development plan.

#### **2.5. Develop a succession plan for key positions to ensure organizational continuity and quality**

*First-year goal:* Develop plan

*First-year data:* Initial planning meetings held

*Analysis:* This goal was not accomplished during the first year, although planning meetings were held. One challenge to the College creating a true succession plan is that College policy requires all open positions to have an open search. If a true succession plan remains a goal, College policy would need to be changed.

### **3. PARTNERSHIPS**

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#### **3.1. Implement a three-year pilot program to provide new concurrent enrollment options in the high schools**

*Baseline data:* 2.7 FTE

*First-year goal:* 5.4 FTE

*First-year data:* 25.7 FTE (852% increase)

*Analysis:* All high schools in the College’s service area have agreed to the concurrent enrollment program<sup>1</sup>, and Memoranda of Agreement have been signed by five high schools. In Fall 2009, 95 high school students are enrolled in concurrent courses.

*Other relevant data:* Dual enrollment is also strong, showing a 9% increase from Fall 2008 (22.3 FTE) to Fall 2009 (24.2 FTE). In Fall 2009, 68 high school students are dual enrolled.

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<sup>1</sup> “Concurrent enrollment” courses are college courses delivered in the high schools. “Dual enrollment” is defined as a high school student taking a college course on the NWC campus, at the Cody or Worland Centers, or via distance education (e.g., online).

**3.2. Collaborate with service area high schools and the Wyoming Department of Education to clearly define and articulate pathways to facilitate smooth transitions from high school to our programs of study**

*First-year goal:* Complete pathway for Construction Trades program

*First-year data:* Did not receive Construction Trades Program grant; did not receive sufficient interest in the program to continue development

*Analysis:* Instead of Construction Trades Programs, the College focused on implementation of concurrent enrollment program, which secures high school-to-college pathways in any area of interest (i.e., career-technical education as well as transfer education).

**3.3. Expand collaboration with businesses on the design and delivery of new workforce training programs that lead to two new or redesigned certificates and degrees**

*First-year data:* Seven programs are in various stages of development or delivery

*Analysis:* The Strategic Plan's goal is for two new or redesigned certificates or degrees to be realized by 2010; no first-year goal was identified. Seven programs, however, are in various stages of development or delivery: Building Analyst Certification, Pharmacy Technician, Food & Hospitality Training, Barista Training, Certified Medical Assistant, Work Readiness Program, and Survey Technician.

**3.4. Expand partnerships with businesses and organizations to produce a 2% annual increase in the number of participants in workforce training programs**

*Baseline data:* 1,255 duplicated headcount

*First-year goal:* 1,280 duplicated headcount

*First-year data:* 848 duplicated headcount (32% decrease)

*Analysis:* The decrease is explained by a shift in management and personnel during 2008-09, which led to decreased program offerings during the transition. The changes included temporary position vacancies and implementation of new more consistent program-wide workshop enrollment reporting guidelines. Program delivery and enrollment numbers are expected to increase compared to 2008-09.

## **4. INSTITUTIONAL VITALITY**

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**4.1. Increase FTE enrollment by 2% per year**

*Baseline data:* 1,759 FTE

*First-year goal:* 1,794 FTE

*First-year data:* 2,043.3 FTE (16% increase)

*Analysis:* The dramatic increase in FTE to near historic highs is the result of both positive internal factors—e.g., retention efforts, effective recruiting, new academic programs, Trapper Scholarship Program, an effective advertising campaign, strong efforts by faculty and staff to accommodate enrollment growth, etc.—and negative factors such as the declining U.S. and state economy.

**4.2. Increase minority student head-count enrollment by 2% per year**

*Baseline data:* 131 students

*First-year goal:* 134 students

*First-year data:* 196 students (50% increase)

*Analysis:* The College recently implemented specific strategies to recruit Hispanic students. As NWC attempts to expand access, the increase in minority student head-count is a positive development.

*Other relevant data:* For this strategic goal, minority student head-count includes only U.S. students. The total minority student enrollment—including international students—is 277 in Fall 2009.

**4.3. Enhance and streamline shared governance by clarifying the advisory roles of constituency groups, College Council, and standing committees**

*First-year goal:* Develop restructured system

*First-year data:* Discussions on “mapping” of shared governance have occurred

*Analysis:* A document providing detailed information on the various committees and work groups that have a role in shared governance is being compiled. Once this document—and the diagram that “maps” shared governance—have been reviewed by constituency groups and College Council, the College will be in a better position to determine whether changes to our current shared governance processes are desired.

**4.4. Produce a comprehensive self-study accreditation document through broad College involvement**

*First-year goal:* Complete preliminary draft of self-study

*First-year data:* Review of first draft completed

*Analysis:* Initial institutional strengths and weaknesses in relation to each of the accreditation criteria were considered by the Accreditation Executive Committee. This work laid the foundation for the development and review of full self-study report drafts in the 2009-10 academic year. The self-study process remains on schedule in anticipation of the November 2010 visit by a Higher Learning Commission evaluation team.

## **5. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

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**5.1. Increase the number of degree/certificate student completers by 1% per year**

*Baseline data:* 343 degrees; 95 certificates

*First-year goal:* 346 degrees; 96 certificates

*First-year data:* 323 degrees (6% decrease); 81 certificates (15% decrease)

*Analysis:* The graduating class of 2007-08 was the largest in recent history. The decrease in completers in the first year of the Strategic Plan (2008-09) is not highly concerning: The increase in enrollment, increase in fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention, and implementation of a scholarship program that generally provides two years of financial support should lead to increased graduation numbers in the next several years.

**5.2. Increase the first-time, full-time student fall-to-spring retention rate by 1.5% per year**

*Baseline data:* 81.0%

*First-year goal:* 82.5%

*First-year data:* 82.6% (1.6% increase)

*Analysis:* The College’s goal of increasing the fall-to-spring retention rate to 82.5% was—along with Strategic Goal 5.3—perhaps the most ambitious, given that the 81.0% “baseline” rate is high compared to national data. The fact that the College exceeded the goal is one of the highlights of the first year of the Strategic Plan.

**5.3. Increase the first-time, full-time student fall-to-fall retention rate by 1.5% per year**

*Baseline data:* 59.0%

*First-year goal:* 60.5%

*First-year data:* 62.7% increase (3.7% increase)

*Analysis:* Creating programs, services, and an environment that encourage students to persist into their second year should be a focus of any institution of higher education. Like Strategic Goal 5.2, Strategic Goal 5.3 was very ambitious. The increase in fall-to-fall retention from 59.0% to 62.7% is perhaps the most significant outcome of the first year of the Strategic Plan.

**5.4. Implement new cross-college initiatives designed to enhance the academic success of students who test into developmental courses:**

**a. Reduce by 1% per year the number of these students who drop out of college in their first year**

*Baseline data:* 53.6% retention rate

*First-year goal:* 54.6% retention rate

*First-year data:* 60.6% retention rate (7.0% increase)

*Analysis:* Students who test into developmental courses are among those most at-risk for dropping out of college in their first year. Data in this area are very positive in two ways: (1) the “baseline” retention rate for these students (53.6%) was surprisingly high compared to the retention rate of all students (59.0%); and (2) the 7% increase in the retention rate, to 60.6%, is significant.

**b. Increase by 1% per year the number of these students who successfully complete the college-level course that follows completion of related developmental courses**

*Baseline data:* Math: 15.5%; English: 24.7%

*First-year goal:* Math: 16.5%; English 25.7%

*First-year data:* Math: 17.1% (1.6% increase); English: 17.7% (7.0% decrease)

*Analysis:* This is one of the more complicated strategic goals to fully understand. The increase in retention in math (exceeding the strategic goal) is a positive development. English has traditionally had higher student transition success from developmental to college-level courses than math. Like all of our strategic goals, longitudinal data for the retention rate for English is needed to better understand the dynamics involved.

## **6. COMMUNICATION & IMAGE**

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**6.1. Evaluate Web site redesign and the new content management system in terms of increased internal and external usability**

*Baseline data:* New web design & content management system

*First-year goal:* Staff training; usability testing

*First-year data:* Staff training and usability testing has occurred; Web site award received

*Analysis:* The College’s new Web site was successfully redesigned and a content management system implemented, and numerous hours of staff training and usability testing have been accomplished. The College also received external validation on the high quality of the new Web site: NWC’s site earned the 2009 “Gold Medallion of Excellence” from the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations (District 4).

**6.2. Develop a new initiative to improve internal communication**

*First-year goal:* Software identification for electronic forum

*First-year data:* Electronic forum (“Yammer”) identified

*Analysis:* After consideration of various possibilities, and as the result of several faculty and staff employing it, “Yammer” was selected as a means for college employees to communicate with one another regarding unofficial, yet important, matters of interest.

**6.3. Implement additional digital communication strategies to enhance communication with prospective and current students**

*First-year goal:* Implement “Active Admissions” by Spring 2009

*First-year data:* “Active Admissions” implemented

*Analysis:* After extensive research, pilot-testing, and collaboration, “Active Admissions” was successfully implemented. Through an integrated electronic prospect and application process, prospective students have instantaneous access to customized information about academic programs, activities, and scholarships of interest.