

# Northwest College - WY

HLC ID 1724

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STANDARD PATHWAY: Reaffirmation Review

Visit Date: 9/11/2017

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## Context and Nature of Review

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### Visit Date

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9/11/2017

#### Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

- The Year 4 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Biennial Review for Applying institutions

#### Reaffirmation Reviews include:

- The Year 10 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Review for Initial Candidacy for Applying institutions
- The Review for Initial Accreditation for Applying institutions
- The Year 4 Review for Standard Pathway institutions that are in their first accreditation cycle after attaining initial accreditation

### Scope of Review

- Reaffirmation Review
- Federal Compliance
- On-site Visit
- Multi-Campus Visit (if applicable)

*There are no forms assigned.*

## Institutional Context

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Northwest College (NWC) is a public, two-year comprehensive community college. The College serves a three-county area and is located in the small town of Powell, Wyoming, which is set in the valley of the Shoshone River. The campus covers 132 acres and includes residential halls and apartments. The College also includes four additional locations.

Due to its physical size, layout, and facilities, the main campus has the appearance and feel of a mid-sized, four-year institution. Buildings and grounds are well-kept, modern, and welcoming, despite some aging physical structures. Support facilities, such as the library, are well-maintained, student focused and inviting.

The College serves 1,715 students, 59% full-time. There are 301 employees, including 145 faculty, 72 of whom are full-time. The College student-to-faculty ratio is 12:1. There are also 156 administrative, classified and professional staff members.

The College has seen a reduction in state allocations in recent years and has made appropriate, yet sometimes difficult, changes in response to the loss in revenue. On the other hand, NWC has a strong Foundation and grant opportunities that help to support the students. The College has also found innovative ways to ensure student success through various initiatives that are clearly beneficial to the entire college community.

NWC has experienced a recent turnover in leadership, but the new President and her cabinet are clearly committed to ensuring operational stability and continuous improvement at the College. Faculty and staff also show commitment to ensuring student success and upholding the college mission.

## **Interactions with Constituencies**

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### Individuals:

Vice President for Administrative Services and Finance

Vice President for Student Services

Vice President for College Relations

Vice President for Academic Affairs

President

Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships

Administrative Secretary for Academic Affairs

Administrative Assistant for College Relations

Printing Services Technician

Foundation Technician

Human Resources Director

Foundation, Development Manager

Foundation, Executive Director

Foundation, Development Coordinator

Foundation Analyst

Scholarship Technician

Dean, Extended Campus

Facilities Assistant

Dean of Student Learning

Registrar, Director of Admissions and Judicial Affairs

Faculty/Assessment Coordinator

Institutional Researcher

Instructional Technology Coordinator

Maintenance Manager

Director of Facilities

Library Coordinator/temporary library director

Business Office Manager

Finance Director

Web Developer

Campus Security Manager

Director of Residence and Campus Life

Admissions Manager

Director of Children's Learning and Care Center

Manager of Student Health

GEAR UP Coordinator

Interim Student Success Center Manager

Program Manager TRIO SSS

JFC Coordinator

Groups/meetings:

President and Cabinet (5)

HLC Assurance Committee (13)

Facilities Review (3)

Distance Review (7)

Students (14)

Student Learning Assessment (12)

Classified and Professional Staff (72)

Planning and Budgeting (7)

Governance and Administration (15)

Federal Compliance (7)

Criterion 1 & 2 open forum (56)

Curriculum Committee (12)

Board of Trustees (7)

Board of Trustees, Advisory Board, Community members (26)

Full and Part-time Faculty (33)

Institutional Effectiveness Committee (12)

Criterion 3 & 4 open forum (48)

Student Services Leadership Team (12)

Professional Staff (25)

Academic Advising Council (10)

Exit Session (3)

Additional Location tour: Cody Center

## **Additional Documents**

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22 faculty transcripts

# 1 - Mission

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

## 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

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

## Rating

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Met

## Evidence

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To update the mission due to institutional cultural changes, the revision of the mission statement was initiated by the President in Spring 2015. The process involved employee submissions which helped develop the Institutional Priority Inventory (IPI). The IPI was used by both internal and external audiences to secure ideas and information. Results were the identification of five themes that became the five mandates. The College Council received and finalized the statements and recommended approval to the President (see College Council minutes 03/01/15). The President submitted the mission statement to the Board for approval (see Board minutes 03/14/16).

The central tenant of the institution's mission is to be "Student Centered." The institution's academic programs clearly serve the interest of the students by staying true to their original mission of a liberal arts education, while offering a diverse battery of programs including agriculture, criminal justice, and animal science. Many of these programs are supported by impressive and unique facilities (farm, animal facility, rodeo facility, Library) that are specific to unique geographic needs of the institution. The institution is attentive to issues with low enrolled programs by making difficult decisions to cut programs in order to maintain quality in other programs and services supportive of the mission.

The HLC visiting team found that Northwest College (NWC) was particularly attentive to supporting the student need to transfer to other universities by cultivating articulation agreements with institutions outside the State of Wyoming. Additionally, the institution supports students through Trio programs, international student support efforts, and upgraded library and tutoring services.

The institution's planning and budgeting process originated from Vision 2020. It was complete with

key performance indicators and measurable objectives. Vision 2020 is consistent with the recently-revised mission statement, linking the budget process with the vision statement.

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### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The mission statement may be found on the college website, Board of Trustees webpage, and the college annual report. Additionally, the mission statement is sent to over 1200 external stakeholders via a letter from the President, and is distributed to all faculty and staff on campus. This initiative ensures maximum disbursement of the mission. Although it was mentioned that the statement would be visible in wall presentations and desk cubes on the campus tour, the HLC visiting team did not observe the mission in desk cubes, and the wall presentations were relatively small and did not necessarily stand out from other wall hangings (i.e. bulletin boards, paintings, etc.). The mission is also included at the bottom of every Board of Trustees meeting agenda which is sent out to the campus community.

The college's mission statement contains 5 themes:

1. Student Centered
2. Forward Thinking
3. Cultivate Community
4. Prepare Students for Transfer, Career, and Life
5. Retain and Graduate Students

Each of these relate to Vision 2020 with core objectives and measurable outcomes. Furthermore, the mission identifies the core constituents of students and community, and mirrors the College's goal of serving liberal arts transfer students along with technical and career students consistent with the needs of the community and the state.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The HLC visiting team found that NWC is very focused on attracting and supporting an international student population. Additionally, the Team found that NWC makes an effort to educate the campus and surrounding community by offering a robust and diverse set of programs on international student cultures. However, there seems to be lack of overall diversity in the student, faculty, administrative, and staff population, which is reflective of the surrounding community. Additionally, faculty expressed some concerns involving the lack of diverse academic programs that have been discussed within the College recently, including Gender Studies and Native American Studies. While these concerns are understandable, the administration has demonstrated that it has had to consider factors such as enrollment, budget and market needs when considering new programs.

Through the Intercultural House, the College offers a variety of international programs including: Chilean Night, Journey through India, and Macau Night. A robust Multicultural Club operates on campus with an average membership of 68 students. Additionally, the students are introduced to the community through various events and learning opportunities. Furthermore, students are able to travel abroad through a nationwide consortium.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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NWC surveyed the community to better understand public attitudes, perceptions and desired courses and services in 2014. The Partnership Report is a summary of education, community and regional development partnership information that demonstrates commitment to the public good. The survey results included overwhelming praise for the College and course/program offerings. Discussion with Advisory Board members confirmed the importance of supporting partnerships.

During the meeting with the community, the Team observed that retired faculty members who continued to reside in the community actively engaged in college activities and served as conduits between NWC and other community members.

The public has access to a large number of NWC campus facilities for little to no charge. The childcare center and fitness center are among facilities that are heavily used by community members as explained by various constituency groups.

NWC is a publicly funded college governed by a 7-member locally elected Board of Trustees. A review of board minutes, board rules and regulations attests to independence from third-party entities or organizations.

An external stakeholder's contact list of 426 representatives is maintained with regular mailings of college information, such as institutional fact cards, annual reports, surveys, etc. Additionally, the President's blog and approximately 300 news releases to local and regional outlets are also posted on the College's website for informational purposes.

**Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

### Evidence

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It was apparent to the 2017 HLC visiting team that the mission was developed as part of a defined process that involved significant outreach to a variety of campus constituents. While five themes were identified through the process, the central tenant of "Student Centered" formed the foundation. This foundation is evident in the mix of both transfer and occupational programs and support systems designed to aid students through their journey. Additionally, the strategic plan (Vision 2020) was specifically tied to the institution's budget, which is tied back to the mission statement.

The Team also discovered that the mission statement is widely distributed to campus and community stakeholders through a variety of means including: internet, mailings, and visual displays. Although the visual displays of the mission statements were lacking somewhat in their visibility.

While diversity found within the college employee groups was lacking, it does reflect the general make up of the surrounding population. Nonetheless, the institution attempts to educate the campus and community through a wide variety of multicultural events. The main mechanism for these programs is the Intercultural House, which has a strong student membership and serves a number of individuals both on and off campus. These programs are strengthened by the availability of a number of study abroad opportunities.

Finally, the institution strives to service its community's needs and preferences. Through a survey, the institution assessed community attitudes. Particularly popular services the institution offers to the community include the child care center and fitness facility. The community also has access to a number of programs and facilities.

## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

### 2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

#### Rating

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Met

#### Evidence

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The Board's authority and responsibility is articulated in "Rules and Regulations Pertaining to the Governance of the Northwest College Board of Trustees." Included is a Board Code of Ethics and Conduct. This document is regularly reviewed and amended to assure Board focus in curriculum, budget, finances, personnel and community service area. A review of selected Board meeting minutes attest that appropriate deliberations are regularly taking place at Board meetings. Meetings of the Board of Trustees are publicized and include a published agenda. Included on the agenda is time for "Citizen's Open Forum."

Financially, the College contracts with a third party accounting firm to conduct an annual Financial and Compliance (Audit) Report, including an A-133 Federal Compliance Audit. The audit is presented to the Board of Trustees by a managing partner in November of each year. The results of the audit are also reviewed at an all-college employee meeting. An annual budget process involving administration, faculty, staff, budget managers, and the budget committee produces an annual budget document that is submitted to the President and to the Board of Trustees for their review and approval (BoT Minutes 7/11/16). The College is subject to Wyoming State Statute, Article 1m Title 21, Chapter 18 (Wyoming Community College System Code) as well as Title 16, Chapter 4 (Uniform Fiscal Procedures) which requires the College to submit approved budgetary, enrollment and other data that accurately represents the operations of the College.

The College adheres to and is held accountable for its academic policies and procedures by publishing them in the college catalog, student handbook, employee handbook, course syllabi and on the college website. Challenges to any of these policies/procedures are addressed through the respective college appeals procedure including the involvement of college committees, such as Grievance Committee, Student Appeals Board and Academic Freedom and Grievance Committee.

The Vice President for Administrative Services and Finance serves as the Compliance Officer for employment related matters. The Vice President for Student Services serves as the Compliance Officer for non-employment related matters, such as the Cleary crime report, FERPA,

Disability/ADA, Financial Aid, Title IV, Student Conduct and Title IX. Policies and procedures for addressing issues relating to the above are identified in college publications and are available to all constituents on the website. The example of two recent Title IX grievances (2016-17) demonstrates that the procedural processes outlined for addressing these situations were appropriate and followed.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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All key College program publications, such as the college catalog, course schedule, faculty-staff directory, admissions, Financial Aid (cost of attendance) are available to all internal and external constituents on the college website. Board of Trustee meeting agenda and minutes are also available on the college website. Notice of accreditation can also be found in appropriate publications and on the college website. Employee policies related to faculty and staff are delineated in the employment handbook, which is available on the college website.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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A review of the Board of Trustee meeting agenda and minutes provides evidence that interests of internal and external constituents are considered during deliberations. Examples of such deliberations and actions include: building construction, operational plan 2016, credit transfer, student retention, outcomes assessment, employee satisfaction, student enrollment, student success and student completion. To encourage external constituency input, the agenda includes a regularly scheduled time at each Board meeting for "Citizens Open Forum." The Board also reviewed the Community Survey (2014) conducted by the College. Regular opportunities are available for the College's Alumni Association and the Northwest College Foundation to attend Board meetings and to engage with the Board of Trustees.

Each Board member is elected by a community constituency according to the Statutes of the State of Wyoming and is required to adhere to a Board Code of Ethics as well as avoid any Conflict of Interest. A violation of a Board Rule will subject the Board members to sanctions as outlined in its "Rules and Regulations." The Board has statutory powers that frame its relationship with the Wyoming Community College Commission. Given the unique relationship of Northwest College to the Northwest College Foundation, its agent for fund raising and managing these resources to support the mission of the College, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was created in 2016 to identify and list the duties and responsibilities of each entity.

Board members are elected officials and hold autonomous governance responsibilities for the College District with statutorily derived powers. Statement of Board Member Responsibilities, Board Code of Ethics, Disclosure of Interest Statement, Conflict of Interest Statement, procedures and sanctions for violation of Board of Trustee Rules and regulations and Board protocols to respond to internal and external concerns have been approved by the Northwest College Board of Trustees.

The Northwest College Board of Trustees delegates the day-to-day management of the College to the

President as noted in "Chapter IX-College President" of the "Rules and Regulations ...", other Board generated documents and the College organizational chart. The Curriculum Committee, with seven of its fourteen members being faculty, meets regularly and maintains an educational focus on instructional programming. The Academic Advisory Council meets regularly to advise the Vice President for Academic Affairs on instructional and budget issues, program review and faculty positions.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Affirmation of academic freedom can be found in the "Faculty Employment Policy" under Rights and Privileges and Professional Ethics. The Northwest College Faculty Organization lists as one of its objectives "to promote within the faculty the highest type of professional practices and a spirit of professional ethics." The College has adopted the "Statement on Professional Ethics" from the American Association of University Professors. Two College standing committees, the Committee for Faculty Development and Morale, comprising five elected faculty members and chaired by a faculty member, and the Academic Freedom and Grievance Committee, comprising seven elected faculty members and chaired by a faculty member, support freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth through shared governance. A review of selected committee minutes documents meetings taking place with appropriate discussions.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The Institutional Review Committee is a standing committee chaired by the Dean of Student Learning and composed of faculty and professional staff that review proposals for research involving human subjects and submits their recommendation to the President. The IRC adheres to guidelines of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services best practices and ethical standards.

The Communication section of the General Education Curriculum includes the course outcome "to find, analyze, evaluate and document information appropriately using a variety of sources, including library sources." All students are required to take ENG 1010, Introduction to Composition, where they learn the mechanics of college writing and documentation. In addition, some upper level (2000) courses and departments instruct students in the use of discipline related citation styles, such as, MLA, APA, Chicago and Agronomy. A review of the Library Instruction Assessment Report 2012-2017 identifies efforts to support these endeavors by developing practice exercises to address the following: 1) credibility of sources, 2) selecting a variety of sources, and 3) internet searching an evaluation. In addition to assistance with ENG 1010, the Library staff are available to assist in class and provide additional citation sources through a series of library guides and videos.

Policies addressing honesty and integrity are published in the college catalog, the student handbook and on the college website. Course syllabi include an outline of consequences for academic dishonesty or reference the student handbook. The Academic Code of Conduct, as well as the General Code of Student Conduct are published in the college catalog and student handbook. Administration of the Academic Code of Student Conduct is the responsibility of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Academic Dishonesty Policy was revised in 2017.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

### Evidence

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The Board of Trustees' authority and responsibility are articulated in Wyoming Statutes and "Rules and Regulations Pertaining to the Governance of the Northwest College Board of Trustees" including a Board Code of Ethics and Conduct, which is reviewed annually. Board members are elected officials who hold autonomous governance responsibilities for the College District. The Board delegates the day-to-day management of the College to the President, per "Chapter IX-College President" in the "Rules and Regulations ... of the Northwest College Board of Trustees." A review of selected Board minutes attests that appropriate deliberations are regularly taking place at Board meetings, including time for "Hearings Before the Board/Citizens Open Forum." A third party accounting firm completes an annual Financial and Compliance (Audit) Report, including a Federal Compliance Report. The annual budget document that is presented to the Board is the result of a budget process involving administration, faculty and staff.

The HLC visiting team found that college policies are published in the college catalog, student handbook, employee handbook and on the college website. Employee policies related to faculty and staff are delineated in the employment handbook which is also available on the college website. Included in these documents are procedures that address grievances, student appeals, and academic freedom. All college program publications, i.e., catalog, course schedule, faculty-staff directory, admissions, Financial Aid (cost of attendance) are available to all internal and external constituents on the college website, as well.

The Affirmation of academic freedom can be found in the "Faculty Employment Policy." The Northwest College Faculty Organization lists as one of its objectives, "to promote within the faculty the highest type of professional practices and a spirit of professional ethics." The College has also adopted the "Statement of Professional Ethics" from the American Association of University Professors. These expressed beliefs are supported by two standing College committees: Committee for Faculty Development and Morale and Academic Freedom and Grievance Committee.

A review of selected committee minutes attests that meetings regularly took pace according to a published schedule with an agenda, discussion and appropriate action.

The Team also learned during the visit that with the addition of NWC's current President, the Board of Trustees has not engaged in micromanaging the College. The agendas for these meetings are drafted by the President of the College and the actions of the Board are determined by recently established policies. These positive changes have occurred because of the leadership of the current President.

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

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

### **3.A - Core Component 3.A**

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

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

### **Rating**

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Met

### **Evidence**

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NWC awards four types of associate degrees: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate Degree in Nursing, and Associate of Applied Science. The institution also offers a Skills Certificate and Comprehensive Skills Certificates. Learning outcomes have been established for all courses and programs and are included in syllabi. Programs are reviewed every five years to update and determine currency. Additionally, 93 percent of NWC courses transfer to the University of Wyoming and other Wyoming community colleges. The College also has several 2+2 agreements with the University of Wyoming and 34 articulations agreements with colleges and universities outside of WY.

The certificate programs requirements are clearly outlined in the course catalog and on the college website and are differentiated from the general education requirements. The College articulates clear differences in learning goals for certificates and degrees. For example, an Associate of Arts degree requires 26-28 general education credits, while a Comprehensive Skills Certificate requires 6 credits per the college catalog.

The College has developed master syllabus guidelines, but not a master syllabus. As such, some of the syllabus is subjective per instructor preference. The HLC visiting team recommended, during the Curriculum Committee meeting and the exit interview, that the College explore the use of a master course syllabus. While syllabi were reportedly the same for concurrent sections of the same course, the Team observed that it is possible for multiple instructors to develop online course shells for the same course.

The HLC student survey included praise for the Moodle LMS: "I'd just like to say that from my experience at NWC and other colleges in Wyoming, NWC's Moodle has been the easiest

student portal to use and navigate. It is easy to find and access both the Moodle homepage and online information about courses, academic history, and college resources." However, as part of the distance review, it was noted that there was no set plan for growth of distance learning. Furthermore, multiple faculty could create the same online course and receive a stipend for the creation; the courses, however, would not be consistent. There appeared to be a general lack of expediency or direction with regard to the development of distance learning.

The HLC visiting team recommends that the institution establishes a formalized plan for distance learning, that would include projecting growth of hybrid and online courses and programs. Furthermore, the College would benefit from establishing a plan for the growth of its dual enrollment offerings. While there seems to be potential for sustainability based on current operations and processes, the College would benefit from taking an opportunity to pro-actively plan for future growth, which may require a need to increase financial, human, technological and other support services.

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### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The HLC visiting team found that the effort to revise and standardize the general education structure subsequent to the 2013 Focused Visit was well received by all constituent groups and that it supports NWC's current mission, educational offerings and degree programs. It was clear to the 2017 HLC visiting team that NWC has made great strides in this area. The revised general education requirements are articulated in the 2017-2018 College Catalog and aligned with courses that fulfill these requirements.

The new general education requirements include the First Year Seminar, which is consistent with NWC's mission to be "student-centered." This requirement also grows out of a focus on maintaining retention and graduation rates and will be assessed in the future. Other general education requirements, such as "Communication" and "Creativity" also support the mission of the College.

The College offers courses in the "Human Condition" category that include a focus on human and cultural diversity of the world; for example, agricultural economics, anthropology, art, business, communication, criminal justice, economics, English, geography, history, humanities, Japanese, political science, sociology, social work, and Spanish. The faculty expressed a desire to establish additional programs that focus on diversity, such as Gender Studies and Native American Studies.

The College cited lack of enrollment and budget cuts as reasons for discontinuing the Journalism

program. As such, administration is understandably focused on these factors when it comes to approving new programs. During the meeting with the Curriculum Committee, the Team learned that faculty had invested time and resources in developing a proposal for the Gender Studies program, only to see it "scrapped," as articulated by a faculty member. In an effort to avoid this situation in the future, the HLC visiting team recommends that the College investigates ways to improve the procedure for considering new programs. An improved procedure would lend itself to incorporating significant decision points early on in the process. While the interests of stakeholders should be considered in the decision-making process, these groups also need to understand the obligation to weigh the feasibility of launching new programs in light of enrollment issues, financial concerns, and the rural nature of the environment.

The Team observed the presence of scholarly work on display in academic buildings. The work was typically collaborative work between faculty and students. This work was specific to science. The College received a grant to cultivate and grow hops for use in the Agricultural program and the Team was able to observe the lab used for experimentation as well as the farm where the product is grown and harvested. The Criminal Justice program purchased a VIR TRA (firearms) simulator for approximately a quarter of a million dollars. This simulator helps students to understand how to de-escalate situations in addition to other law enforcement strategies.

Some students expressed dismay over the discontinuation of the Journalism program and the printed college newspaper. While the College cited lack of enrollment and budget cuts as reasons for this action, NWC is strongly encouraged to consider additional means for promoting journalistic expression.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The College has a healthy ratio of students to faculty (12:1), which is above the median for the IPEDS comparison group (14:1). The average salary for 2015-2016 for full-time faculty was above the average of 14 comparable institutions. The Team learned that the faculty have not received salary increases in recent years, but that this was the outcome of a vote (rather than choosing to eliminate positions).

While the Curriculum Committee serves in an advisory role with regard to curricular decisions, the VPAA has the authority to accept or reject recommendations. The VPAA has the responsibility to inform the Committee of his decision in a timely manner; however, as discussed in 3.B, the faculty complained that this was not the case with regard to the Gender Studies program since this program was not vetted by the VPAA. As discussed in 3.B, the Team recommends a change in process to provide the feasibility of establishing proposed, individual programs before substantial time and resources are invested.

The Team checked 22 full-time and adjunct faculty transcripts for qualifications and found that all faculty were properly credentialed; however, two concurrent faculty lacked current transcripts. The Faculty Organization established an ad hoc committee to determine areas of expertise, including whether tested experience fulfills HLC requirements. The Assurance Argument and the Ad Hoc

Committee on Faculty Qualifications shared the proposal with the Visiting Team. The College has clear knowledge of HLC requirements for credentialing.

The College has processes in place for regular faculty evaluation and instructors are regularly evaluated by students. The full-time faculty are required to submit an annual report and it was conveyed that almost 100% were compliant with this requirement. However, there were concerns about whether these reports were read by the administration, as very little feedback was generally shared with the concerned party. Furthermore, the timeline for submission seems to change, confusing faculty. According to the Assurance Argument, the report is submitted to the VPAA before being reviewed by the Rank and Tenure committee. During the meeting with faculty, however, a faculty member expressed concern that the Rank and Tenure committee "no longer functioned" as a result of a policy revision process. On the other hand, the VPAA explained that the policy had not changed since the last HLC comprehensive visit and that the Rank and Tenure committee continued to function. The Team recommends that the College consider ways to enhance transparency of process and communication of outcomes, so that all individuals and constituency groups are well-informed at all times.

Faculty also play the role of Advisors in the new advisory model. Students conveyed that the relationship was helpful, but some students did express frustration that faculty did not have enough time to provide the level of advising assistance that was needed. Additionally, some students expressed concern about the information that was shared with regard to transferability, indicating that it was not always accurate. There appeared to be a certain amount of frustration on the part of students who felt that they were directed to take classes that would not transfer to other institutions. On the other hand, when pressed, faculty explained that they have taken multiple steps to ensure information shared is accurate and up to date, particularly with regard to articulation agreements with four-year partners. The HLC visiting team also observed faculty holding "office hours" in the library where they indicated that there is a better opportunity to talk with students directly. In general, faculty appeared to be invested in the mission of the College and focused on ensuring student success.

During the HLC team visit, some faculty maintained that while they are provided with opportunities for professional development, there is only a small fund to support this effort. On the other hand, during informational workshops held by the College in 2016, faculty clearly expressed appreciation for professional development support provided by NWC. According to the Assurance Argument, NWC's budget "includes a Professional Development and Travel Fund allocated to divisions proportionately based on the number of full-time faculty in each division."

The HLC visiting team confirmed through direct contact and by reviewing published information in the catalog that counseling staff is properly qualified. The Team also spot checked credentials for staff in Financial Aid, Registrar, and Residence Life, and all were properly qualified.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Various constituency groups confirmed that NWC has a well established early alert process (HELP). The Team confirmed the existence of the form on the NWC website. The Team further confirmed that many offices go above and beyond to support student success. This is demonstrated by the HERO grant, which provides emergency funding for students who experience financial hardship. One specific example of this was a grant that went to a student who lost their job due to a medical emergency.

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

NWC's Adult Education program provides math skills development to students who need to improve their preparation before entering for-credit courses. The developmental math offered through Adult Education is non-credit, cost-free. NWC also offers a co-requisite math model and is piloting a co-requisite English model this Fall. This initiative will allow students to take the required math and English, with a co-requisite course, even if they do not directly test into college-level math or English.

Another class that provides support and preparation for a successful college career is a mandatory First Year Seminar (FYS). NWC offers twelve discipline-specific seminars and seven general studies seminars. All of the various versions of the FYS course share the same learning outcomes. Students spoke very highly of the FYS commenting that advising through the seminar gave them ample and supportive guidance. The HLC visiting team felt this was a particular strength of the institution; that

it has the potential to sustain an already high retention and persistence rate.

Advising at NWC follows a split model consisting of a centralized advising center and faculty advisors from each program. NWC has 69 active advisors with an average of 25 advisees to each advisor. As discussed earlier, students expressed some frustration that faculty don't always have sufficient time to properly provide advice. The Team confirmed that faculty advising is considered part of normal duties and they do not receive release time for advising. NWC may want to consider restricting advising duties of faculty if their teaching loads are heavy.

The Advising Center (AC) provides academic advising for general studies majors and undecided students. The AC offers the following services:

- General academic advising: helps guide student through their journey at NWC;
- Transfer advising: helps students prepare for their academic careers after NWC;
- Career advising: helps students identify and follow the correct academic path to reach their career goals set at NWC;
- Coordinating internships: helps students identify and follow the correct path to reach the career goals that they set at NWC;
- Responding to the early alert system and referring students to appropriate resources e.g., the Success Center, Trio, Tutoring, Registrar's Office. Over Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 299 students were contacted by the AC;
- Peer mentors connect with students who need help adjusting to college.

College facilities supporting students and faculty were impressive. The Team felt this was another strength of the institution. The library is well endowed with computers, worktables, study rooms, and other resources and it provides ample space for peer tutoring and supplementary instruction. Additionally, the library has dedicated space for late-hours studying and there are also comfortable study areas throughout campus. Furthermore, there are several state-of-the-art simulation labs and instructional spaces including the Criminal Justice firearms simulator, Nursing lab, and chemistry hoods. The College also operates a rodeo arena, farm, and livestock area that are all used to support instruction. Students have multiple options for on-campus dining as well as a variety of residential facilities. There are plans to renovate space and create a teaching center to aid instructors, and the institution also includes museum space. Classrooms are high-tech, spacious, and clean.

The library has an instructional classroom that is used, particularly for students in the First Year Seminar course, to assist students in using the library for a variety of purposes including conducting research.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.E - Core Component 3.E

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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As noted on NWC's website, there are 44 active clubs and organizations on campus for students to join. There are also 10 intramural sports available to students, along with a fitness center. The team was particularly impressed with the breath and diversity of intercultural programs offered for students and community members alike.

As a member of the NJCAA Division I and the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association athletic programs, NWC teams compete in men's and women's basketball, soccer & rodeo, men's wrestling, and women's volleyball. More than 100 student-athletes participate. Intercollegiate athletics offers student-athletes the opportunity to follow their interests and talents and contributes to the sense of community on campus.

While there is no formal service learning opportunity, individual classes include a service learning component which allows students to engage with the community.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

### 3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

#### Evidence

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NWC's administration, staff, and faculty work together to ensure that students are provided a high quality education, consistent with the college mission. Degree programs are appropriate to higher education and offer options that enable seamless transfer to four-year institutions or preparation for the workforce.

The College's new general education requirements and outcomes support the mission of the College and have become central to all of its degree offerings. The new general education requirements include the First Year Seminar, which provides a foundation for a successful academic career and has the potential to yield continued success with retention and graduation rates.

While general education (distribution) requirements for each degree program are clearly articulated in the college catalog and included on the degree worksheet, some faculty communicated to the HLC visiting team that there was bewilderment and inconsistency with regard to how many general education credits were required for the A.A.S. in comparison to the previous year. It appears that this confusion occurred as a result of a combination of the preparation of the academic year and HLC visit. The situation appears to have been resolved as evidenced by a review of the website and course catalog. There is no evidence that students have been impacted. In order to avoid similar situations in the future, it is important that the College actively pursue and contribute to maintaining open lines of communication.

With regards to distance learning to ensure consistency across this modality, the Team suggested that the institution consider the development of master course shells.

Faculty and staff appear to be committed to the mission of the College, which includes commitment to maintaining a "student centered" environment. Students clearly appreciate the quality and ability to pursue a well-rounded education. Students also spoke highly of the faculty, noting that they appreciated the knowledge and experience that was brought to the classroom environment.

Northwest College invests in facilities and support services that help to ensure that students are afforded an optimal learning environment. The library, labs, classrooms, and other learning environments included state-of-the art equipment. Staff was trained to assist students in their pursuit of a higher education. Students also have the ability to join clubs, which are numerous, and participate in sports.

The Team recognizes the College is committed to providing a high quality education. However, there are also issues that persist at this institution. Many of the issues mentioned in Criterion 3 stem from a lack of communication that was articulated to the HLC visiting team during meetings with different stakeholder groups, by individuals in passing, and through various means. While a small number of faculty and staff articulated these concerns during the visit and survey results indicate an improvement with regard to communication, it was clear that these issues do exist. In order to remedy this situation the College may want to consider:

- refining the curriculum process to have the VPAA approve/decline prior to creating programs;
- promoting communication through newsletters;
- providing opportunities to articulate concerns such as but not limited to:
  - Informal drop-in sessions for small groups with key administrators (such as coffee with the President), in an effort to continue to build community.
  - and ensuring and expecting transparency with regard to all matters.

There is also a tendency based upon past college culture to not easily accept decisions (this is a small group) that are different from past decisions, as well as those decisions with which there is disagreement. NWC has made some major cultural shifts in a short time frame. It would benefit the College to find ways to transform these issues in order to ensure that all stakeholders have a singular focus--one that is "student centered." It is vital, however, that all parties (administration, staff, and faculty) play a role in finding ways to improve this matter.

## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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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

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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NWC employs a five-year rotation cycle for its Program Review process. Reviews are staggered, with 5-8 occurring each year, as demonstrated in the Program Review Schedule for 2013-2019. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee is responsible for evaluating submitted Program Reviews and annual reports for non-academic areas. The College provided the Program Review self-study report form. The HLC visiting team had a difficult time determining whether Program Reviews had been submitted at the required time. It appeared that of the five programs scheduled for 2016-2017, only two had submitted the report to the college portal. Furthermore, the 2015-2016 program reviews were

uploaded in June 2017. The Team did not find evidence that the three remaining reviews from 2016-2017 had been completed.

The Team learned about Program Review from the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. This Committee is currently growing to include additional members, one of which will be involved with program evaluation. The Team was able to access program reviews through the NWCmyportal. Program review includes three documents; however, they were difficult to find. The three components of the review include a narrative, quantitative data, and a program cover sheet. In checking the journalism example, it was clear that enrollment was at a critically low level for an expanded period and that the decision to discontinue this program was based on this evidence, indicating that the College is using results from its Program Review process to make appropriate change.

NWC has processes in place for awarding previously earned credit, including for experiential learning. The Registration and Records Office is responsible for evaluating transfer credit and a team of faculty is responsible for evaluating Self-Acquired Competency Credit (SACC). NWC accepts credits only from regionally-accredited postsecondary institutions. International Baccalaureate (IB) credit transfer is evaluated by the Registrar.

The Team learned that NWC has a very active Curriculum Committee (CC), which meets almost weekly, as confirmed by the CC minutes. The Committee is comprised of a cross-section of representatives, including faculty, staff, students and administration. This Committee oversees the new course creation process and determines whether courses should earn general education credit. The College provided the New Course Curriculum and Course Revision forms and Guidelines for both processes. The Team confirmed the process with the Curriculum Committee. It was explained that some programs took a short time to develop and implement, while others took an inordinately long time to go through the process. Any new certificate or program degree needs to be approved by the Wyoming College Commission and some need HLC approval, which may add to the time it takes to launch the program. If the College wants to pilot a program up to six credits, there is an opportunity to expedite the process. The Team suggests that NWC contacts HLC to determine if and when approvals are necessary.

The Dean of the Extended Campus oversees concurrent enrollment and the Division Chairs review concurrent classes, including visitation and analysis of student evaluations. A pilot assessment of concurrent classes was conducted by the English department, demonstrating that students in the program achieved at the same level as those enrolled in college courses. This assessment will serve as a model for other areas. The Team learned that Division Chairs have oversight of all concurrent enrollment classes and ensure that the course-specific syllabus is consistently used in these classes.

The College included the credit hour expectation, which is complete--including homework requirements. However, one credit hour equates to one hour in the definition (this should be 50 minutes according to the class schedule on the website). The Team explained the issue to NWC and personnel indicated that this issue would be dealt with.

The Team learned that NWC is known as the "transfer community college" and that its students are tracked by the University of Wyoming, the major four-year partner. Results indicate that those students who transferred performed similarly to all transfer students. The College collects data relative to employment, which is associated with the annual performance indicators, and it is sent to the WCCC where it is compared to other community colleges.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

### Rating

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Met With Concerns

### Evidence

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Pursuant to recommendations made by the Focused Visit team of 2013, NWC has instituted change in its assessment process. The VPAA appointed a full-time faculty member to the role of Assessment Coordinator in Fall 2013. The Assessment Coordinator worked with the Central Assessment Team (CAT) to restructure assessment. The 2017 HLC visiting team had an opportunity to meet with the Coordinator and CAT members who seemed to be committed to ensuring continuous improvement relative to assessment at the College.

In response to the recommendation from the 2013 Focused Visit that NWC adopt "a single set of general education/all-college goals and a unified process for assessing whether all graduates of the institutions are meeting those goals," the College made changes. General Education Outcomes replaced the "All-College Outcomes," which align with program and course-level outcomes for assessment. The previous "General Education Outcomes" were renamed "General Education Distribution Requirements." This framework is used to determine the number of courses students need to take in each category.

Revisions were undertaken by the Curriculum Committee in 2016-17 and the new general education structure became effective Fall 2017, reflecting a new focus on categorization and credit hour requirements. The new outcomes are similar to the previous outcomes, but include two additional categories: creativity and first year seminar. The College explained that the first year seminar outcomes will be addressed by the first year seminar courses, required of all first year students and, at times, are discipline-specific. NWC explained that the process for assessing general education outcomes has not changed.

Streamlining of the general education requirements and outcomes has had a positive effect on the assessment process; however, as these requirements have only been recently revised, the College has not had an opportunity to assess the new outcomes.

The College has also developed new forms and converted to electronic submission methods within the past year. Therefore, processes, such as submitting course information for inclusion in the general education program, will increase efficiency and effectiveness for the College. NWC recently postponed the date for submitting program-level reports partly due to the conversion to the electronic submission system. As such, Program Assessment data for 2016-2017 was not available at the time of the 2017 HLC team visit. The plan is for this report to be completed during the current semester and finished in time for budget planning during the Spring 2018 semester.

It was learned during the meeting with the Curriculum Committee that while the College does not generate a Master Course Syllabus, there are guidelines in place. The Universal Syllabus Information document (Spring 2017) does not include outcome information. Course syllabi were accessed from the myNWCportal. While course learning outcomes are articulated on these syllabi for Fall 2017, general education outcomes are not always included on the syllabi.

The Team met with CAT and learned that there is an active assessment process; however, the Team expresses concern over the method of assessment at the section level (across courses in the same section) as individual instructors are conducting their own assessment which may or may not be shared with others in the department. As a result of this inconsistency, course-level assessment may not yield the most meaningful information. While it was argued by some CAT members that the lack of cross-section efforts gave individual instructors certain freedom to conduct appropriate assessment at the course level, the lack of employment of shared instruments and measures and, as a result, the inability to compare findings across sections may lead to the derailment of the process. In accordance with best practices, the College may want to consider conducting cross-section assessment of common learning outcomes in addition to its individual course-level initiative.

The College provided evidence of the revision of program learning outcomes between 2013-2016. Assessment results indicate that the College saw an increase in achievement between 2013-2016. The Assurance Argument indicated a 59% increase between 2013-16 on the collective review section of the CAT feedback report.

NWC began a curriculum mapping initiative and provided results for five programs. While the Assurance Argument indicated that this initiative would take priority over the 2017-2018 academic year, CAT team members explained that it had "fizzled out," indicating that it lost momentum. As such, this initiative was not part of the assessment effort at the time of the HLC visit. Curriculum mapping is highly effective, as it ensures that assessment is conducted on all levels. It would benefit the College to re-establish this effort, especially as some programs have already made a commitment to do so.

As maintained in the Assurance Argument, the Team learned during the meeting with CAT that CCSSE results are being used to make informed decisions and improvements. Retention, for example, is a driving force for a number of different initiatives. NWC uses CCSSE and benchmarks findings.

While NWC assesses outcomes for curricular programs, non-curricular outcomes have not been formally identified nor has there been an assessment process for these programs. The College maintains that the academic model will be used for the development of outcomes and assessment of co-curricular and non-academic areas. As a matter of best practice, the College may want to consider aligning co-curricular and curricular outcomes. The College does note that the Graduate Exit Survey data indicates that students are satisfied with co-curricular offerings.

The College measures actions taken to improve student learning. Findings indicate that between 2013-

2016, the College saw increases in the pedagogical, curricular, and logistics/technological areas. Planned actions were also measured for potential of improving student learning and saw positive results. The College provided examples of how they have "closed the loop" in several areas.

NWC provides information about how assessment informs the budget process. One example was how the Graduate Exit Survey informed the establishment of the Teaching and Learning Center.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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Northwest College has made substantial improvement to its assessment process; however, as the revision process is still evolving, it will be important to demonstrate that recently developed components are assessable and that improvements have been made based on findings. The Team found that there were other issues that need to be addressed as the College moves forward with its assessment effort, such as the establishment of co-curricular and non-academic outcomes, the uneven course-level assessment process, ensuring success with the on-line format for submitting reports, and making improvements based on assessment findings relative to the new general education outcomes.

The monitoring report should demonstrate that:

- a successful completion of one cycle of assessment that includes, but is not exclusive to, the new general education outcomes has been accomplished;
- improvements have been made relative to findings based on the above assessment activity;
- the new general education outcomes inform the budget/planning process;
- the on-line assessment report submission system is efficient and effective;
- new program-level report submission deadlines are adhered to;
- and co-curricular outcomes are developed and a plan for assessing these outcomes has been implemented (including milestone markers).

due: December 1, 2019

## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Goals are ambitious, attainable and on-track and demonstrated by the 2012-13 to 2016-17 Strategic Plan tracking report and articulated by the Vision 2020 key performance indicators. Retention and completion also tie to the priority of Experience in Vision 2020 and NWC's mission which includes being student-centered, preparing students for the future, and producing graduates. In meeting with various constituency groups at Northwest College, the HLC Visiting team learned that there is a commitment to ensuring student success in all areas.

Northwest provided the IPEDS completions and graduate rate surveys for 2016-2017 in addition to Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) and Consumer Information Disclosures reporting data. NWC's retention rate has remained above 60% for first-time, first year students since 2013, ranking the College at #1 in the State of Wyoming. For part-time students, the number is 29.6%, which is above the state average of 28.5% and ranks the College as #4. The three-year degree completion rate for first-time, full-time degree seeking students was 36.5% in 2014. The annual Enrollment Report is widely-distributed and retention and completion rates are included on the website.

As communicated in the Assurance Argument and verified during meetings that focused on HLC Criteria for Accreditation, the Team learned that retention data drive a number of improvement initiatives at the College. These improvements included the development of the First Year Seminar, which was also highly praised by students, advising reform, revisions to the early alert process, co-

requisite offerings in math, and 15 to finish, to name a few. The Retention Committee has been instrumental in establishing initiatives that help students to succeed. Based on findings relative to success rates, and specific to students who engaged in program orientation for Agriculture, Education, and Engineering, the College established the First Year Seminar in 2014. The course has become a requirement for degree-seekers and was offered in connection with all programs in 2015.

The College also has a HERO Grant that is specifically designed to help students who are in need of emergency support. The Team learned about specific instances where students were supported by this fund, which allowed them to stay in College.

The Advising Center (AC) was first open in Summer 2013 and it offers a split model for academic advising. There was a need for advising specific to General Studies, so one side of advising focuses on these students. The Team found that students appreciated the support of the full-time advisors and were grateful for the introduction to advising through the First Year Seminar. On the other hand, it is clear that there are still challenges associated with implementing this split model, particularly with regard to students' understanding of which classes transfer to universities outside of Wyoming. The Team maintains that in time this new model will be highly beneficial and supportive of student needs, as it employs the expertise of professional advisors and faculty.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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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.

### Evidence

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NWC demonstrated that it evaluates its effectiveness through its program review process, assessment of student learning, and collection, analysis and data-driven improvements based on findings relative to retention, persistence and completion. It was apparent to the 2017 HLC visiting team, however, that assessment is still in the process of becoming accepted and embedded in NWC's culture. It was also clear that with the continued dedication of CAT, the assessment journey will yield fruitful results and opportunities for improvement. This committee and those involved in the assessment effort have made great strides for the institution as a whole.

While the HLC team that conducted a Focused Visit in 2013 confirmed that many of the issues that were cited in 2011 had been remediated, some outstanding issues were subject to further organizational attention. The first issue cited in the report dealt with administrative turnover resulting in the lack of oversight with regard to the assessment of student learning. The 2017 visiting team specifically addressed this issue during its meetings with various constituency groups. During the Assessment meeting, CAT members indicated that the committee, as a "permanent" committee, would be the force behind the sustainability of assessment at the College. Specifically, "leadership" was cited as an important driver. While it was clear to the 2017 HLC visiting team that there is *currently* strong leadership, commitment, momentum, and processes in place, it is also conceivable that this initiative may not be sustainable without key members who are instrumental in providing oversight for assessment. Once the effort is fully embedded in the culture and embraced by the institution as a whole, processes will be sustainable. This effort will be assisted by cycling through the assessment of the new general education outcomes and participation of constituency groups beyond the assessment team.

The 2013 report also indicated that because of the inconsistency with academic leadership for two years following the 2010 comprehensive visit that Northwest did not completely meet the expectation that the institution "should demonstrate a clear mechanism on how assessment results and analyses are feeding into planning and into budget development as well as into curricular change." This issue was also addressed and remediated by the institution. Various constituency groups confirmed this alignment during the visit and the Assurance Argument demonstrates that this is no longer an issue at the College. Once again, the College is strongly urged to ensure that processes and procedures are not tied to key individuals, but are independently sustainable.

## 5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

### 5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The College is funded from state appropriations, local mill levies, student tuition/fees and auxiliary operations. A review of the Financial and Compliance Report (Audit) FY 2016 attests to the College's ability to address the challenges of reduced state appropriations and local levies with appropriate reserve balances and assistance from the Northwest College Foundation. The College monitors its Financial Ratios (BKD) 2014-2016 and maintains a composite financial index score between 4 and 5 which suggests that it has adequate resources for future planning. NWC's Customized IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2016 compares the College with a comparable group of 14 colleges located in Wyoming, Colorado and Montana. Cited in this report is Northwest College's 12-1 student/faculty ratio which compares favorably to the Group average of 14-1. Also cited is the College's number of full-time equivalent teaching staff of 98 which compares favorably with the Group average of 81.

A review of the College's Audit FY 2016 and Budget confirm that the College is independent from any third party entity or organization and does not allocate any resources to such.

College strategic goals are stated in Vision 2020 and are annually delineated in the President's Operational Plan FY14; FY15; FY16; FY17 which is informed by the budget process and annually

submitted to the Board of Trustees for review and approval per Board minutes.

The College follows a procedure that is outlined in the Staff Employment Policies to develop and modify staff job descriptions which are on file in the Office of Administrative Services. The published roster of staff with degrees earned attests to the appropriateness of their academic preparation, as did a review of selected resumes. Professional development opportunities are available to all staff and include a variety of campus based Human Resources training, on-line webinars and training modules and off-campus seminars, conferences, etc. All of these opportunities are funded by a specific Professional Development budget that has seen a slight increase over the past four years (2015-2018).

A review of the Budget Committee agenda confirms a functioning budget and planning process that involves a cross-section of administration, faculty and staff and prepares a budget document (2017; 2018) for the President's review and approval that is informed by the College Mission Statement and Vision 2020. Discussions with College groups attests that the final budget is shared with the college community before it is presented to the Board of Trustees. Budget managers review regular budget reports and are accountable for managing their respective budgets. Quarterly Budget and Financial reports are prepared by the CFO and submitted to the President and Board of Trustees for review and monitoring purposes.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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A review of the "Rules and Regulations Pertaining to the Governance of the Northwest College Board of Trustees, as amended May 8, 2017" codifies a framework for Board governance through monthly meetings based upon a structured agenda. A series of regular reports prepared by the College Administration inform each Board meeting agenda, discussion and action. A review of Board minutes and these reports documents that all aspects of College operations (academics, finances, personnel, student welfare and community involvement) are regularly discussed and acted upon.

The engagement of internal constituencies in the governance of the College is defined and outlined in the "Northwest College Shared Governance and Decision Making Guide" which blends the traditional organization structure based upon supervisory reporting lines (President's Advisory Council) with a constituent structure (College Council) based upon membership in a constituent group (i.e., staff, faculty, and students). A variety of shared governance options (committee, councils, teams and ad hoc groups) provide avenues for involvement. A review of selected minutes attests that these 25 committees have a process for providing input that reaches the President and Board of Trustees for their respective decision and action, when appropriate.

The membership, function, and minutes of the following Academic Committees identify their respective roles in setting academic requirements, policies and processes: Academic Advisory Council, Academic Computing, Committee, Central Assessment Team, Course Scheduling Committee, Library Committee, Writing in the Academic World and Retention Committee.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

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The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Vision 2020 is the College's strategic plan of action that is directly tied to Key Performance Indicators which make possible clear measurable results. A review of the action of the enhanced Budget Committee in Spring 2016 confirms that decisions regarding resource allocation were informed by Vision 2020. An example of factors that were considered to address state revenue shortfall included: student scholarship alternatives, Early Retirement Special Offer and Program Sustainability Analysis.

An example of assessment of student learning informing budget decisions occurred in 2014 when the College received a one-time allocation of \$427,289 from the State of Wyoming and used the recommendations of the Central Assessment Team (CAT Budget Proposal Rankings) which included costs as priorities for this additional funding.

The revised Mission Statement, Emergency Operations Plan and the Facilities Master Plan demonstrate evidence of internal and external constituent involvement through planning teams and focused groups.

Realizing the importance of enrollment growth and capacity, a review of the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan was undertaken by a team associated with AACRAO in 2015. The report reviewed current activities, summarized findings and recommended changes. The recommendations have enhanced the College's SEM with updated and new targeted objectives and resulted in responsibility for overseeing this effort being assigned to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. The President's Advisory Council monitors the fluctuation of revenue sources as they impact the College. As recently as May 2015, the College renegotiated its long term debt to a more favorable rate thereby saving \$103,000 in annual interest payments through 2033.

The College is fortunate to have an educational partner in the Northwest College Foundation. Although a separate 501(c)(3) entity, it consistently supports student scholarships and college

programs and has been able to offset some of the decreasing public revenue streams with increased allocations.

The College has the second largest enrollment of international student behind only the University of Wyoming (68 versus 947 in 2016). This purposeful strategy has not only enhanced the globalization of the College's educational enterprise, but has also provide a reliable revenue source.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.D - Core Component 5.D

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The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Vision 2020 is the College's strategic plan with operational goals and key performance indicators that are annual documented, measured, reviewed and published. Annually, as evidenced in Board of Trustees minutes (6/12/17), the Board of Trustees approves a set of Institutional Priorities which informs the annual President's Operational Plan. A review of this Plan for the past four years (FY17; FY16; FY15; FY14) identifies objectives, responsibility, timeline, measurement and status which are related to Vision 2020. Academic Programs are reviewed on a five year rotation as listed in the Academic Program Review Schedule (2013-14 thru 2018-19). An examination of several academic program reviews attests that this is an on-going process. Oversight of academic program reviews has been assigned to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee by the President who also charged the IEC with developing a non-academic program review process.

The College focuses on continuous quality improvement by annually reviewing the following: Key Performance Indicators of Vision 2020, President's Operational plan, Facilities Project Report, Emergency Plan Implementation, Budget planning results, Program planning results, Financial and Compliance (Audit) Report, Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report 2015-16, and Course Scheduling Committee Report 2016-17. In addition, the College has utilized the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) to secure and document student and employee feedback.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

### Evidence

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A review of the Financial and Compliance Report (Audit) FY 2016 attests to the College's independence from any third party entity and ability to address the challenges of reduced state appropriations and local levies with appropriate reserves and Northwest College Foundation support. Its financial ratios (BKD) highlight a financial index score which suggests adequate resources for planning. The College's customized IPEDS Feedback Report 2016 notes its student/faculty ratio (is lower) and full-time equivalent full-time faculty number (is higher) than the comparative college group average. Strategic goals are annually updated and integrated into the President's Annual Plan and inform the college-wide budget process. The budget includes a professional development allocation that supports staff as well as faculty. Budget managers review regular budget reports which are also shared with the Board of Trustees for review and monitoring.

A framework for Board oversight is codified in Wyoming State Statutes and "Rules and Regulations Pertaining to the Governance of the Northwest College Board of Trustees, as amended May 8, 2017." A review of Board minutes by the Visiting Team attests that the Board fulfills its oversight and policy setting responsibilities. The "Northwest College Shared Governance and Decision Making Guide" outlines the role and scope of shared governance through the various committees, councils, teams, etc. A review of selected minutes confirms they actively fulfill their duties.

The College Strategic Plan (Vision 2020) is tied to Key Performance Indicators which along with the Central Assessment Team's annual recommendations inform the annual Budget Process and the President's Annual Plan. A meeting with several college advisory group members clarified for the Visiting Team the purposeful involvement of external groups in program and services development, as well as in the Mission Statement, the Emergency Operations Plan and the Facilities Master Plan through planning teams and focused groups.

Strategic Enrollment Management, as well as revenue fluctuations are monitored on an ongoing basis for appropriate strategic action, an example of which was a recent long term debt (2015) renegotiation that resulted in annual interest savings of \$103,000. With the second largest enrollment of international students, second only to the University of Wyoming, the College has demonstrated a sound academic and fiscal commitment to the value of globalization.

A review of the President's Annual Plans for the past four years (FY17; FY16; FY15; FY14) identifies objectives, responsibility, timeline, measurements and status which are all informed by Vision 2020. In addition, Academic Programs are reviewed on a 5 year rotation as attested to by the Academic Program Review Schedule (2013-14 thru 2018-19). Together with several other annual college surveys and reports, this information serves to "close the loop" on institutional assessment and in turn informs the annual Budget Process.

## Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.D	Core Component 1.D	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.E	Core Component 3.E	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met With Concerns
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.D	Core Component 5.D	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

## Review Summary

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### Interim Report(s) Required

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**Due Date**

12/1/2019

**Report Focus**

The monitoring report should demonstrate that:

- a successful completion of one cycle of assessment that includes, but is not exclusive to, the new general education outcomes has been accomplished;
- improvements have been made relative to findings based on the above assessment activity;
- the new general education outcomes inform the budget/planning process;
- the on-line assessment report submission system is efficient and effective;
- new program-level report submission deadlines are adhered to;
- and co-curricular outcomes are developed and a plan for assessing these outcomes has been implemented (including milestone markers).

due: December 1, 2019

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### Conclusion

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The 2017 HLC visiting team found that Northwest College is operating within its distance education stipulation and that it meets the Criteria for Accreditation.

The 2017 HLC visiting team found that Northwest College has made great strides in some areas since the 2013 Focused Visit. On the other hand, the Higher Learning Commission has revised its Criteria since that time and the institution is still lagging in other areas, such as establishing co-curricular outcomes relative to its assessment of student learning initiative.

It is clear that the College took seriously recommendations made by the 2013 visiting team. It is also clear that the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty and staff are committed to ensuring a culture of improvement and student success. As such, the 2017 HLC visiting team recommends that the College be eligible to choose its Pathway.

While the College should be congratulated for the aforementioned achievements, it is important to point out that NWC is challenged with the ability to maintain open channels of communication, an issue that was articulated by various constituency groups. While administration is vested with the role of establishing the means to ensure open communication, engagement and participation needs to come from all sides.

During the meetings with community members, as well as College personnel, the Team learned that acceptance of change tends to be a challenge for certain groups and individuals. While change can often be difficult, especially when driven by financial factors, it needs to be accepted in order for the College to continue to thrive and meet the needs of its students and the demands of a changing society.

## **Overall Recommendations**

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### **Criteria For Accreditation**

Met With Concerns

### **Sanctions Recommendation**

No Sanction

### **Pathways Recommendation**

Eligible to choose



## Federal Compliance Worksheet for Evaluation Teams

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### ***Evaluation of Federal Compliance Components***

The team reviews each item identified in the *Federal Compliance Filing by Institutions* (FCFI) and documents its findings in the appropriate spaces below. Teams should expect institutions to address these requirements with brief narrative responses and provide supporting documentation where necessary. Generally, if the team finds in the course of this review that there are substantive issues related to the institution's ability to fulfill the Criteria for Accreditation, such issues should be raised in the appropriate parts of the Assurance Review or Comprehensive Quality Review.

This worksheet is to be completed by the peer review team or a Federal Compliance reviewer in relation to the federal requirements. The team should refer to the *Federal Compliance Overview* for information about applicable HLC policies and explanations of each requirement.

Peer reviewers are expected to supply a rationale for each section of the Federal Compliance Evaluation.

The worksheet becomes an appendix in the team report. If the team recommends monitoring on a Federal Compliance Requirement in the form of a report or focused visit, the recommendation should be included in the Federal Compliance monitoring sections below and added to the appropriate section of the Assurance Review or Comprehensive Quality Review.

Institution under review: Northwest College, Wyoming

Please indicate who completed this worksheet:

Evaluation team

Federal Compliance reviewer George W. Swan III

**To be completed by the Evaluation Team Chair if a Federal Compliance reviewer conducted this part of the evaluation:**

Name: Maura Abrahamson

X I confirm that the Evaluation Team reviewed the findings provided in this worksheet.

## Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition

(See FCFI Questions 1–3 and Appendix A)

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1. Complete the [Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours](#). Submit the completed worksheet with this form.
  - Identify the institution's principal degree levels and the number of credit hours for degrees at each level (see the institution's Appendix A if necessary). The following minimum number of credit hours should apply at a semester institution:
    - Associate's degrees = 60 hours
    - Bachelor's degrees = 120 hours
    - Master's or other degrees beyond the bachelor's = At least 30 hours beyond the bachelor's degree
  - Note that 1 quarter hour = 0.67 semester hour.
  - Any exceptions to this requirement must be explained and justified.
  - Review any differences in tuition reported for different programs and the rationale provided for such differences.
2. Check the response that reflects the evaluation team or Federal Compliance reviewer's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

X The institution meets HLC's requirements.

The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: A review of the institution's assignment of credit hours indicates it conforms to the minimum standards for the awarding of Associate's degrees based on a minimum of 60 credit hours. NWC operates on two 15 week semesters each academic year with eight-week sub-terms and a summer session. The institution provided appropriate explanations and guidance on the methods to derive the equivalence of quarter hours to credit hours in accordance with standards set by the Wyoming Department of Education, Wyoming Community College Commission and the US Department of Education (USDE). The College does not offer any programs that necessitate a review of Clock Hours. While there are no differences in the credit hour tuition rates (determined by the State of Wyoming each year), specific career programs such as nursing require additional costs including lab and other fees that are clearly articulated in published and printed documents.

All programs meet the minimum credit requirement of 60 credits for the Associates degree; however, there are a few programs that until recently required a minimum of 67-69 credits. The College explained that with the recent action to restructure general education requirements, it has been able to reduce the requirement for the A.A. and the A.S. degrees

from 39-40 to 26-28 required hours and the A.A.S. to a required 19-21 credit hours, effective Fall 2017. These numbers are consistent with HLC assumed practices as stated in Assumed Practice B.h.

With regard to specific programs, the College explained that “the new reduced general education requirements will reduce the current required hours for most programs to 60 hours or less, if program core requirements also meet general education requirements. Because the minimum requirement for any associate degree is 60, the affected programs will identify elective courses, or specify the appropriate number of elective courses to meet the 60 hour requirement.” NWC provided details for programs that fit this description.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## **Institutional Records of Student Complaints**

(See FCFI Questions 4–7 and Appendixes B and C)

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1. Verify that the institution has documented a process for addressing student complaints and appears to be systematically processing such complaints, as evidenced by the data on student complaints since the last comprehensive evaluation.
  - Review the process that the institution uses to manage complaints, its complaints policy and procedure, and the history of complaints received and resolved since the last comprehensive evaluation by HLC.
  - Determine whether the institution has a process to review and resolve complaints in a timely manner.
  - Verify that the evidence shows that the institution can, and does, follow this process and that it is able to integrate any relevant findings from this process into improvements in services or in teaching and learning.
  - Advise the institution of any improvements that might be appropriate.
  - Consider whether the record of student complaints indicates any pattern of complaints or otherwise raises concerns about the institution’s compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or Assumed Practices.
2. Check the response that reflects the team’s conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:
  - X The institution meets HLC’s requirements.
  - The institution meets HLC’s requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.
  - The institution does not meet HLC’s requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution’s compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate

reference).

Rationale: NWC publishes a procedure for both informal and formal non-academic student complaints on its website, in its catalog and within the Student Handbook. A review of the Compliance Filing by the institution reflected a chart reporting the number of complaints received by the College, but not the disposition or lessons learned from the process of responding to the concerns/complaints raised. During a meeting with the Federal Compliance team, the HLC visiting team learned that while improvements have not been made in the past, with the recent adoption of Maxient software, the College is planning to make efficient and effective use of complaint findings.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## **Publication of Transfer Policies**

(See FCFI Questions 8–10 and Appendixes D–F)

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1. Verify that the institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies should contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.
  - Review the institution’s transfer policies.
  - Review any articulation agreements the institution has in place, including articulation agreements at the institution level and for specific programs and how the institution publicly discloses information about those articulation agreements.
  - Consider where the institution discloses these policies (e.g., in its catalog, on its website) and how easily current and prospective students can access that information.
  - Determine whether the disclosed information clearly explains any articulation arrangements the institution has with other institutions. The information the institution provides to students should explain any program-specific articulation agreements in place and should clearly identify program-specific articulation agreements as such. Also, the information the institution provides should include whether the articulation agreement anticipates that the institution (1) accepts credits from the other institution(s) in the articulation agreement; (2) sends credits to the other institution(s) in the articulation agreements; (3) both offers and accepts credits with the institution(s) in the articulation agreement; and (4) what specific credits articulate through the agreement (e.g., general education only; pre-professional nursing courses only; etc.). Note that the institution need not make public the entire articulation agreement, but it needs to make public to students relevant information about these agreements so that they can better plan their education.
  - Verify that the institution has an appropriate process to align the disclosed transfer policies with the criteria and procedures used by the institution in making transfer decisions.

2. Check the response that reflects the team’s conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

X The institution meets HLC’s requirements.

The institution meets HLC’s requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC’s requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution’s compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: NWC appropriately publishes and discloses its transfer policy, procedures, articulation agreements and the conditions applicable to the acceptance of credit from secondary and other post-secondary institutions on its website, in the college catalog and student handbook. NWC publishes program specific transfer guidance related to its Nursing program and other specialized accredited program offerings including sources of reference for students and the public for additional information. The policy and procedures promulgated by NWC align with the criteria used by the institution in making transfer decisions.

NWC has numerous articulation agreements with institutions in the State of Wyoming and in other states. While these are clearly posted on the college website, students seemed confused about whether classes transfer or not. It would benefit NWC and students to ensure that this information is correctly communicated, in a timely manner, perhaps through the First Year Seminar experience.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## **Practices for Verification of Student Identity**

(See FCFI Questions 11–16 and Appendix G)

1. Confirm that the institution verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided through distance or correspondence education. Confirm that it appropriately discloses additional fees related to verification to students, and that the method of verification makes reasonable efforts to protect students’ privacy.
  - Determine how the institution verifies that the student who enrolls in a course is the same student who submits assignments, takes exams and earns a final grade. The team should ensure that the institution’s approach respects student privacy.
  - Check that any costs related to verification (e.g., fees associated with test proctoring) and charged directly to students are explained to the students prior to enrollment in distance or correspondence courses.

2. Check the response that reflects the team’s conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

X The institution meets HLC’s requirements.

The institution meets HLC’s requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC’s requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution’s compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: The institution clearly articulates its policies, procedures and the measures through which to verify the identity of students enrolled in distance learning courses. The College provides for a variety of safeguards regarding the verification of student identity and protecting the disclosure of student information aligning with data security and FERPA requirements. The College discloses the additional costs for student access and fees related to test proctoring on its website prior to students enrolling in distance courses through the course schedule, registration system and the college catalog. This is also conveyed by reference to links to these documents in financial aid and student services related webpages.

NWC is in the process of adopting EXAMITY, which is an online proctoring service. This product allows for faculty to select from different authentication and proctoring levels and fees are assessed depending on the level. This product is compatible with the College’s LMS (Moodle). The Federal Compliance team disclosed that no faculty had used the product at the time of the visit.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## Title IV Program Responsibilities

(See FCFI Questions 17–24 and Appendixes H–Q)

1. This requirement has several components the institution must address.
  - The team should verify that the following requirements are met:
    - **General Program Requirements.** The institution has provided HLC with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution’s fulfillment of its responsibilities.
    - **Financial Responsibility Requirements.** The institution has provided HLC with information about the Department’s review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution’s fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. (Note that the team

should also be commenting under Criterion 5 if an institution has significant issues with financial responsibility as demonstrated through ratios that are below acceptable levels or other financial responsibility findings by its auditor.)

- **Default Rates.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its three-year default rate. It has a responsible program to work with students to minimize default rates. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. Note that for 2012 and thereafter, institutions and teams should be using the three-year default rate based on revised default rate data published by the Department in September 2012; if the institution does not provide the default rate for three years leading up to the comprehensive evaluation visit, the team should contact the HLC staff.
- **Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, and Related Disclosures.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.
- **Student Right to Know/Equity in Athletics.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The disclosures are accurate and provide appropriate information to students. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion 2, Core Component 2.A if the team determines that the disclosures are not accurate or appropriate.)
- **Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The institution has demonstrated that the policies and practices meet state or federal requirements and that the institution is appropriately applying these policies and practices to students. In most cases, teams should verify that these policies exist and are available to students, typically in the course catalog or student handbook and online. Note that HLC does not necessarily require that the institution take attendance unless required to do so by state or federal regulations but does anticipate that institutional attendance policies will provide information to students about attendance at the institution.
- **Contractual Relationships.** The institution has presented a list of its contractual relationships related to its academic programs and evidence of its compliance with HLC policies requiring notification or approval for contractual relationships. (If the team learns that the institution has a contractual relationship that may require HLC approval and has not received HLC approval, the team must require that the institution complete and file the change request form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Substantive Change Application for Programs Offered Through Contractual Arrangements on HLC's website for more information.)
- **Consortial Relationships.** The institution has presented a list of its consortial relationships related to its academic programs and evidence of its compliance with HLC policies requiring notification or approval for consortial relationships. (If the team learns that the institution has a consortial relationship that may require HLC approval and has not received HLC approval, the team must require that the

institution complete and file the form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Substantive Change Application for Programs Offered Through Consortial Arrangements on HLC's website for more information.)

- Review all of the information that the institution discloses having to do with its Title IV program responsibilities.
- Determine whether the Department has raised any issues related to the institution's compliance or whether the institution's auditor has raised any issues in the A-133 about the institution's compliance, and also look to see how carefully and effectively the institution handles its Title IV responsibilities.
- If the institution has been cited or is not handling these responsibilities effectively, indicate that finding within the Federal Compliance portion of the team report and whether the institution appears to be moving forward with the corrective action that the Department has determined to be appropriate.
- If issues have been raised concerning the institution's compliance, decide whether these issues relate to the institution's ability to satisfy the Criteria for Accreditation, particularly with regard to whether its disclosures to students are candid and complete and demonstrate appropriate integrity (*Core Components 2.A and 2.B*).

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: NWC provided evidence of its fulfillment of Title IV Responsibilities and did not require a review of its activities by the USDE during the period between the last comprehensive visit and the current one. Areas of concern raised during past audits have been satisfactorily addressed and the institution is successfully reducing the proportionate of student loan defaults and working to minimize default rates. NWC appropriately discloses campus crime information, athletic participation information and information about its financial aid programs. Other required disclosures are evidenced in submissions by the College referencing links to publications and online documentation available to students and the public.

The current investigation of a Title IX matter through the US Office of Civil Rights was disclosed and documented as required. This claim relates to the application of the Higher Learning Commission's faculty credential requirements. At the time of the HLC visit, NWC was in the process of collecting and submitting requested information for the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. It should be noted that the complainant in this case inappropriately attended the Federal Compliance team meeting (this person was not part of

the Federal Compliance team and the HLC visiting team did not know of this person's attendance until after the meeting).

The College also explained that there was a 2016 Title IX claim relating to an incident involving two students. NWC provided all documentation to the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights as requested. According to the institution, no additional correspondence was received from the Office of Civil Rights.

NWC provides appropriate disclosures about its Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies in online student handbooks, catalogs and printed materials. The College has no contractual or consortial relationships at this time.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## **Required Information for Students and the Public**

(See FCFI Questions 25–27 and Appendixes R and S)

1. Verify that the institution publishes accurate, timely and appropriate information on institutional programs, fees, policies and related required information. Verify that the institution provides this required information in the course catalog and student handbook and on its website.
2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: A review of the College's website, institutional documents (including catalog, student handbook, and policy manuals), promotional materials, view books, and required publications related to financial aid programs and campus crime reports indicate NWC publishes accurate, timely and appropriate information on its programs, fees, policies and discloses required information. The College provides a high degree of transparency for the public and provides additional links as reference to more detailed reports regarding programs, services, student learning outcomes for consumers. In this regard, NWC meets HLC's requirements on required information for students and the public.

Additional monitoring, if any:

## Advertising and Recruitment Materials and Other Public Information

(See FCFI Questions 28–31 and Appendixes T and U)

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1. Verify that the institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with HLC and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.
  - Review the institution’s disclosure about its accreditation status with HLC to determine whether the information it provides is accurate, complete and appropriately formatted and contains HLC’s web address.
  - Review the institution’s disclosures about its relationship with other accrediting agencies for accuracy and for appropriate consumer information, particularly regarding the link between specialized/professional accreditation and the licensure necessary for employment in many professional or specialized areas.
  - Review the institution’s catalog, brochures, recruiting materials, website and information provided by the institution’s advisors or counselors to determine whether the institution provides accurate, timely and appropriate information to current and prospective students about its programs, locations and policies.
  - Verify that the institution correctly displays the Mark of Affiliation on its website.
2. Check the response that reflects the team’s conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

X The institution meets HLC’s requirements.

The institution meets HLC’s requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC’s requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution’s compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: NWC discloses its accreditation status with HLC on its website with the appropriate formatted statement and “linked” Mark of Affiliation to the HLC site referencing the institution. As well, it appropriately discloses its relationship with specialized accrediting agencies for programs in Music, Art and Nursing in the form as required by those entities on its website. While reference to HLC in the view book was not identified, a statement was included in other printed documents. The statement listed on the institutional fact card was not complete, yet it did include the correct website reference.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## Review of Student Outcome Data

(See FCFI Questions 32–35 and Appendix V)

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1. Review the student outcome data the institution collects to determine whether they are appropriate and sufficient based on the kinds of academic programs the institution offers and the students it serves.
  - Determine whether the institution uses this information effectively to make decisions about planning, academic program review, assessment of student learning, consideration of institutional effectiveness and other topics.
  - Review the institution's explanation of its use of information from the College Scorecard, including student retention and completion and the loan repayment rate.
2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

XXThe institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: The institution's description of the reports and methods used in collecting, assessing, and employing student outcome data for the improvement of academic programs, services and decision making processes that strengthen institutional effectiveness meets the expectations that these efforts result in tangible value and benefit to the success of students. The process, scheduled engagement of various members of the college community and focus on continuous improvement suggests that the institution meets HLC requirements in this regard. NWC has experienced a proportionate reduction in its default rate and increase in loan repayment rates in comparison with institutional history, state and nationally peer institutions. With a retention rate that has increased as well, it is important that NWC continues to be diligent in advocating for student financial responsibility.

Additional monitoring, if any: An interim report on assessment of student learning, as outlined in Core Component 4.B, is due on December 1, 2019.

## Publication of Student Outcome Data

(See FCFI Questions 36–38)

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1. Verify that the institution makes student outcome data available and easily accessible to the public. Data may be provided at the institutional or departmental level or both, but the institution must disclose student outcome data that address the broad variety of its programs.
  - Verify that student outcome data are made available to the public on the institution’s website—for instance, linked to from the institution’s home page, included within the top three levels of the website or easily found through a search of related terms on the website—and are clearly labeled as such.
  - Determine whether the publication of these data accurately reflects the range of programs at the institution.

2. Check the response that reflects the team’s conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

X The institution meets HLC’s requirements.

The institution meets HLC’s requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC’s requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution’s compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: The institution provides access to student outcome data within the top two levels (About Us: Institutional Research) of its website. The data provided is program specific and allows for comparative views of retention rates, completion and transfer data in addition to demographic, historical enrollments and graduate information. Access to outcome data was tested through the “Search” function on the College’s portal resulting in a link to the appropriate Institutional Research page.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## Standing With State and Other Accrediting Agencies

(See FCFI Questions 39–40 and Appendixes W and X)

1. Verify that the institution discloses accurately to the public and HLC its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditors and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.

The team should consider any potential implications for accreditation by HLC of a sanction or loss of status by the institution with any other accrediting agency or of loss of authorization in any state.

**Note:** If the team is recommending initial or continued status, and the institution is now or has been in the past five years under sanction or show-cause with, or has received an adverse action (i.e., withdrawal, suspension, denial or termination) from, any other federally recognized

specialized or institutional accreditor or a state entity, then the team must explain the sanction or adverse action of the other agency in the body of the assurance section of the team report and provide its rationale for recommending HLC status in light of this action.

- Review the list of relationships the institution has with all other accreditors and state governing or coordinating bodies, along with the evaluation reports, action letters and interim monitoring plans issued by each accrediting agency.
- Verify that the institution's standing with state agencies and accrediting bodies is appropriately disclosed to students.
- Determine whether this information provides any indication about the institution's capacity to meet HLC's Criteria for Accreditation. Should the team learn that the institution is at risk of losing, or has lost, its degree or program authorization in any state in which it meets state presence requirements, it should contact the HLC staff liaison immediately.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

X The institution meets HLC's requirements.

The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: NWC provided evidence in its submission of its relationships with HLC, three specialized accrediting agencies and the State of Wyoming Coordinating body. The appropriate language and "Mark of Affiliation" linking to the HLC website is apparent in navigating the institution's web portal. As well, the link to institutional accreditations provides required references to the specialized accreditations in Music, Art and Nursing. In review of the correspondence from these accrediting agencies, there were no adverse actions in relation to these programs. Concerns raised through prior visits—comprehensive and focused—by HLC visiting teams have been addressed.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## Public Notification of Opportunity to Comment

(FCFI Questions 41–43 and Appendix Y)

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1. Verify that the institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third-party comments. The team should evaluate any comments received and complete any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments.

**Note:** If the team has determined that any issues raised by third-party comments relate to the team’s review of the institution’s compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, it must discuss this information and its analysis in the body of the assurance section of the team report.

- Review information about the public disclosure of the upcoming visit, including copies of the institution’s notices, to determine whether the institution made an appropriate and timely effort to notify the public and seek comments.
- Evaluate the comments to determine whether the team needs to follow up on any issues through its interviews and review of documentation during the visit process.

2. Check the response that reflects the team’s conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

X The institution meets HLC’s requirements.

The institution meets HLC’s requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC’s requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution’s compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: NWC has documented the Implementation Plan used to solicit public comments through notification to students, alumni, staff, faculty, foundation members and the public. This included direct emails, email blasts, social media (Facebook and Twitter), published notices (electronic and print media), and through surveys seeking opinions from students. A review of a sample of notices indicates a strong effort to solicit and encourage community members comments for the upcoming comprehensive team visit. Only one comment, in support of the College, was submitted to the Higher Learning Commission.

Additional monitoring, if any: None

## **Competency-Based Programs Including Direct Assessment Programs/Faculty-Student Engagement**

(See FCFI Questions 44–47)

1. Verify that students and faculty in any direct assessment or competency-based programs offered by the institution have regular and substantive interactions: the faculty and students communicate on some regular basis that is at least equivalent to contact in a traditional classroom, and that in the tasks mastered to assure competency, faculty and students interact about critical thinking, analytical skills, and written and oral communication abilities, as well as about core ideas, important theories, current knowledge, etc. (Also, confirm that the institution has explained the credit hour equivalencies for these programs in the credit hour sections of the Federal Compliance Filing.)

- Review the list of direct assessment or competency-based programs offered by the institution.
  - Determine whether the institution has effective methods for ensuring that faculty in these programs regularly communicate and interact with students about the subject matter of the course.
  - Determine whether the institution has effective methods for ensuring that faculty and students in these programs interact about key skills and ideas in the students' mastery of tasks to assure competency.
2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale: The institution offers no competency-based programs.

N/A

Additional monitoring, if any:

### **Institutional Materials Related to Federal Compliance Reviewed by the Team**

Provide a list of materials reviewed here: Federal Compliance Filing and Appendices A-G, H-S, T-Y and Office of Civil Rights including:

Title IV Responsibilities including:

Default Rates and Default Rate Management Plan, US Department of Education (USDE) correspondence

Specialized Accreditation Documents for Music, Art and Nursing

Disclosures: Camus Crime Athletic Participation, Equity in Athletics, Student Right to Know, Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies.

Financial Statements and Compliance Reports: 06/30/2014, 06/30/2015, and 06/30/2016

USDE Correspondence

HC Correspondence and Reports from Comprehensive and Focused Visits

College Website

College Catalog: College Policies, Transfer, Award of Academic Credit, Attendance, FERPA, and other required and standard disclosures

Viewbook and other publications

Student Handbook: institutional policies

Online Syllabi Reference <http://area10.nwc.edu/nwcforms/syllabi/?term=16%2FFA>

Sampled Programs and Course Descriptions Reviewed:

Accounting (AAS)

Business Administration (AS)

Aeronautics (AS)

Biology (AS)

Chemistry (AS)

Computer Science (AS)

Mathematics (AS)

Photography-Commercial (AAS)

Welding (AAS)

Sampled Syllabi Reviewed:

ACCT 2010 Principles of Accounting

ASTR 1005 Introduction to Astronomy

BIOL 2020 General Biology

CO/M 2150 Argumentation

MATH 0930 Intermediate Algebra

PHTO 1610 Introduction to Photography



## Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours

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Institution Under Review: Northwest College, Wyoming

Review the *Worksheet for Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours*, including all supplemental materials. Applicable sections and supplements are referenced in the corresponding sections and questions below.

### Part 1. Institutional Calendar, Term Length and Type of Credit

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#### **Instructions**

Review Section 1 of Appendix A. Verify that the institution has calendar and term lengths within the range of good practice in higher education.

#### **Responses**

##### **A. Answer the Following Question**

1. Are the institution's calendar and term lengths, including non-standard terms, within the range of good practice in higher education? Do they contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

Yes                       No

Comments: A review of the institution's calendar and term lengths are within the range of good practice and conform, as well, with the requirements of the State of Wyoming coordinating board.

##### **B. Recommend HLC Follow-Up, If Appropriate**

Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's calendar and term length practices?

Yes                       No

Rationale: No HLC follow-up is required at this time.

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:

## Part 2. Policy and Practices on Assignment of Credit Hours

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### **Instructions**

Review Sections 2–4 of the *Worksheet for Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours*, including supplemental materials as noted below. In assessing the appropriateness of the credit allocations provided by the institution the team should complete the following steps. The outcomes of the team's review should be reflected in its responses below.

- 1. Format of Courses and Number of Credits Awarded.** Review the *Form for Reporting an Overview of Credit Hour Allocations and Instructional Time for Courses* (Supplement A1 to the *Worksheet for Institutions*) completed by the institution, which provides an overview of credit hour assignments across institutional offerings and delivery formats.
- 2. Scan the course descriptions in the catalog and the number of credit hours assigned for courses in different departments at the institution (see Supplements B1 and B2 to *Worksheet for Institutions*, as applicable).**
  - At semester-based institutions courses will be typically be from two to four credit hours (or approximately five quarter hours) and extend approximately 14–16 weeks (or approximately 10 weeks for a quarter). The descriptions in the catalog should reflect courses that are appropriately rigorous and have collegiate expectations for objectives and workload. Identify courses/disciplines that seem to depart markedly from these expectations.
  - Institutions may have courses that are in compressed format, self-paced, or otherwise alternatively structured. Credit assignments should be reasonable. (For example, as a full-time load for a traditional semester is typically 15 credits, it might be expected that the norm for a full-time load in a five-week term is 5 credits; therefore, a single five-week course awarding 10 credits would be subject to inquiry and justification.)
  - Teams should be sure to scan across disciplines, delivery mode and types of academic activities.
  - Federal regulations allow for an institution to have two credit-hour awards: one award for Title IV purposes and following the federal definition and one for the purpose of defining progression in and completion of an academic program at that institution. HLC procedure also permits this approach.
- 3. Scan course schedules to determine how frequently courses meet each week and what other scheduled activities are required for each course (see Supplement B3 to *Worksheet for***

*Institutions*). Pay particular attention to alternatively structured or other courses completed in a short period of time or with less frequently scheduled interaction between student and instructor that have particularly high credit hour assignments.

4. **Sampling.** Teams will need to sample some number of degree programs based on the headcount at the institution and the range of programs it offers.
  - For the programs sampled, the team should review syllabi and intended learning outcomes for several courses, identify the contact hours for each course, and review expectations for homework or work outside of instructional time.
  - At a minimum, teams should anticipate sampling at least a few programs at each degree level.
  - For institutions with several different academic calendars or terms or with a wide range of academic programs, the team should expand the sample size appropriately to ensure that it is paying careful attention to alternative format and compressed and accelerated courses.
  - Where the institution offers the same course in more than one format, the team is advised to sample across the various formats to test for consistency.
5. **Direct Assessment or Competency-Based Programs.** Review the information provided by the institution regarding any direct assessment or competency-based programs that it offers, with regard to the learning objectives, policies and procedures for credit allocation, and processes for review and improvement in these programs.
6. **Policy on Credit Hours and Total Credit Hour Generation.** With reference to the institutional policies on the assignment of credit provided in Supplement A2 to *Worksheet for Institutions*, consider the following questions:
  - Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution?
  - Does that policy address the amount of instructional or contact time assigned and homework typically expected of a student with regard to credit hours earned?
  - For institutions with courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy also equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the time frame allotted for the course?
  - Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

- If so, is the institution's assignment of credit to courses reflective of its policy on the award of credit?
  - Do the number of credits taken by typical undergraduate and graduate students, as well as the number of students earning more than the typical number of credits, fall within the range of good practice in higher education?
7. If the answers to the above questions lead the team to conclude that there may be a problem with the credit hours awarded the team should recommend the following:
- If the problem involves a poor or insufficiently detailed institutional policy, the team should call for a revised policy as soon as possible by requiring a monitoring report within no more than one year that demonstrates the institution has a revised policy and provides evidence of implementation.
  - If the team identifies an application problem and that problem is isolated to a few courses or a single department, division or learning format, the team should call for follow-up activities (a monitoring report or focused evaluation) to ensure that the problems are corrected within no more than one year.
  - If the team identifies systematic noncompliance across the institution with regard to the award of credit, the team should notify the HLC staff immediately and work with staff members to design appropriate follow-up activities. HLC shall understand systematic noncompliance to mean that the institution lacks any policies to determine the award of academic credit or that there is an inappropriate award of institutional credit not in conformity with the policies established by the institution or with commonly accepted practices in higher education across multiple programs or divisions or affecting significant numbers of students.

### ***Worksheet on Assignment of Credit Hours***

#### **A. Identify the Sample Courses and Programs Reviewed by the Team**

##### Sampled Programs and Course Descriptions Reviewed:

Accounting (AAS)

Business Administration (AS)

Aeronautics (AS)

Biology (AS)

Chemistry (AS)

Computer Science (AS)

Mathematics (AS)

Photography-Commercial (AAS)

## Welding (AAS)

### Sampled Syllabi Reviewed:

ACCT 2010	Principles of Accounting
ASTR 1005	Introduction to Astronomy
BIOL 2020	General Biology
CO/M 2150	Argumentation
MATH 0930	Intermediate Algebra
PHTO 1610	Introduction to Photography

### **B. Answer the Following Questions**

#### 1. Institutional Policies on Credit Hours

- a. Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution? (Note that for this question and the questions that follow an institution may have a single comprehensive policy or multiple policies.)

X Yes                  No

Comments: The published policy in the online catalog and student handbook addresses the awarding of academic credit for all delivery formats. As well, the institution employs an orientation/counseling protocol that reinforces the explication of the policy.

Note: The College definition of a credit hour explains that one credit=one hour; however, according to the class schedule, one credit=50 minutes. This inconsistency was discussed with the College and it was explained that this would be corrected.

- b. Does that policy relate the amount of instructional or contact time provided and homework typically expected of a student to the credit hours awarded for the classes offered in the delivery formats offered by the institution? (Note that an institution's policy must go beyond simply stating that it awards credit solely based on assessment of student learning and should also reference instructional time.)

X Yes                  No

Comments: The college catalog provides explicit detail for expectations of instructional time in ratio to homework and other learning activities (laboratory work/ internship) required to meet the intent of the learning experience. The policy provides the means to calculate that relationship in realistic terms.

c. For institutions with non-traditional courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the time frame and utilizing the activities allotted for the course?

Yes                      No

Comments: N/A

d. Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

X Yes                      No

Comments: NWC's policy meets the expectations of Wyoming state public colleges.

## 2. Application of Policies

a. Are the course descriptions and syllabi in the sample academic programs reviewed by the team appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

X Yes                      No

Comments: The course descriptions and syllabi meet the requirements for transfer and acceptance by the State of Wyoming and are appropriate to the institution's policy on the award of credit.

b. Are the learning outcomes in the sample reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit?

X Yes                      No

Comments: Of those courses sampled, the learning outcomes are in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit.

c. If the institution offers any alternative-delivery or compressed-format courses or programs, are the course descriptions and syllabi for those courses appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of academic credit?

Yes           No

Comments: A review of course syllabi for offerings in the eight (8) week format evidenced an appropriate consideration of learning outcomes and expectations within the compressed period.

d. If the institution offers alternative-delivery or compressed-format courses or programs, are the learning outcomes reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit? Are the learning outcomes reasonable for students to fulfill in the time allocated, such that the allocation of credit is justified?

Yes           No

Comments: The course design as expressed in the course descriptions and syllabi are appropriate to the learning outcomes required to meet the awarding of academic credit in the compressed format.

e. Is the institution's actual assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution reflective of its policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

Yes           No

Comments: A review of the institutional policy indicates it is consistent with commonly accepted practice for the awarding of credit in higher education.

### **C. Recommend HLC Follow-up, If Appropriate**

Review the responses provided in this worksheet. If the team has responded "no" to any of the questions above, the team will need to assign HLC follow-up to assure that the institution comes into compliance with expectations regarding the assignment of credit hours.

Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's credit hour policies and practices?

Yes           No

Rationale:

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:

**D. Systematic Noncompliance in One or More Educational Programs With HLC Policies Regarding the Credit Hour**

Did the team find systematic noncompliance in one or more education programs with HLC policies regarding the credit hour?

Yes            X No

Identify the findings:

Rationale:

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### **Part 3. Clock Hours**

#### ***Instructions***

Review Section 5 of *Worksheet for Institutions*, including Supplements A3–A6. Before completing the worksheet below, answer the following question:

Does the institution offer any degree or certificate programs in clock hours or programs that must be reported to the Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes even though students may earn credit hours for graduation from these programs?

Yes            X No

**If the answer is “Yes,” complete the “Worksheet on Clock Hours.”**

**Note:** This worksheet is not intended for teams to evaluate whether an institution has assigned credit hours relative to contact hours in accordance with the Carnegie definition of the credit hour. This worksheet solely addresses those programs reported to the Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes.

Non-degree programs subject to clock hour requirements (for which an institution is required to measure student progress in clock hours for federal or state purposes or for graduates to apply for licensure) are not subject to the credit hour definitions per se but will need to provide conversions to semester or quarter hours for Title IV purposes. Clock hour programs might include teacher education, nursing or other programs in licensed fields.

Federal regulations require that these programs follow the federal formula listed below. If there are no deficiencies identified by the accrediting agency in the institution’s overall policy for awarding semester or quarter credit, the accrediting agency may provide permission for the institution to provide less instruction so long as the student’s work outside class in addition to direct instruction meets the applicable quantitative clock hour requirements noted below.

Federal Formula for Minimum Number of Clock Hours of Instruction (34 CFR §668.8):

1 semester or trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction

1 quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction

Note that the institution may have a lower rate if the institution's requirement for student work outside of class combined with the actual clock hours of instruction equals the above formula provided that a semester/trimester hour includes at least 30 clock hours of actual instruction and a quarter hour includes at least 20 semester hours.

## ***Worksheet on Clock Hours***

### **A. Answer the Following Questions**

1. Does the institution's credit-to-clock-hour formula match the federal formula?

Yes

No

Comments:

2. If the credit-to-clock-hour conversion numbers are less than the federal formula, indicate what specific requirements there are, if any, for student work outside of class.

3. Did the team determine that the institution's credit hour policies are reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that if the team answers "No" to this question, it should recommend follow-up monitoring in section C below.)

Yes

No

Comments:

4. Did the team determine in reviewing the assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution that it was reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

Yes

No

Comments:

### **B. Does the team approve variations, if any, from the federal formula in the institution's credit-to-clock-hour conversion?**

Yes                  No

**C. Recommend HLC Follow-up, if Appropriate**

Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's clock hour policies and practices?

Yes                  No

Rationale:

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:





## Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

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<b>INSTITUTION and STATE:</b>	Northwest College, WY
<b>TYPE OF REVIEW:</b>	Standard Pathway Comprehensive Evaluation
<b>DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:</b>	Comprehensive Evaluation includes a Federal Compliance reviewer.
<b>DATES OF REVIEW:</b>	9/11/2017 - 9/12/2017

No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

### Accreditation Status

Nature of Institution

Control: Public

**Recommended Change: nc**

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Degrees Awarded: Associates

**Recommended Change: nc**

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Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2011 - 2012

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2017 - 2018

**Recommended Change: 2027-28**

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### Accreditation Stipulations

General:

Prior Commission approval is required for substantive change as stated in Commission policy.

**Recommended Change: nc**

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Additional Location:

Prior HLC approval required.

**Recommended Change: nc**

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# Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

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**Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:**

Approved for distance education courses and programs. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

**Recommended Change:** nc

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**Accreditation Events**

Accreditation Pathway Standard Pathway

**Recommended Change:** Eligible to Choose

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**Upcoming Events**

**Monitoring**

**Upcoming Events**

None

**Recommended Change:** Interim Report due 12/1/2019 on assessment of student learning.

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**Institutional Data**

Educational Programs		Recommended Change:
<b>Undergraduate</b>		
Certificate	26	_____
Associate Degrees	67	_____
Baccalaureate Degrees	0	_____
<b>Graduate</b>		
Master's Degrees	0	_____
Specialist Degrees	0	_____
Doctoral Degrees	0	_____

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**Extended Operations**

**Branch Campuses**

None

**Recommended Change:** nc

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## Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

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### Additional Locations

Cody Center, 1501 Stampede Ave, Cody, WY, 82414 - Active

Worland Center, 1200 Culbertson, Worland, WY, 82401 - Active

**Recommended Change: nc**

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### Distance Delivery

09.0101 - Speech Communication and Rhetoric, Associate, AA Communication

09.0401 - Journalism, Associate, AA Journalism-Print

09.0401 - Journalism, Certificate, Journalism Endorsement for Public School Teachers

13.1202 - Elementary Education and Teaching, Associate, AA Elementary Education

13.1205 - Secondary Education and Teaching, Associate, AA Secondary Education

13.1209 - Kindergarten/Preschool Education and Teaching, Associate, AA Early Childhood Education

13.1209 - Kindergarten/Preschool Education and Teaching, Associate, AS Early Childhood Education

13.1209 - Kindergarten/Preschool Education and Teaching, Certificate, Early Childhood Education

16.0905 - Spanish Language and Literature, Associate, AA Modern Languages-Spanish

23.0101 - English Language and Literature, General, Associate, AA English-Literary Studies

23.0101 - English Language and Literature, General, Associate, AA English-Writing

24.0101 - Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies, Associate, AA Liberal Studies

24.0102 - General Studies, Associate, AA General Studies

24.0102 - General Studies, Associate, AS General Studies

42.0101 - Psychology, General, Associate, AA Psychology

43.0103 - Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration, Associate, AA Criminal Justice

45.0101 - Social Sciences, General, Associate, AA Social Science

45.0201 - Anthropology, Associate, AA Anthropology

45.0901 - International Relations and Affairs, Associate, International Studies

45.1001 - Political Science and Government, General, Associate, AA Political Science

45.1101 - Sociology, Associate, AA Sociology

50.0402 - Commercial and Advertising Art, Associate, AA Graphics-Design

50.0504 - Playwriting and Screenwriting, Associate, AA Screenwriting

50.0602 - Cinematography and Film/Video Production, Associate, AA Film Production

50.0701 - Art/Art Studies, General, Associate, AA Art

50.0901 - Music, General, Associate, AA Music

51.3801 - Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse, Associate, AAS Nursing

51.3901 - Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training, Certificate, Practical Nursing

51.3902 - Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide, Certificate, Nursing Assistant

54.0101 - History, General, Associate, AA History

**Recommended Change: nc**

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### Correspondence Education

None

**Recommended Change: nc**

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### Contractual Arrangements

None

# Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

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**Recommended Change:** nc

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**Consortial Arrangements**

None

**Recommended Change:** nc

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