



2025 ASSURANCE ARGUMENT

Table of Contents

CRITERION 1 – MISSION..... 1

Core Component 1.A. The institution’s mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution. 1

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

1.A.2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution’s emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose. 1

1.A.3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides. 2

1.A.4. The institution’s academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission. 3

1.A.5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities. 4

Core Component 1.B. The institution’s mission demonstrates commitment to the public good. 5

1.B.1. The institution’s actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity. 5

1.B.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..... 6

1.B.3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow. 6

Core Component 1.C. The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves. 8

1.C.1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success. 8

1.C.2. The institution’s processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations..... 9

1.C.3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives. 11

Core Component 1 Summary..... 12

CRITERION 2 – INTEGRITY..... 13

Core Component 2.A. The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff. 13

2.A.1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission..... 13

2.A.2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary functions..... 13

Core Component 2.B. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public. 15

2.B.1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships. 15

2.B.2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development..... 15

Core Component 2.C. The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution’s integrity. 17

2.C.1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution’s financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities. 17

2.C.2. The governing board’s deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution. 18

2.C.3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution’s internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations. 18

2.C.4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties. 19

2.C.5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution’s administration and expects the institution’s faculty to oversee academic matters..... 20

Core Component 2.D. The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. 21

2.D.1. The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. 21

Core Component 2.E. The institution’s policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff, and students. 22

2.E.1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior, and fiscal accountability. 22

2.E.2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students. 22

2.E.3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources. 23

2.E.4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity. 23

Core Component 2 Summary 24

CRITERION 3 – TEACHING & LEARNING: QUALITY, RESOURCES, & SUPPORT 25

Core Component 3.A. The rigor of the institution’s academic offerings is appropriate to higher education. 25

3.A.1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded. 25

3.A.2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs. 31

3.A.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). 33

Core Component 3.B. The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments. 37

3.B.1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. 37

3.B.2. <i>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.</i>	39
3.B.3. <i>The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.</i>	41
3.B.4. <i>The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.</i>	43
Core Component 3.C. The institution has faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.	48
3.C.1. <i>The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.</i>	48
3.C.2. <i>The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning; and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.</i>	49
3.C.3. <i>All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.</i>	51
3.C.4. <i>Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.</i>	52
3.C.5. <i>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.</i>	52
3.C.6. <i>Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.</i>	53
3.C.7. <i>Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and cocurricular activities are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.</i>	54
Core Component 3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.	56
3.D.1. <i>The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.</i>	56
3.D.2. <i>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.</i>	60

3.D.3. *The institution provides for academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.* 61

3.D.4. *The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution’s offerings).*..... 62

Core Component 3 Summary 64

CRITERION 4 – TEACHING & LEARNING: EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT 66

Core Component 4.A. The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings. 66

4.A.1. *The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.*..... 66

4.A.2. *The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.*..... 68

4.A.3. *The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.* 69

4.A.4. *The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.* 69

4.A.5. *The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.*..... 72

4.A.6. *The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.* 73

Core Component 4.B. The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students. 75

4.B.1. *The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.* 75

4.B.2. *The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.* 79

4.B.3. The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members...... 82

Core Component 4.C. The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs. 84

4.C.1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings...... 84

4.C.2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs...... 85

4.C.3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data...... 86

4.C.4. The institution’s processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)..... 88

Core Component 4 Summary..... 89

CRITERION 5 – INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, RESOURCES & PLANNING 91

Core Component 5.A. Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution’s leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission. 91

5.A.1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—through planning, policies, and procedures. 91

5.A.2. The institution’s administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents...... 92

5.A.3. The institution’s administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures...... 93

Core Component 5.B. The institution’s resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future. 94

<i>5.B.1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>5.B.2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution’s organization, resources and opportunities.</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>5.B.3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.</i>	<i>96</i>
<i>5.B.4. The institution’s fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.</i>	<i>97</i>
Core Component 5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.	98
<i>5.C.1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>5.C.2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>5.C.3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>5.C.4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution’s sources of revenue and enrollment.</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>5.C.5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.</i>	<i>102</i>
<i>5.C.6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.</i>	<i>102</i>
<i>Core Component 5 Summary.</i>	<i>103</i>

Criterion 1 – Mission

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

Core Component 1.A.

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

1.A.1.

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

North Central's mission is to provide exceptional, accessible, relevant higher education to the benefit of all ([NC-003 p. 3](#)). Beginning in 2020 and ending in 2021, while laying the groundwork for the creation of the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan, the mission statement, along with the College's vision and values, was crafted through a process reflective of our rural community. Led by the Strategic Planning and Assessment Team (SPAT), which includes representatives from various divisions ([NC-002 p. 20](#)), we engaged various community groups and listened carefully to stakeholders throughout its development.

The development process focused on serving the educational, economic, and cultural needs of our community to the benefit of all, which also helped shape our Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002](#)). We started with an environmental scan ([NC-002 p. 13](#)), researching current trends and stakeholder needs, followed by a SWOT analysis ([NC-002 p. 16](#)). This analysis incorporated data from over 100 participants, including employees, community members, donors, students, and alumni.

1.A.2.

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

The College's mission and related statements emphasize various key aspects, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and cultural purpose. North Central maintains the

relevance of its mission, vision, and values through a strategic planning timeline, ensuring regular updates ([NC-004](#)).

Objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) are updated yearly, action plans every 2-3 years, strategic goals every 5 years, and strategic directions every 15 years. This review process involves the Board of Trustees, President, Cabinet, SPAT members, and employees. The Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan is a living document. For example, our mission and vision statements were updated in 2022 to enhance clarity and specificity in our commitment to student success and equity. SPAT members also assess the alignment of the plan with College operations and budget yearly, tracking performance against objectives ([NC-005](#); [NC-006](#)). The College's mission-driven activities related to components in 1.A.2 are available in a table ([NC-007](#)).

North Central meets the best practice standards required for state appropriations under Michigan Public Act 144 of 2022 ([NC-008](#)), demonstrating the College's adherence to best practices in providing local strategic value in the categories of economic development, business/industry partnerships, educational partnerships, and community services.

1.A.3.

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

The College's mission, vision, and core values guide our actions and priorities and are clearly directed to our constituents.

The mission statement commits us to providing exceptional, accessible, and relevant higher education. As an open-access institution, we meet the needs of all individuals who can benefit from our services, offering learning opportunities in credit and non-credit formats at multiple locations and online. The vision statement emphasizes our commitment to being a student-centered college that aims to support our students' varied needs.

New and existing programming such as Nursing and Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) ([NC-150](#)), Medical and Health Sciences ([NC-147](#)), and Digital Art and Design ([NC-016](#)) shows the College focuses its priorities on constituents' needs. The College also recognizes the need for workforce training and development and, through that recognition, has made workforce training a priority through its Fast Track programs such as Medical Assistant, Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), Phlebotomy, and Medication Aide ([NC-037](#)).

Our core values outline how we deliver our educational offerings and services, aiming to improve northern Michigan communities through innovation, agility, and stewardship of resources. These offerings are delivered with excellence, integrity, results, stewardship, compassion, and inclusion ([NC-003 p. 3](#)).

1.A.4.

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

Our academic offerings, student support services, and enrollment profile align with our mission. North Central offers a range of credit and non-credit programs, ensuring *exceptional, accessible, relevant* higher education *to the benefit of all*.

Exceptional

- Nursing ([NC-021](#))
- Student Satisfaction and Engagement Surveys ([NC-081](#); [NC-076](#))

Accessible

- In-person, hybrid and online instruction for credit ([NC-082](#))
- Fast Track offerings for abbreviated credential obtainment ([NC-037](#))
- Scholarships ([NC-033](#))
- Athletics ([NC-294](#))
- Tutoring and Testing Center ([NC-030](#))
- Campus Cupboard ([NC-028](#))
- Veterans and Active Military Assistance ([NC-027](#))
- Early College ([NC-014](#))
- Futures for Frontliners ([NC-024](#))
- Michigan Reconnect ([NC-026](#))

Relevant

- Nursing ([NC-102](#))
- Childcare ([NC-023](#))
- AA in Environmental and Sustainability Studies ([NC-031](#))
- New program offerings:
 - AA in Global Studies ([NC-042](#))
 - AA in Digital Art and Design ([NC-016](#))
 - AA Concentration in Teacher Education ([NC-091](#))
 - AS Concentration in Medical and Health Sciences ([NC-147](#))
 - AS Concentration in Mechanical Engineering, AAS Mechatronics, Certificate in Mechatronics ([NC-146](#))
 - LPN Certificate ([NC-150](#))
- Career Services Support ([NC-045](#))

- College credit for high school CTE courses aligned with 13 of the College's academic programs ([NC-032](#))

To the benefit of our host communities and area businesses, we provide several workforce and community resources:

- The division of Corporate and Community Education (CCE) Division ([NC-054](#)) offers non-credit workforce and corporate training and lifelong learning
- The College offers senior citizens in the community the opportunity to enroll in any open class using the Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver (Policy #112) ([NC-066 p. 7](#))
- SCRC Fitness and Wellness Programs ([NC-085](#))
- Luncheon Lecture Series Events ([NC-096](#))
- Harris Gardens ([NC-086](#))
- International Lecture Programs ([NC-036](#))
- Summer Learning Academy for kids ([NC-025](#))
- Sustainability Committee - investigates and recommends initiatives to help the College effectively manage its facilities and systems and serve as a regional leader in sustainability ([NC-097](#))

Our enrollment profile over the last three years shows a stabilization of key performance indicators ([NC-012](#)). This consistency and impact align with our mission.

1.A.5.

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

North Central articulates its mission through public information, including statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, and plans. Our mission, vision, values, strategic priorities, and goals are available on our website ([NC-003 p.3](#)). They are also articulated in both the comprehensive Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002](#)) and the condensed Thrive 2035 booklet ([NC-003](#)) available on the College's website. These elements are displayed on banners at all three College locations ([NC-275](#)) and incorporated into our Campus Master Plan ([NC-009 p. 1, p. 5](#)). Discussions on these topics are included in agendas for the Board of Trustees ([NC-011](#)), SPAT ([NC-010](#)), and Cabinet meetings ([NC-319](#)).

Core Component 1.B.

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

1.B.1.

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

The College's Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002](#)) highlights its commitment to serving the public through its mission, vision, and values by providing exceptional, accessible, and relevant education. We strive to be a premier student-centered institution, excelling in transfer education, workforce development, and lifelong learning, boosting the social and economic vitality of our communities.

The College ensures the relevancy of its courses and programs to the public through established academic processes like outcomes assessment ([NC-264](#)), program review ([NC-203](#); [NC-314](#)), and committee work. These processes were refined during the College's recent participation in the HLC Assessment Academy ([NC-001](#)). A recent example is the new LPN Certificate program ([NC-017](#)), developed to meet regional educational and training demands ([NC-142](#); [NC-149](#)), which was reviewed and recommended through the Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee process ([NC-314](#)) before approval by the President and Board of Trustees, and the HLC ([NC-088](#)).

The College focuses on local community schools and districts, encouraging high school students to attend North Central through dual credit and targeted scholarships. It offers Early College programs at five local high schools ([NC-014](#)) and provides two key scholarships annually: the Presidential Scholarship ([NC-018](#)) rewarding academic excellence and leadership, and the Tip of the Mitt Scholarship ([NC-019](#)) aimed at first-generation students with a 2.5+ GPA who may be uncertain about attending college.

In Summer 2024, the College began participating in a Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) program to work with graduating high school seniors who are undecided about attending college or pursuing a post-secondary credential. The *Timberwolves Thrive* academic catch-up program ([NC-022](#)) focuses on preparation for college-level English and math, exploration of academic and career pathways, and other topics.

The College participates in Michigan Reconnect ([NC-026](#)), a state scholarship program that allows qualifying Michigan residents aged 21 and over to complete a North Central degree or certificate tuition-free.

The Child Care Initiative ([NC-023](#)) and CCAMPIS address the childcare shortage through CCAMPIS Advisor services ([NC-046](#)) and activities like North Central playgroups, which are led by Early Childhood Education students ([NC-063](#)).

North Central's division of Corporate and Community Education (CCE) Division ([NC-054](#)) offers non-credit workforce Fast-Track ([NC-037](#)) programs, corporate training ([NC-083](#)), and lifelong learning ([NC-084](#)). An example is the Medical Assistant Fast-Track program bundling medical assistant, phlebotomist, and EKG technician training ([NC-037 p. 10](#)). Since first offering the program in May 2022, the program has had 80 graduates. A concurrent phlebotomy-only training program has had 26 graduates.

1.B.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.

North Central operates as a non-profit public institution under the Michigan Community College Act of 1966 ([NC-040](#)), where its Board of Trustees derives direction and governing authorities.

North Central's budget highlights its focus on its educational responsibilities. A primary function of the College's budgeting process, discussed in more detail in 5.B.3., is to fund positions supporting student success. Of the College's \$19 million general fund budget, 70% is allocated for salaries and benefits ([NC-039](#)) for positions such as Student Success Coordinator, Career Development Specialist, Accessibility Services Coordinator, and Instructional Designer ([NC-115](#)). This focus on supporting student success also included the recent hiring of four additional faculty members in the areas of Chemistry ([NC-011 p. 52](#)), Communication ([NC-011 p. 74](#)), History ([NC-011 p. 32](#)), and Nursing ([NC-011 p. 117](#)), growing the full-time faculty ranks by nearly 13%.

The College reinvests any excess revenue in new programs and other mission-oriented initiatives. Recently approved new programs supporting the College's mission include the AA in Global Studies ([NC-140](#)), AAS in Digital Art and Design ([NC-141](#)), LPN Certificate ([NC-142](#)), Retail Management Certificate ([NC-143](#)), and AA Concentration in Teacher Education ([NC-144](#)). All new program proposals include a financial review to ensure adequate resources are available ([NC-119 p. 5](#)).

1.B.3.

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

Goal 4 of the College's Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan is to be the region's community leader in sustainability and collaboration. External community constituencies working alongside the

College through advisory boards ([NC-103](#); [NC-107](#); [NC-108](#); [NC-109](#); [NC-110](#); [NC-111](#); [NC-112](#)), the President's Commission ([NC-104](#)), and more. Employees serve on community boards and organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Chambers of Commerce, Zonta, Women's Resource Center of Northern Michigan, Manna, Northmen Den, Crooked Tree Arts Center, and more ([NC-139](#)).

The College also meets external constituency needs through a variety of community-focused programs such as Lifelong Learning ([NC-084](#)), Summer Learning Academy ([NC-025](#)), Harris Gardens ([NC-086](#)), maintaining a natural area ([NC-090](#)), and participating in Tree City USA ([NC-089](#)).

Launched in 2022, the College's Child Care Initiative ([NC-023](#)) addresses Emmet County's childcare shortage by creating sustainable, equitable access to childcare supported by a qualified workforce earning livable wages. The lack of affordable, reliable childcare in rural northern Michigan affects parents, employers, and providers, making economic stability for families increasingly difficult.

The College is an active community partner in sustainability and environmental initiatives. These activities include the Solar Panel Array, SludgeHammer Wastewater Treatment, Stormwater Runoff, Green Roof, Bioswale, and Weather Station ([NC-097](#)).

Core Component 1.C.

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

1.C.1.

The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.

Since 2021, the North Central's HLC Assessment Academy has focused on outcomes assessment and program review with significant input from faculty and staff. (Criteria 3 and 4 of the assurance argument provide in-depth detail.) Specifically, the College developed and implemented new Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) ([NC-041](#)), leading to the creation or revision of program learning outcomes (PLOs) and course learning outcomes (CLOs).

North Central's curricular and co-curricular activities align with the five ILOs, setting standards for preparing students for informed citizenship and workplace success. These ILOs are communicated to students and cover competencies in intellectual skills, communication skills, applied skills, cultural skills, and ethics ([NC-061](#)).

Curricular

The College offers various curricular activities to prepare students for citizenship and workplace success. For example, the CRD/AP Committee actively supports academic programming and policy development. Recent examples include:

- *AA in Global Studies*: Prepares students to be civically engaged, culturally aware, and environmentally conscious global citizens ([NC-034](#)).
- *AAS in Digital Art and Design*: Focuses on improving visual communication across various forms, from architecture to graphic design ([NC-035](#)).
- *Practical Nurse Certificate (PN-LPN)*: Prepares graduates for the NCLEX-PN and entry-level nursing practice ([NC-017](#)).

Other curricular examples include Michael Kendzierski's work with the Little Traverse Conservancy on wildlife crossings and Nathan Babcock's collaboration with the City of Petoskey on sustainability solutions. Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ENVS) students have also contributed to local government efforts, identifying a rare and invasive plant species in the College's Natural Area. ([NC-059 p. 73](#))

Co-Curricular

Co-curricular activities also support citizenship and workplace success. The International Committee promotes global awareness ([NC-036](#)), while student organizations offer leadership opportunities. For example, the College's Phi Theta Kappa chapter recently won the national and state "Distinguished Chapter Officer Team Award" in 2024 ([NC-050](#)). In 2024, the College established the Timberwolf Leadership Academy, which supports emerging student leaders ([NC-148](#)).

Career Services ([NC-045](#)) enhances student employment prospects through career fairs and professional development training. The division of Corporate and Community Education ([NC-054](#)) provides job-specific and personal interest training. Graduates contribute as skilled workers in fields such as nursing ([NC-044](#)) and paramedics ([NC-052](#)).

Finally, the HLC Assessment Academy Team leads efforts ([NC-001](#)) to ensure curricular and co-curricular ([NC-064](#)) activities support the ILOs. As one example, the faculty have mapped all General Education learning outcomes in each distribution area to at least two ILOs (also the General Education Program Learning Outcomes). This ensures the General Education program prepares students to be informed citizens and successful in the workplace ([NC-276](#)). The Team is institutionalizing curriculum maps, assessment structures, and program reviews across the curriculum and holding "Assessment Days" for stakeholders to develop these tools ([NC-065](#)). This work is discussed in more detail in Criteria 3 and 4.

1.C.2.

The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.

The College's policies work to ensure inclusive, equitable treatment of all. The College's mission and values of Excellence, Integrity, Results, Stewardship, Compassion, and Inclusion ([NC-003 p. 3](#)) and open Admission and Enrollment policy (#300) ([NC-066 p. 29](#)) promote access for all applicants, while its Non-Discriminatory (#408) ([NC-066 p. 48](#)), Title IX Sexual Harassment (#415) ([NC-066 p. 54](#)) and Student Code of Conduct (#308) policies ([NC-066 p. 32](#)) ensure fair treatment for both staff and students.

Human Resources (HR) integrates DEI policies by diversifying the candidate pool through specialized recruiting websites and a bias screening system for applicants ([NC-043](#)). Staff receive diversity training ([NC-058](#)), and the Employee Handbook includes a Diversity and Inclusion statement (Policy #304) ([NC-053 p. 10](#)). HR's Employee Assistance Program supports employees' mental health, fostering inclusion and support ([NC-101](#)).

Recent campus facility improvements, including the opening of the Borra Learning Center (BLC) in 2021 ([NC-068](#)), reflect the College's commitment to access and inclusion. The

BLC houses essential student services like financial aid and advising, centralized for ease of student access ([NC-067](#)). Learning pods provide a comfortable, private, quiet space for students who learn best by studying alone. A Student Commons with comfortable, rearrangeable group seating allows students to work collaboratively in groups. Upgraded classroom technology is also included ([NC-069](#)).

The College also completed a comprehensive website redesign that resulted in a fully ADA-compliant site using the most current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The fully accessible website was launched in Fall 2021 ([NC-059 p. 97](#)).

The College also offers robust learning services to support diverse learning needs, including a writing center, math lab, and peer/professional tutoring ([NC-030](#)). Accessibility Services provides an easy application process for student disability accommodation ([NC-029](#)). The Library leads in equity and inclusion by supporting faculty in the use of Open Education Resources (OER), helping to remove financial barriers to course materials ([NC-051](#)). During the COVID-19 pandemic, students gained access to free laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, and other technology through checkout from the Library, a practice that continues post-pandemic ([NC-070](#)).

The College started a Real Talk initiative ([NC-060](#)) that fosters a culture of collective efficacy, transformative pedagogy, and diversified learning. This program includes four cohorts of faculty and one cohort of student affairs staff members; early student success impact data is promising ([NC-048](#); [NC-047](#)).

The Library recently completed a Library Decolonization initiative in collaboration with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB) Education Department. The project involved a comprehensive evaluation and reorganization of the Library's 400-title Indigenous collection, transitioning from the Western-focused Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system to a new classification structure adopted with guidance from LTBB partners ([NC-290](#)).

Wraparound services further demonstrate the College's commitment to equity and inclusion. For example, the Campus Cupboard provides a food pantry and hygiene products year-round ([NC-028](#)). The College allows service and emotional support animals on campus (Policy #413) ([NC-066 p. 53](#)) and supports student parents with its Child Care Initiative ([NC-023](#)). Veterans receive support through dedicated advisors, a Veterans' group, and a private lounge ([NC-027](#)). Student DEI organizations include the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Student Veterans Association, and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship ([NC-098](#)). The College also added seven full-time positions to support student and employee success, including an Accessibility Advisor, a Mental Health Counselor, an Instructional Designer, Gift Officers, a Human Resources Generalist, and a Student Success Coordinator ([NC-115](#)).

Beyond North Central's curricular and co-curricular practices, various units support the College's commitment to inclusive and equitable treatment. The Campus Assessment, Response & Evaluation Team ([NC-099](#)) provides proactive discussion and intervention for students in crisis. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee ([NC-100 p. 4](#)) leads inclusive initiatives, including drafting a 2023 DEI Board of Directors Resolution ([NC-011 p. 52](#)) and analyzing demographic ([NC-105](#)), Campus Climate Survey ([NC-117](#)) and HEED data ([NC-106](#)), and organizing DEI-centered events ([NC-113](#)). The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment collects and analyzes data to track success and improve outcomes for diverse student ([NC-308](#)) and employee populations ([NC-043](#)), advocating for inclusive and equitable practices ([NC-075](#); [NC-076](#); [NC-077](#)).

1.C.3.

The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

North Central actively fosters a climate of respect among students, faculty, staff, and administrators from diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives. This effort starts with the Employee Handbook, which includes a Respectful Workplace Policy (#406) ([NC-053 p. 18](#)). The DEI Committee also promotes respect through various initiatives, as highlighted in 1.C.2.

North Central's Employee Engagement Committee serves the College community through events designed to foster respect and belonging ([NC-100 p. 5](#)). Activities include Take Your Child to Work Day, Employee Appreciation, Jingle Mingle Holiday Activities, ties, Years of Service Luncheon, Appreciation Lunch, and Sunset Cruise ([NC-277](#)).

The College recently launched Real Talk ([NC-060](#)), a professional development initiative for student affairs staff and faculty. This program includes cohort retreats encouraging meaningful conversations and relationship-building based on a shared learning framework. The Real Talk initiative ([NC-048](#)) focuses on equity and inclusion, helping create supportive learning environments for all students. For student affairs, the Real Talk initiative aims to develop best practices in areas like financial aid, athletics, admissions, academic advising, and more ([NC-047](#)). Positive outcomes for students include the use of shared language, warm hand-offs, empathy, and mentoring ([NC-059 p. 90](#)).

North Central students also contribute to building a respectful climate through organizations like the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Student Veterans Association, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Phi Theta Kappa ([NC-098](#)). For instance, Phi Theta Kappa's 2023 College Project fostered a sense of belonging through events like panel discussions on global experiences ([NC-049](#)).

The Library supports a sense of belonging by offering a lending Library of Things that includes a wide variety of devices, games, and tools ([NC-074](#)) and by hosting exhibits on

various topics such as Women Physicians in Medicine, Disability Awareness, decolonization, and Black History ([NC-056](#)). The Library also collaborates with faculty to enhance information literacy and learning through its services ([NC-073](#)). Finally, the Library consistently offers guest speakers and engaging events to students and the larger community focused on inclusion and support. For example, in November 2024, the schedule of events included: Indigenous Movie Tuesday, Where Wolves Don't Die (book club), Late Night in the Library, and Comfort and Therapy Dogs ([NC-056 p. 15](#)).

Core Component 1 Summary

North Central's mission is to provide exceptional, accessible, relevant education that meets the educational, economic, and cultural needs of its community. Developed with input from stakeholders, this mission is embedded in the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan, guiding all programs and services.

The College emphasizes instruction, public service, and economic development, regularly updating its mission to align with community needs and Michigan's standards. Offering credit and non-credit options, including workforce-focused certifications, North Central addresses the needs of diverse learners. Flexible learning formats and support services, like tutoring, food pantry, and veterans' resources, further align with the mission to ensure accessible education.

Public communication of the mission is clear through online resources, campus displays, and strategic documents. North Central prioritizes public service by partnering with local schools and businesses and through initiatives like dual enrollment and corporate training programs. The College promotes civic engagement and workforce readiness in curricular and co-curricular activities guided by Institutional Learning Outcomes.

In summary, North Central's mission-centered approach promotes student success, inclusivity, and community impact through consistent planning, regular review, and responsive programming aligned with community needs.

Criterion 2 – Integrity

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

Core Component 2.A.

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

2.A.1.

The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.

North Central’s mission statement ([NC-003 p. 3](#)) was adopted in 2020 ([NC-011 p. 205](#)) and is a guiding principle for planning and policy making. Operating in sync with its mission, the College provides the benefit of high-quality higher education to all its constituencies.

2.A.2.

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary functions.

The mission statement and its underlying policies and processes ensure fair and ethical behavior to all constituencies. For example, Board Policy #114 ([NC-066 p. 7](#)) prescribes “Ethical Standards for Faculty, Staff, Administration, and the Board of Trustees.” The integrity of academic operations is detailed in Core Component 2.E.

The North Central Employee Handbook ([NC-053](#)) contains multiple policies and processes that provide mandates and guidelines that ensure fairness, integrity, and ethical behavior on the part of employees and the Board of Trustees ([NC-120](#)).

The College has two collective bargaining agreements: North Central Association of Faculty and Professional Staff ([NC-013](#)) and Custodian, Maintenance, Office Personnel Association ([NC-078](#)). These agreements complement the Employee Handbook in terms of integrity and ethical behavior.

The College adheres to the State of Michigan Transparency Reporting guidelines. The homepage of the College website includes links to budgets, audits, debt obligations,

handbooks, collective bargaining agreements, a five-year capital outlay plan, security reports, and consumer information ([NC-116](#)).

Financial integrity is a strength of the College. The policies and practices that comprise financial management, operations, reporting, controls, and evaluation include the work of the Board and its Finance and Facilities and Personnel subcommittees ([NC-118 p. 6](#)). In 2024, the College's finances were evaluated by Moody's, an external rating agency, as part of a bond issue and received an Aa2 rating, one of the highest and very favorable ([NC-121](#)). This high rating is the result of the College's detailed budgeting and monitoring process, which is discussed in detail in 5.B.3. Each audit since the College's last HLC evaluation has resulted in a clean opinion ([NC-038](#)).

Core Component 2.B.

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

2.B.1.

The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.

North Central ensures the accuracy of any representations about academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs, governance, and accreditation. The College's website serves as the central hub for all pertinent information for students and the community. The integrated [College e-catalog](#), updated daily, lists all academic programs ([NC-122](#)) and includes real-time career, salary, and financial aid information. The program pages include a link to the Federal Net Price calculator ([NC-123](#)) so students can get information on tuition costs and financial aid packages, as well as real-time career and salary information.

The website's home page displays disclosure and compliance elements, such as a link to verify the College's Higher Learning Commission accreditation status ([NC-124](#)) and State Budget and Performance Transparency Reporting ([NC-116](#)). The Fast Facts page ([NC-125](#)) includes information about North Central and links to the Economic Impact Report ([NC-126](#)) and Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-003](#)).

2.B.2.

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

North Central supports any claims about educational contributions through research, community engagement, experiential learning, and economic development. For example, the College's Office of Institutional Research tracks and reports student retention, graduation, transfer-out rates ([NC-127](#)), and detailed data on costs, aid, enrollment, diversity, and more through IPEDS reporting ([NC-128](#)).

The College initiated Fast Track programs in 2022 to meet the region's workforce training demands. A year after launching a non-credit Fast-Track Healthcare Program in 2022, the College celebrated adding 44 healthcare professionals to the workforce ([NC-129](#)). Since then, the College has greatly expanded these Fast Track programs ([NC-037](#)).

Through a nearly \$500,000 investment ([NC-093](#)) over seven years, the College has prioritized a student sense of belonging through the research-based Real Talk pedagogy. This is further discussed in Core Component 1.C.3.

Launched in 2022, the College's Child Care Initiative ([NC-023](#)) addresses Emmet County's childcare shortage by creating sustainable, equitable access to childcare supported by a qualified workforce earning livable wages. The initiative is supported by a nearly \$2M federal grant over four years ([NC-197](#)) to expand childcare access for student parents and is supported by local community foundations and government bodies.

North Central's AA in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ENVS) program ([NC-031](#)) equips students with multidisciplinary knowledge to address environmental challenges. Recently, a student discovered a rare, invasive plant in the College's Natural Area, demonstrating the program's community impact ([NC-059, p. 73](#)).

Core Component 2.C.

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

2.C.1.

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

North Central operates independently as a non-profit public institution under the Michigan Community College Act of 1966 ([NC-040](#)) to serve its district of Emmet County. The voters of Emmet County elect the seven members of the Board of Trustees ([NC-130](#)) in staggered six-year terms to conduct the affairs of the College, meet the educational needs of its citizens, and enrich the life of the community in accordance with its bylaws ([NC-118](#)).

Trustees are trained and knowledgeable to make informed decisions regarding the College's financial and academic policies and practices. New trustees meet with the Board Chair and the College's President to be trained on the College's mission, vision, and values and to review the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002](#)). New trustees are briefed on current projects, initiatives, and challenges the College may be facing. New trustees are also presented with information relevant to the general operations of the Board, such as Board Bylaws ([NC-118](#)), the Board Policy Manual ([NC-066](#)), and the Campus Master Plan ([NC-009](#)).

In accordance with Michigan's Open Meetings Act 267 of 1976 ([NC-131](#)), the Board meets monthly in open sessions. Meeting notices, agendas, and minutes are posted on the College's website ([NC-132](#)). Trustees participate in biannual retreats, which include activities such as the retreat evaluation activity ([NC-138](#)) conducted during its June 2023 retreat with Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) facilitator Luke Robbins ([NC-011 p. 156](#)).

Although Michigan's 31 two-year colleges are autonomous, a strong collaborative network operates through the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA). MCCA provides professional development and legislative advocacy opportunities for North Central trustees.

2.C.2.

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

The Board of Trustees operates in a manner that reflects its priorities to preserve and enhance the College through its regular meetings and committee structure. The Board's monthly meeting agendas ([NC-011](#)) focus on the institution's priorities and provide opportunities for public comment and input, both scheduled and unscheduled. The Board committees include Finance and Facilities, Personnel, Bylaws and Policy, and Curriculum ([NC-118 p. 5](#)).

The Finance & Facilities Committee ensures compliance through monthly meetings and reviews of reports relevant to the College's finances. The committee fully reviews annual operating and capital budgets, selects an external auditor to perform annual audits, and receives an opinion from the auditor regarding financial conformance with all financial recording and reporting requirements ([NC-038](#)).

In addition to regular monthly meetings, the Board meets periodically for longer planning sessions at Board retreats. Board retreat agendas are posted as open meetings and typically held in downtown Petoskey. The retreats allow for more in-depth planning and discussion on strategic topics than at a regular Board meeting. Topics include strategic planning, facility needs, assessment and accreditation, the 5-year budget forecast, strategic plans, and an in-depth review of campus initiatives ([NC-011 p. 41, p. 104, p. 156](#)).

2.C.3.

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

The Board of Trustees is focused on North Central's achievement of its mission through the success of its students and its impact on the community, incorporating the input of external stakeholders. The Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan focuses on people, programs, and places, with people being the number one priority. The College is committed to the people it serves: students, employees, and the community – including external stakeholders ([NC-003 p. 7](#)).

North Central's President frequently invites campus community members to speak at Board meetings. Examples of such presentations include the College's Library ([NC-011 p. 74](#)) and Business Office ([NC-011 p. 60](#)) staff.

Most recently, the Board directed the College to focus on the Career and Technical Education Enhancement (CATEE) project ([NC-133](#)), which will improve health, technology, and trade offerings to students and help fill community needs in the areas of nursing, allied

health, automation, mechatronics, robotics, and other skilled trades that drive our community's vitality and growth.

In addition to their formal role as Board members, trustees are active leaders within the Petoskey community and have varied opportunities to interact with citizens. Trustees attend College events such as the annual faculty/staff holiday party, numerous lectures and meetings held on the campus, the Employee Years of Service banquet, the Phi Theta Kappa induction ceremony, the Athletics Banquet, and Commencement ceremonies. These events provide opportunities for the trustees to hear the views of internal and external constituents and to factor the information gleaned into future decision-making.

2.C.4.

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

The Board of Trustees preserves its independence from undue influence by its Conflicts of Interest policy in its Bylaws (Article VII) ([NC-118 p. 7](#)).

North Central's Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization ([NC-135](#)) chartered separately from the College and has its own Articles of Incorporation ([NC-134](#)) and Policies ([NC-136](#)). The Foundation seeks to initiate philanthropy in partnership with the College and community to provide financial support to the College ([NC-071](#)), such as assistance in meeting the goals of its Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan.

The College's Board appoints Foundation Board members ([NC-137](#)). Foundation Board members may serve three three-year terms for a total of nine years of service. The College's President also serves as the President of the Foundation Board and is a voting member. As many as one to three College Board Trustees also serve as Foundation Board members and on the Foundation's Executive Committee. The Foundation's Executive Committee is made up of the College's President, who serves as the committee's President, and a Chair, Past Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Foundation Board members are given a job description that includes the commitments of Foundation Board membership ([NC-080](#)). Foundation Board members must follow the Foundation conflict of interest policy ([NC-136 p. 3](#)), which is identical to the College Board of Trustees conflict of interest bylaw ([NC-118 p. 7](#)).

The Executive Director of the Foundation reports to the College's President, serves as the Vice President for Advancement on the President's Cabinet team, and, with the President, serves as the interface between the College and Foundation boards in identifying fundraising priorities. The Foundation's Administrative Assistant keeps minutes of Foundation meetings ([NC-187](#)).

Although the College Foundation Board and Board of Trustees are careful to maintain separation, both have adopted a common policy regarding lobbying (Policy #115) ([NC-066 p. 7](#)). The separation is evidenced through Foundation audits ([NC-057](#)) and its 990 reports ([NC-055](#)).

2.C.5.

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

The College's Board of Trustees has delegated the authority and responsibility for overseeing the College's day-to-day operations and the execution of its strategic goals to the President. The President consults with the five vice presidents of the College, who are the VP of Finance and Facilities, VP of Academic Affairs, VP of Student Affairs, VP of Marketing and Strategy, and VP for Advancement, in weekly Cabinet meetings on matters concerning federal and state compliance, short and long-term planning, budget, personnel, and other operational issues.

College administration oversees the institution's day-to-day management. The College's organizational chart ([NC-062](#)) illustrates the relationship between the Board, the President, and those reporting directly to the President.

The College's faculty are responsible for chairing the Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee. Other faculty, instructional deans, associate deans, the VP for Academic Affairs, the VP for Student Affairs, and the Registrar complete the committee's membership. The mission of the CRD/AP Committee is to review and approve new, revised, or inactivated courses and revised programs. This group also reviews and recommends new and inactivated programs ([NC-100 p. 4](#)). All course approvals (new, revised, or inactivated) are implemented without further approval by the President or Board. Likewise, all approved program revisions do not require further approval by the President or Board. CRD/AP also reviews and recommends academic policies ([NC-279 pp. 31-34](#)) through the President and to the Board, such as the College's Program Review and Assessment policies (Board policies #213, #214, #215, and #216) ([NC-011 p. 177](#)).

Core Component 2.D.

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

2.D.1.

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

To meet North Central's mission to provide exceptional, accessible, relevant higher education to the benefit of all ([NC-003 p. 3](#)), academic freedom and freedom of expression are paramount, as evidenced in Board of Trustees policy #406 regarding Freedom of Assembly ([NC-066 p. 46](#)). Aligning under this policy are statements on academic freedom and freedom of assembly in the [Student Handbook](#). Also in alignment, the collective bargaining agreement with North Central's Association of Faculty and Professional Staff includes a section on academic freedom ([NC-013 p. 8](#)). North Central's commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning is clear and drawn directly from its governing board.

In pursuit of truth in teaching and learning, North Central ensures a focus on its five institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) for all students. The five ILOs are Intellectual Skills, Communication Skills, Ethics, Applied Skills, and Cultural Skills ([NC-061](#)). Mapping the College's general education curriculum ([NC-145](#)) – which aligns with the statewide Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) curriculum ([NC-087](#)) – these five ILOs enable this pursuit and ensure students learn about the world in which they exist while cultivating critical thinking and engaging in a sustained and independent search for truth. The general education learning outcomes ([NC-072](#)) are identical to the ILOs. Criteria 3 and 4 provide further discussion on the teaching and learning of the ILOs.

North Central encourages open dialogue for students, community members, faculty, and staff through a myriad of opportunities to exercise academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning, often through other learning activities outside of the structure of academic programs. These opportunities take the form of a series of forums or events and singular, unique events such as Lifelong Learning Club presentations ([NC-084](#)), Luncheon Lecture series ([NC-096](#)), International Committee Speakers series ([NC-036](#)), and Library presentations, displays, and events ([NC-056](#)).

Core Component 2.E.

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

2.E.1.

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

North Central supports research aligned with its Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002](#)) and adheres to policies that ensure regulatory compliance, ethical behavior ([NC-092](#)), and fiscal responsibility. The College acknowledges its role in fostering and sharing knowledge through policies on academic freedom found in the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement ([NC-013](#)), [Student Handbook](#), and Intellectual Property Policy (#205) ([NC-066 p. 10](#)). The Ethical Standards for Faculty, Staff, Administration, and Board Policy (#114) ([NC-066 p. 7](#)) sets high standards of integrity for employees and trustees, while the Student Handbook addresses student conduct and academic dishonesty. The Board Bylaws ([NC-118](#)) and Intellectual Property Policy (#205) ([NC-066 p. 10](#)) ensure financial accountability, reflecting the College's commitment to ethical and responsible practices.

The Office of Institutional Research (IR) supports research conducted by faculty involving students or employees, requiring them to submit proposals for review ([NC-094](#)). Using standards from Michigan State University and the University of Michigan, IR ensures ethical and professional standards are met through its research review process ([NC-095](#)). If a study qualifies as Human Subjects Research under the Common Rule ([NC-151](#)), IR assists faculty in collaborating with external IRBs ([NC-152](#)) until North Central establishes its own IRB, a process currently in development ([NC-153 pp. 2-3](#)). When working with external organizations, North Central follows their research standards and procedures, such as with the CCSSE ([NC-154](#)) and PACE Climate Survey ([NC-155](#)).

2.E.2.

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

North Central's Office of Institutional Research provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students in many ways, such as literature review, survey design, methodology, and data literacy ([NC-156](#)).

The Library actively supports research integrity and scholarly practices among faculty, staff, and students. It provides diverse content and services to ensure the college community has the resources needed to ethically use, share, and create information. This includes a content collection development policy ([NC-157](#)). Research and reference support are available through in-person or virtual sessions and 24/7 chat ([NC-158](#)), monitored by the Librarian and a team of academic librarians. Faculty frequently consult the Library for help with course materials, including Open Educational Resources (OER), copyright, licensing, fair use ([NC-159](#)), source compilation ([NC-160](#)), and adapting materials ([NC-161](#)).

The Library also provides information literacy (IL) and research instruction for College classes and creates research guides ([NC-461](#)). It follows the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy, tailoring sessions based on instructor requests and class assignments. Examples of past sessions include "Fake News and Misinformation" for political science, "Ethics of Generative Artificial Intelligence" for sociology, "Introduction to Scholarly Conversation" for English, and "Identifying Scientific Research" for biology ([NC-162](#)).

North Central's Tutoring and Testing Center, which houses the Writing Lab, is another effective support service for students. As discussed more fully in the response to Core Component 3.D.2., the Writing Lab offers face-to-face and online support for student research writing ([NC-163](#)).

2.E.3.

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

The College provides students with clear policies and procedures regarding student code of conduct and academic dishonesty in the [Student Handbook](#). In addition, North Central provides standardized guidelines on plagiarism and the use of artificial intelligence. These guidelines are included in all syllabi and managed through Simple Syllabus in the Distance Learning division of the College. In addition, faculty may also add additional research guidelines to their syllabi ([NC-164](#)). Some faculty will also give students online guides to help them avoid plagiarism via proper citation. Examples include the Purdue Online Writing Lab. Faculty also meet with students having trouble with citations and may refer them to the campus Writing Lab in the Tutoring & Testing Center ([NC-165](#)).

2.E.4.

The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

North Central's policy regarding academic dishonesty is presented in the [Student Handbook](#). The Academic Dishonesty Process provides a clear definition of academic dishonesty. In addition, the handbook delineates the due process steps that must be

adhered to when bringing charges of academic dishonesty. Evidence of a redacted Judicial Committee decision and Final Decision Letter ([NC-166](#)) to a student illustrates the enforcement of these procedures.

Given the policies and procedures that focus on the discovery of knowledge and its responsible acquisition and application, North Central has a robust system to ensure the institution and its members act with integrity and that its research conduct is ethical and responsible.

Core Component 2 Summary

North Central demonstrates its commitment to integrity through robust policies and processes governing ethical behavior, academic freedom, and clear communication with its stakeholders. The institution's mission serves as a guiding principle for decision-making and operations, ensuring transparency, fairness, and ethical standards.

The College upholds financial integrity through detailed budgeting, audits, and compliance with state transparency reporting. Ethical behavior is mandated across all operations, with guidelines established in employee handbooks, collective bargaining agreements, and board policies. Academic freedom and freedom of expression are protected through policies that encourage open dialogue and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

North Central ensures accurate representations of its programs, costs, governance, and accreditation through its comprehensive website and catalog, which are regularly updated. The institution supports claims about its contributions through research, community engagement, and workforce development initiatives, such as Fast Track programs and its Child Care Initiative.

The governing board operates autonomously and prioritizes the College's mission while maintaining independence from external influences. Faculty oversee academic matters, and administrative staff manage day-to-day operations.

Research integrity is supported through Institutional Research and the Library, which provide resources and guidance on ethical practices. Academic honesty is enforced through clear policies, ensuring that all members act responsibly and ethically.

Criterion 3 – Teaching & Learning: Quality, Resources, & Support

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

Core Component 3.A.

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

3.A.1.

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

Key to ensuring course currency is the master course syllabus (MCS) revision process. Historically, MCS revisions proceeded unevenly across the College, given that no structured review cycle for all institutional programs and courses existed. In response to HLC feedback in 2019 and as part of the College’s HLC Assessment Academy work, a review process to improve consistency of revision was implemented. This began with the 2022 Course Learning Outcome (CLO) Revision Project ([NC-259](#)); by April 2023, outcomes for all active courses were evaluated and, where needed, revised ([NC-350](#)). Faculty and deans formed teams to complete a five-phase project: planning; evaluating existing CLOs to determine if revision was necessary; revising CLOs; submitting revised CLOs for review by the Assessment Academy team; and finally, submitting CLOs (as part of revised master syllabi) for final approval by the curriculum committee. Details on these stages are available in the Project Management Guide ([NC-259](#)). After CLOs were updated, Faculty aligned CLOs to Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) using curriculum maps ([NC-255](#)) - a process detailed in 3.A., 3.B., 3.C., and 4.B. These curriculum maps are additional tools for evaluating course and program currency. Future CLO and other MCS revisions are now tied to program review ([NC-015](#)) to ensure consistency of course currency.

The College further ensures course currency through participation in state initiatives; for example, the College redesigned offerings in Mathematics due to Michigan Reconnect legislation, which requires co-requisite support to facilitate gateway course completion for Michigan Reconnect grant recipients ([NC-026](#)). This approach eliminated sequential

developmental math courses and created new co-requisite courses to support College Algebra (MATH 119: *College Algebra Preparation* as a corequisite for MATH 130: *College Algebra*), Statistics (STAT 095: *Statistics Preparation* as a corequisite for STAT 200: *Statistics*), and Quantitative Reasoning (MATH 098: *Quantitative Reasoning Preparation* as a co-requisite for MATH 128: *Quantitative Reasoning*), and further adjusted the math curriculum around Beginning and Intermediate Algebra (MATH 110/112) ([NC-279 pp. 74-78](#)). To further ensure currency, these course changes have been monitored using data provided by the Associate Dean of Institutional Research and Assessment ([NC-351](#)).

Another example is the Academic Catchup program, a \$10 million state budget allotment administered by the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) to support recent high school graduates impacted by interruptions to in-person learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic ([NC-354](#)). The College developed the Timberwolves Thrive program (July 15, 2024 – August 14, 2024) to help incoming students prepare for college English and Math classes, develop academic skills, and explore academic and career pathways. The program does not enroll students in credit-bearing courses but speaks to curricular currency by offering non-credit learning opportunities that prepare students for co-requisite study ([NC-022](#)).

Programs

Program Review

Curricular currency at the program level is guided by the Board of Trustees policy on program review and applies to all credentials: the Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), Associate of General Studies (AGS), Certificates (C), and Certificates of Development (CD), as well as concentrations in the AA and AS (#213) ([NC-066 p. 27](#)).

This policy is actualized through a system of cyclical program review developed in 2022 ([NC-234](#)) as part of the Assessment Academy to address a historically ad hoc approach to program review. This schedule emerged through the evaluation of program health metrics on enrollment, completion, and other factors ([NC-352](#)). The College follows a 6-year cycle of program review, with four years of assessment (Years 1-4), one year of preparation (Year 5), and one year of feedback and planning for the next cycle (Year 6). New programs undergo a mid-cycle review (at the 3-year mark) focusing on enrollment metrics and student success rates (e.g., course and persistence) but excluding retention, completion, transfer, and assessment of program learning outcomes ([NC-234](#)). Programs with external accreditation follow their third-party accreditation processes. This program review process (detailed in 4.A. and 4.B.) is currently in a pilot phase so that stakeholders can make informed and incremental improvements based on feedback.

The historic Academic Planning and Program Review (APPR) template ([NC-457](#)) constituted the program review structure for over a decade. As part of the Assessment Academy, the College is revising the program review process through a piloted approach

over two years. Given its availability and familiarity, the College utilized the APPR in its most recent cohort of program review (Group 1, Pilot Year 1) and gathered feedback on its utility ([NC-204](#)). This feedback informed the first set of changes to the program review process, resulting in the Review of Academic Programs (RAP) Form ([NC-203](#)). Now in the second year of the pilot, Group 2 programs will complete the RAP form and provide feedback that will guide revisions. Program reviews are now guided by a defined process for completing the review and developing a process improvement plan ([NC-314](#)).

In Academic Year (AY) 23-24, Group 1 program reviews were completed ([NC-353](#)) with Group 1 programs identified as needing immediate attention based on the 2022 program health data analysis ([NC-352](#); [NC-234](#)); per this schedule, Group 2 programs focus on state-approved occupational programs, State Pathways, and coupling stackable credentials to improve workload balance. These are in progress in AY 24-25. Looking ahead, later groups will address additional stackable credential clusters (Group 3), the General Education curriculum, transfer degrees, stackable credential clusters (Group 4), programs with previously established PLOs, and remaining stackable credential clusters (Group 5).

Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee

The Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) committee also helps ensure curricular currency. Regarding program revision or inactivation, as with individual courses, currency is maintained in part through compliance with state initiatives—as discussed above. Changes to these courses in alignment with the state initiative required updating programs where such courses were/are involved. Examples include the Associate of General Studies, the Early Childhood Education Associate of Applied Science, and other programs ([NC-279 pp. 74-78](#)).

Program revision and inactivation historically proceeded ad hoc in response to various issues. They did not occur because of systematic program assessment and review, observed needs, changes in enrollment, or other factors that would typically instantiate the process. On the revision front, for example, Studio Art C, Business of Art CD, and Fine Craft C were all adjusted in 2020 to accommodate the inactivation of ARTS 290: *Portfolio Development* (one credit) and the creation of its replacement, ARTS 293: *Portfolio Development* (three credits) because the Art Program Coordinator determined that one credit was not sufficient to create a representative portfolio ([NC-279 pp. 79-83](#)). On the inactivation front, the Computer Networking AAS and related programs were inactivated in 2020 due to low enrollments and a retiring instructor responsible for most of the curriculum ([NC-279 pp. 84-86](#)). As we move to systematic program review, these in the “life of the college” become additional, not primary, opportunities for updating curriculum.

Experiences such as these, HLC feedback in 2019, and insights gleaned from participation in the Assessment Academy all revealed a need to shift from an ad hoc approach of

CRD/AP review of programs to one more systematic to ensure currency. Much foundational work of the College's Assessment Academy project between 2021 and 2024 has focused on revising (or creating, where needed) outcomes at all levels ([NC-259](#); [NC-279 pp. 31-34](#); [NC-064](#); [NC-260](#); [NC-286 p. 246](#); [NC-249](#); [NC-041](#)), curriculum mapping ([NC-360](#); [NC-255](#); [NC-390](#)), and establishing and testing processes that would facilitate systematic program assessment and review to assure currency in a more cohesive way (e.g., assessment plans) ([NC-359](#)). These processes are further detailed through Criteria 3 and 4.

In this context, CRD/AP has close connections with the program review process and as reviews reveal the need for adjustments, those will be enacted through the curriculum committee. For example, the AA in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ENVS) Group 1 program review ([NC-267](#)) indicated needed program adjustments to address curricular obstacles to completion, such as rotation adjustment, the role of pre-requisites, and improved flexibility with program electives ([NC-279 pp. 1-3](#)). Another Group 1 program, the General Office Professional C, was determined to "lack relevancy in today's job market" and was slated for sunset and inactivation ([NC-355 p. 17](#)). These adjustments, along with others for Group 1 programs, were presented to CRD/AP for review and approval in AY 24-25 ([NC-279 pp. 1-3](#)).

In addition to program revision and inactivation, CRD/AP is the forum for proposing new programs to ensure a current curriculum. Currency here is evidenced by response to community need, particularly for occupational programs. The recent LPN program, approved by CRD/AP in 2022 ([NC-279 pp. 27-30](#)), exemplifies the College's response to current workforce needs. The program was designed to address a strong need for skilled nursing care in the area community: "Practical nursing graduates will enter a workforce desperate for help...Several local skilled nursing facilities have empty beds due to low nursing and CNA staffing. This results in millions of dollars in lost revenue and patients who do not have care where/when they need it" ([NC-142 p. 7](#)); more detailed examples with data are available in the proposal. Identifying workforce needs is just one way the College ensures a current curriculum. Other components of program currency are discussed below.

CRD/AP also supports curricular currency through approvals that foster program transferability with four-year partners; as College programs are structured in alignment with requirements and options for programs offered by Michigan baccalaureate institutions, currency is enhanced. These include, for example, state pathway programs under MiTransfer Pathways. "These transfer pathways build on the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) ([NC-357](#)), which makes it easier for students to transfer their general education courses earned at North Central Michigan College to participating four-year institutions in Michigan" ([NC-228](#)); CRD/AP reviews and approves the MiTransfer Pathways ([NC-356](#)), along with any subsequent revisions that might be necessitated due to changes in the agreed-upon pathways among partner institutions. While no state updates have thus

far happened, should those occur, it would result in the College updating our curriculum here through CRD/AP to reflect those changes.

In addition to MiTransfer pathways, programs in articulation with ones at senior institutions are important for a current curriculum. The new Global Studies concentration in the AA has been articulated with Central Michigan University's (CMU) ([NC-316 p. 1](#)) and Northern Michigan University's (NMU) ([NC-316 p. 37](#)). These agreements are in effect for three years (both CMU and NMU) before review and if needed, updating. The ENVS AA program, also articulated with NMU, was initially articulated in 2017 and through a periodic process of review and revision, is updated, most recently in 2023 ([NC-316 p. 35](#)).

Advisory Boards

The College uses advisory boards to inform currency of occupational programs ([NC-103](#); [NC-107](#); [NC-108](#); [NC-109](#); [NC-110](#); [NC-111](#); [NC-112](#)). For example, the nursing advisory board provides input from the program's communities of interest. The board is made up of representatives from our local healthcare partners, community members, recent graduates, faculty, and students. Each one provides input from their respective area. This input provides the department with insight to evaluate the curriculum to ensure it meets current clinical practices and the needs of students, the community, and our local health partners.

Ensuring Student Performance Levels Appropriate to Credentials

Several strategies are in place to ensure that student performance levels are appropriate to the credentials offered by the College (Certificate of Development, Certificate, and Associate degree). All courses are structured at the 100-200 level, consonant with credentials for two-year institutions; for example, the General Education program aligns with the Michigan Transfer Agreement ([NC-357](#)), providing for the transfer of "college-level credit which fulfill a portion of the lower-division general education requirements at participating four-year colleges or universities."

To further ensure that student performance levels in these courses (and, by extension, program credentials) are appropriate, Bloom's taxonomy guides the creation and revision of course-, program-, and institutional learning outcomes. Here, the emphasis is on (re)writing outcomes that are specific, measurable, and appropriate to the level of the course or program (Assessment Academy Training and Workshop Documents ([NC-266](#); [NC-261](#))). The College's institutional learning outcomes illustrate this. Of the six cognitive domains of Bloom's taxonomy, where Knowledge, Comprehension, and Application constitute more foundational thinking skills than the domains of Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation, all five ILOs ([NC-061](#)) are in the Comprehension and Application domains ("Demonstrate..."; "Develop..."; "Apply").

Beyond setting outcomes at levels consonant with the credentials awarded, outcome proficiency levels and targets articulate expected learner performance appropriate to the program. Until Fall 2024, course outcomes were assessed at the Beginning, Developing, and Advanced levels ([NC-358](#); [NC-264](#)), with few programs having defined outcomes and no clear way to establish student proficiency. As a result of the Assessment Academy's work to improve the institutional ability to understand student learning and make needed adjustments in support of that, process refinements were made in AY 23-24 to clarify proficiency levels associated with CLO assessment and to develop these at the program level (once outcomes had been developed). One revision process to support greater clarity was a reframing of the three-tiered proficiency levels for CLO assessment of student performance—shifting from Beginning/Developing/Advanced, where there was no clear articulation of which level would indicate learners having met proficiency, to Below/Meets/Exceeds Proficiency, which would more directly indicate a minimum level of proficiency (“Meets”) expected of learner performance ([NC-286 pp. 27-41](#)); the inclusion of “Exceeds” retained the familiarity of a three-tiered structure, and also facilitates more nuanced analysis of data as to the degree to which a learner demonstrates proficiency.

It is important to note that faculty drove the development and adoption of this approach to CLO proficiency ([NC-283](#); [NC-286 pp. 27-41](#)), with a strong majority preference (71%) for a new framework grounded in the language of proficiency and a majority preference (61%) for a three-tiered structure as opposed to a binary one (Meets/Does Not Meet) ([NC-283](#)). These faculty-driven revisions facilitate a better ability to gauge learner performance vis-a-vis CLOs.

At the program level, appropriate levels of learner performance are supported by proficiency target thresholds established for each PLO in a program or General Education distribution area (e.g., Humanities, Natural Science); of note, institutional ILOs serve as General Education PLOs. The program-level (or distribution area) proficiency target threshold is the percentage of all students that must demonstrate they meet the student learning outcome. Established as part of the program assessment planning process in 2024, this approach utilized historical data to inform initial target thresholds, though these may be revised in accordance with insights gleaned from the program assessment process. For example, according to the General Education Historic Proficiency Data ([NC-284](#)), 73% of learners, on average, met or exceeded CLO proficiency in the Social Science distribution area. The Social Science Faculty used this information to set the target (75%) for the percent of learners who should meet or exceed proficiency for the General Education PLO 1 (“Demonstrate solutions to problems from multiple perspectives”) in 2024-2025 ([NC-359](#); [NC-360 p. 1](#)).

Additionally, 72% of learners in the Business Management AAS program historically met or exceeded proficiency across course outcomes ([NC-284 p. 3](#)). The Business Management Faculty used this data to set a 75% proficiency target. That is, 75% of learners in the program should meet or exceed proficiency for the PLO being assessed in 2024-2025 ([NC-359](#); [NC-360 p. 2](#)).

Ensuring appropriate levels of learner performance is also enhanced by using a binary proficiency scale (Meets/Does Not Meet Proficiency) for PLO assessment ([NC-286 p. 13-41](#)). This approach recognizes that as a two-year institution, there are fewer instances of prerequisites and mandatory sequencing. The binary scale is operationalized in terms of the proficiency target thresholds for each PLO and embedded in program assessment plans ([NC-359](#)). Returning to the example of the Social Science distribution area for AY 24-25 assessment, if 75% or more of all learners assessed for General Education PLO #1 (“demonstrate solutions to problems from multiple perspectives”) meet or exceed proficiency on the respective CLO assessments mapped to that PLO ([NC-145](#)), then the PLO is considered as having been met.

While opportunities for scaffolding of learner proficiency through prerequisites and mandatory course sequencing are more limited than at baccalaureate institutions, where such scaffolding is essential for learner proficiency, these techniques are employed. In the General Education program, this occurs in the English composition sequence, Mathematics, and Psychology ([NC-362](#)).

Occupational programs utilize pre-requisites and mandatory sequencing more frequently; several examples include the Nursing AAS, Accounting Assistant C, Accounting AAS, Business Management AAS, Mechatronics AAS, Emergency Medical Services/ Paramedic C, and Emergency Medical Services/ Paramedic AAS ([NC-363](#) - see linked course descriptions which indicate pre- and corequisites).

Through these mechanisms to ensure that learner proficiency is appropriate to the curriculum and credentials awarded, and through interrelated processes of course and program review and updating, participation in state initiatives, and development of programs in response to area needs, the College demonstrates its commitment to maintaining academic rigor appropriate to higher education.

3.A.2.

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

North Central defines and distinguishes learning goals across its 46 associate and certificate programs (AAS, AGS, AA, AS, C, CD) and 16 associate degree pathways and concentrations ([NC-313](#)). When proposing new programs, stakeholders complete a comprehensive program proposal template ([NC-119](#)) detailing the program’s aims, goals, objectives, and the alignment of outcomes with curriculum design ([NC-140](#); [NC-141](#); [NC-142](#); [NC-143](#); [NC-144](#)). They also provide labor market data to justify demand for the program ([NC-119](#)). Associate degrees require a minimum of 60 credit hours, with 30 MTA-approved general education credits for MTA-integrated degrees ([NC-274 p. 3](#)). Certificate

programs typically require 30 credit hours, while Certificates of Development require fewer than 30 hours ([NC-378](#)).

The College previously aligned the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) profile with specific courses to display learning goals by degree and certificate. However, faculty had varied interpretations of the DQP's purpose and its role in enhancing teaching and learning ([NC-247](#)). This led the HLC Assessment Academy to conclude that the DQP profile did not clearly articulate learning goals across programs. In collaboration with faculty and stakeholders, North Central retired the DQP structure in 2022 ([NC-249](#)) and developed new institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) ([NC-041](#)), which now guide the design and alignment of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) ([NC-255](#)). North Central has five Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) based on five core competency areas ([NC-061](#); [NC-072](#)). Regardless of program type (associate degree or certificate), all students can develop and demonstrate proficiency in these ILOs. The College ensures this through its curriculum mapping process described below.

The College is conducting a large-scale PLO and curriculum mapping project ([NC-001](#)) to ensure that program learning goals are clearly defined and that CLOs, PLOs, and ILOs align ([NC-255](#)). Recognizing the general education curriculum as “a foundation for core areas of study” ([NC-364](#)), the Team prioritized defining and mapping learning outcomes for the General Education Program (Communication, English Composition, Humanities, Social Science, Mathematics, and Natural Science maps - [NC-365](#)). Based on faculty input on ILOs and the General Education program, and the Assessment Academy's unanimous decision to support it ([NC-248 p. 47](#)), North Central's ILOs now serve as the General Education Learning Outcomes ([NC-072](#)). In Fall 2023, faculty revised PLOs for several occupational programs and mapped required CLOs to PLOs and PLOs to ILOs ([NC-462](#); [NC-079](#)). As the project progresses, all programs will undergo PLO revision and curriculum mapping ([NC-001](#)).

Once PLOs are developed or revised, program stakeholders complete or update the curriculum map, aligning required course CLOs to PLOs and PLOs to ILOs ([NC-255](#)). While distinct PLOs will be developed for different disciplines (e.g., Business; Art & Design; AA; AS), programs that build upon one another will have aligned PLOs (e.g., Certificate in Management & AAS in Business Management; Certificate in Art & Design & AAS in Art & Design; LPN & Nursing; Michigan Transfer Pathways & Transfer Degrees).

North Central distinguishes between curricular and co-curricular learning. Curricular program learning outcomes stem from classroom instruction and represent student learning achieved through required courses in an academic program ([NC-266](#)). Co-curricular outcomes arise from activities, programs, and experiences that complement the formal curriculum, reinforcing course, program, or institution-wide learning outcomes ([NC-260 pp. 1-16](#)). Despite this distinction, the College applies consistent standards for effective learning outcomes in both areas, such as scaffolding learning with Bloom's

taxonomy, focusing on the learner, and ensuring clarity and measurability ([NC-266](#); [NC-260 pp. 1-16](#)). Both curricular and co-curricular outcomes align with institutional learning outcomes ([NC-064](#); [NC-258](#)).

3.A.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).

North Central maintains program quality and consistent learning goals across all delivery modes and locations. The Board of Trustees policies, such as the Academic Degrees, Programs & Course Policy (#213) ([NC-066 p. 27](#)), provide guidance, defining credential types, catalog requirements, completion requirements, and faculty and administrative oversight. Additional policies supporting quality and consistency include the General Education Policy (#214) ([NC-066 p. 27](#)), Outcomes Assessment Policy (#216) ([NC-066 p. 28](#)), and Program Review Policy (#215) ([NC-066 p. 27](#)). These policies were established by the College’s governing body for curriculum and academic standards.

Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum, Review, and Development and Academic Policies Committee (CRD/AP) oversees the academic curriculum at North Central Michigan College. Composed of faculty, staff, and administration, this committee “reviews and approves new, revised, or deactivated programs; recommends new or deleted programs to the College President; reviews and recommends academic policy changes; and participates in the annual catalog revision process” ([NC-100 p. 4](#)). Policy, program, or course changes require a 75% majority vote of present voting members to pass ([NC-366](#)), with faculty holding a majority of the voting membership ([NC-100 p. 4](#)).

When designing new programs, the faculty and academic deans use a standard and comprehensive program proposal form ([NC-119](#)). CRD/AP reviews completed proposals with a program proposal form ([NC-397](#)), a program structure document (e.g., catalog build for the Global Studies program), new course proposal forms, and any master course syllabi for new courses. Approved proposals proceed to the College President for consideration. Program revisions follow a similar process, with faculty and academic deans submitting updates via the Course and Program Proposal Form ([NC-391](#)). This standardized form ensures consistent documentation and oversight of curriculum changes.

Learning Outcome Design

New and revised courses, no matter the modality or location, undergo CRD/AP review and approval using the master course syllabus (MCS) to ensure quality and consistency. The faculty and academic deans proposing a new course submit an MCS using a standard template ([NC-390](#)). The form's first section outlines instructional hours, a course description, prerequisites, and learning outcomes. In the second section, stakeholders map CLOs to General Education Learning Outcomes (for Gen Ed courses) and provide suggested instruction methods, assessments, texts, and topics. For new General Education courses, faculty and the dean complete a "General Education Designation Proposal," including an updated curriculum map and transferability assessment ([NC-254](#); [NC-392](#)). Once approved, academic deans distribute the MCS to faculty, and the documents are uploaded into SharePoint. New faculty, both full-time and adjunct, receive the MCS and a previous semester's syllabus to assist in course preparation.

Alongside CRD/AP oversight, the HLC Assessment Academy Team has led efforts to update, revise, and map learning outcomes across the College. With input from faculty, staff, and students ([NC-250](#)), faculty developed institutional learning outcomes in 2022, which CRD/AP approved ([NC-279 p. 33](#)) and the Board of Trustees endorsed in Winter 2023 ([NC-011 p. 178](#)). Supported by faculty, these ILOs also serve as the General Education learning outcomes, anchoring the General Education Program in the institution's learning philosophy.

The College also launched a CLO Revision Project ([NC-259](#)) in which faculty and academic deans reviewed all active course CLOs (across all modalities and locations) for quality and consistency, revising as needed. Extensive resources and training supported this work, as further described in 4.B. The Team reviewed all revisions using a standard rubric, and CRD/AP approved the final changes. Additionally, the Team is guiding programs college-wide to write or revise Program Learning Outcomes for all programs, with completion targeted for Winter 2025 ([NC-001](#)). Detailed descriptions of these processes are in sections 3.A., 3.B., and 4.B.

Curriculum Mapping

To strengthen program quality and consistency of learning goals across the College, the Team is leading an institutional project to map curriculum for all programs, including co-curricular programs (e.g., [NC-258](#)), regardless of mode or location. Using a curriculum map template, program stakeholders align course CLOs to PLOs and PLOs to ILOs ([NC-256](#)). This project is scheduled for completion in Winter 2025, with additional details in sections 3A, 3B, and 4B.

Simple Syllabus

The College integrated the online Simple Syllabus platform into its LMS, Brightspace, to ensure consistent quality in student learning. Simple Syllabus automatically populates course descriptions and learning outcomes, standardizing curriculum across all course sections, delivery modes, and locations. Whether a course section is taught face-to-face, hybrid, or online, students engage with the same learning outcomes ([NC-458](#)).

Program Review

North Central ensures program quality through a systematic, cyclical program review process, assessing each program's effectiveness, vitality, relevance, and resource needs every six years ([NC-234](#)). This cycle includes time for PLO assessment, stakeholder coordination, completing the Review of Academic Programs (RAP) form, and receiving feedback ([NC-314](#)). New programs undergo a mid-cycle, abbreviated review after three years. The RAP form ([NC-203](#)) guides stakeholders through evaluating program structure, learning outcomes, resources, and student success metrics. This review process allows stakeholders to confirm, improve, or consider discontinuing a program ([NC-267](#); [NC-216](#)).

Faculty Qualifications and Evaluation

To ensure quality and consistency, standard faculty qualifications and evaluation are the same across modality and location. As discussed in 3.C.3., all faculty, including adjunct faculty and regardless of mode or location, have a Faculty Qualifications Review Assessment completed by the hiring divisional dean ([NC-299](#)). Similarly, criteria for faculty evaluation, which is detailed in 3.C.4., are the same no matter the location or modality of instruction.

Distance Learning

North Central has been a Quality Matters member institution since 2015 ([NC-385](#)) and uses QM's research-based best practices in online course design in its online programming. The Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design chairs the Distance Learning Committee (DLC) ([NC-100 p. 4](#)), which is charged with providing recommendations to the President and the Cabinet regarding North Central's distance learning options, including but not limited to: the role of Quality Matters in course design, professional development opportunities related to distance learning, exploration of open educational resources (OER), and policies and procedures related to distance learning in general ([NC-381](#)).

The DLC, consisting primarily of Faculty, works collaboratively to ensure quality in the College's online offerings through policies, such as establishing training requirements for faculty to teach online ([NC-381 p. 7](#)) and criteria for the design of online courses ([NC-382](#)). Faculty teaching online are required to complete two self-paced courses orientating them to basic and advanced functions of the College's LMS, Brightspace ([NC-387](#)), a self-paced

Introduction to Teaching Online course ([NC-388](#)), and QM's Applying the Quality Matters Rubric ([NC-386](#)) course before beginning online course development ([NC-380](#)).

The Distance Learning and Instructional Design team meets with faculty at the beginning of course development projects to review requirements ([NC-383](#)), and the College's Instructional Designer works with faculty to develop online course curriculum maps ([NC-384](#)) to ensure learning goals are consistent across all delivery modalities. The Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design reviews and approves all online courses before they can be delivered online ([NC-389](#)), and online courses undergo a review every three years to ensure continued quality and alignment with established learning goals.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment students take North Central courses on-campus, online, or at their high school. Most of these courses are taught by North Central faculty (both full-time and adjunct), though qualified high school teachers may teach North Central courses offered at high schools. These instructors must meet the College's faculty qualification requirements ([NC-299](#)) and receive extensive support through the *North Central Now* program ([NC-379](#)). Like courses taught by adjunct faculty at the College's main campus and additional locations, this program includes supervisor evaluations to maintain instructional quality. Adjunct faculty teaching North Central courses at high schools use an MCS and Simple Syllabus to ensure quality and consistency for each course taught. The *North Central Now* program provides high school instructors with ongoing support and resources, ensuring alignment with College standards and enhancing instructional consistency.

Faculty Support Services

Lastly, North Central ensures the quality and consistency of its programs by providing support for faculty. The College provides a variety of required and optional support services for faculty. These include:

- A mentorship program for new full-time faculty (see 3.C.4.)
- Mentor and supervisory observations with constructive feedback for probationary full-time faculty (see 3.C.4.)
- Regular evaluations (a minimum of every 3 years after initial evaluation) and mentorship for adjunct faculty (see 3.C.4.)
- Resources for maintaining currency in their discipline (e.g., robust sabbatical program, tuition reimbursement, conference support, travel allotment (see 3.C.5.)
- Workshops and assessment days (see 3.A., 3.B., 3.C., 4.B., 4.C.)
- Self-paced training tutorials ([NC-387](#); [NC-388](#); [NC-394](#); [NC-395](#); [NC-368](#); [NC-367](#))
- A standard course syllabus template through Simple Syllabus ([NC-393](#))

Core Component 3.B.

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

3.B.1.

The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.

The College's mission is to provide “exceptional, accessible, and relevant education to the benefit of all” ([NC-002](#)). Supporting this mission, the General Education (GE) program offers a curriculum designed to develop intellectual, cultural, communicative, and other skills essential for fostering an educated and engaged citizenry.

In support of this mission, “the general education requirements at North Central provide a foundation for students in core areas of study” ([NC-364](#)). The program is structured across several distribution areas and requires coursework in written composition, oral communication, mathematics, the humanities and social sciences, and natural science; further details as to the focus of each distribution area, as well as a full list of courses available in each distribution area are available in the College Catalog ([NC-364](#)).

The College participates in the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) ([NC-357](#)), which facilitates the seamless transfer of at least 30 GE credits across Michigan’s two- and four-year institutions. The GE program aligns with educational offerings at both the college and university levels to support student transfer to peer (two-year) and senior (four-year) institutions. For a course to receive GE designation and inclusion on the MTA list, it must meet transferability criteria set by a curriculum committee-approved process from 2015 ([NC-377](#)). While the core process remains the same, the College updates its list of frequently transferred institutions every two years, with the latest update in Fall 2024 ([NC-254](#)).

General Education in Transfer Programs

Specific GE requirements vary by program, with the Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) transfer degrees, as well as all concentrations within these ([NC-228](#)) embedding MTA requirements. The AA (and concentrations within it) require one additional course each in Humanities and Social Sciences for GE, and the AS (and concentrations within it) require MATH 130: *College Algebra* or higher in that GE distribution area, with introductory Natural Science courses (e.g., BIO 101: *Introduction to Biology*, CEM 101:

Fundamentals of Chemistry, ESC 101: *Introduction to Earth Science*) not allowed for GE (though these may be used as program electives).

The Associate of General Studies ([NC-364](#)) does not automatically include the MTA but still requires coursework in GE areas such as Composition, Communication, Humanities, Social Science, Mathematics, and Natural Science. With its flexible elective options, this degree can serve as a transfer credential, allowing students to stack specialized Certificate (C) and Certificate of Development (CD) credentials for transfer to four-year institutions focused on those areas. For example, students can embed certificates in Studio Art ([NC-401](#)) and Fine Craft ([NC-402](#)) within the elective portion of the Associate of General Studies ([NC-364](#)) for transfer to a design-focused school.

General Education in Occupational Programs

Occupational programs at the AAS, C, and CD levels vary in how MTA and GE courses are integrated. AAS degrees typically include GE coursework, but requirements differ by program. For instance, the AAS in Business Management ([NC-396 p. 6](#)) requires 12-14 GE credits in English Composition (6 credits), Communication (3 credits), and Mathematics (3-5 credits). The AAS in Early Childhood Education ([NC-396 p. 11](#)) requires 29-33 credits: the same English Composition and Communication credits, more focused Mathematics options (3-5 credits), and additional credits in History (3), Psychology or Sociology (3), and one lab science course. Detailed GE requirements for these and other occupational programs are available in the College Catalog under Programs of Study: Occupational Programs ([NC-274](#)). For further insights on GE structure, see the Exploring General Education presentation from January 2022 Assessment Day ([NC-286 pp. 172-181](#)).

At the CD and C levels, MTA courses are typically not specified as separate GE requirements but are embedded in program requirements; see, for example, ENG 111-112 (*English Composition I & II*) and COM 170: *Interpersonal Communication* in the Management (C) ([NC-396 p. 16](#)); ENG 111 and Math 120 or higher in Emergency Medical Services Basic (CD) ([NC-396 p. 13](#)); and ENG 111 and MATH 140 (Trigonometry) in the Mechatronics (C) ([NC-396 p. 19](#)).

Several Mathematics courses fulfill program-specific GE requirements in occupational programs but do not qualify as MTA courses, as MTA requirements ([NC-357](#)) require pathway math options in College Algebra, Quantitative Reasoning, or Statistics. These guidelines exclude discipline-specific math courses and algebra courses below MATH 130: *College Algebra*. Courses in this category include B 104: *Business Math*, MATH 109: *Beginning Algebra*, and MATH 120: *Intermediate Algebra*.

For example, the course B104: *Business Math* focuses on business applications of mathematics and is tailored to support direct-to-employment business programs. It serves as a GE requirement or option in several AAS programs, including Accounting ([NC-396 p. 1](#)), Business Management ([NC-396 p. 6](#)), Marketing ([NC-396 p. 17](#)), Legal Assistant ([NC-](#)

[396 p. 14](#)), and Computer Information Systems ([NC-396 p. 8](#)). While not specifically designated as GE in C and CD credentials, B104: *Business Math* is frequently included as a program requirement or option in various credentials, such as Bookkeeping CD ([NC-396 p. 5](#)), Accounting Assistant C ([NC-396 p. 3](#)), Management C ([NC-396 p. 16](#)), Office Administrative Services AAS ([NC-396 p. 21](#)), Office Administrative Services – Medical Emphasis AAS ([NC-396 p. 23](#)), Small Business Management C ([NC-396 p. 25](#)), Medical Billing and Coding CD ([NC-396 p. 20](#)), Computer Information Systems C ([NC-396 p. 10](#)) and AAS ([NC-396 p. 8](#)), and the Welding AAS ([NC-396 p. 26](#)).

General Education Program Learning Outcomes

Regardless of whether a credential includes the MTA, "the general education requirements at North Central provide a foundation for students in core areas of study" ([NC-364](#)). Consequently, its program learning outcomes (PLOs) align with the College's institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) in five key skill areas:

- **Intellectual Skills:** Demonstrate solutions to problems from multiple perspectives.
- **Communication Skills:** Demonstrate appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication across contexts.
- **Ethics:** Demonstrate ethical reasoning in varied contexts.
- **Applied Skills:** Apply field-appropriate knowledge and skills to address common issues in an academic, professional, or community context.
- **Cultural Skills:** Develop intercultural competence for living in a globally connected world.

These ILOs, and hence GE PLOs, are articulated in the College Catalogue – Student Learning Outcomes, Assessment, and Academic Policies ([NC-061](#)).

Further, all GE courses are required to demonstrate alignment between course learning outcomes (CLOs) and GE PLOs on the master course syllabus (MCS)—hence, the PLOs are also presented there, and MCSs are available for public viewing via individual course descriptions in the catalog and are also available internally.

3.B.2.

The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.

In early 2022, as part of ongoing efforts to enhance program review and assessment practices and as part of its HLC Assessment Academy project, the College evaluated its

existing institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), which had been based on the broad areas of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) (beta version) ([NC-398](#)) for over a decade. Although the General Education (GE) program was structured around distribution areas aligned with broad areas of inquiry and core life skills, which is consistent with the Michigan Transfer Agreement ([NC-357](#)), it lacked distinct program outcomes that reflected an institutionally developed philosophy.

Throughout 2022, the Academy Team gathered stakeholder input from faculty, staff, and students about the College's ILOs. Based on this input, the Faculty revised the ILOs ([NC-286 p. 223](#)) and presented them to the curriculum committee (CRD/AP) and President for review and approval ([NC-279 p. 22](#)), and subsequent presentation to the Board of Trustees ([NC-011 p. 178](#)). The faculty also supported having the ILOs serve as the GE program outcomes ([NC-286 p. 246](#)). Importantly, this means the GE program is now grounded in an institutionally defined philosophy of the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that an educated graduate is expected to demonstrate—a philosophy that was vetted by the students, staff, and faculty of the College.

As outlined in 3.B.1., the guiding KSAs focus on preparing students for active citizenship and personal and professional growth. The GE PLOs in Intellectual and Applied Skills emphasize critical inquiry and the practical application of both broad and field-specific knowledge. The Cultural and Communication Skills outcomes enhance awareness of diverse cultures and encourage respectful engagement across cultural contexts. Additionally, the Ethics outcome fosters ethical reasoning, forming a basis for ethical practice in various settings. Further details on these KSAs in alignment with GE PLOs can be found in the General Education Program Competency Areas and Outcome Statements ([NC-072](#)).

To ensure alignment of GE program learning outcomes (PLOs) and corresponding KSAs with course learning outcomes (CLOs) and to ensure comprehensive PLO coverage, all GE CLOs in each distribution area are mapped to at least two GE PLOs, with several areas exceeding this minimum ([NC-276](#)). Examples of curriculum maps include the Humanities Curriculum Map ([NC-365 p. 3](#)) and Communication Curriculum Map ([NC-365 p. 1](#)). All distribution areas have completed curriculum mapping, and new courses added to the GE curriculum must map their CLOs to the GE PLOs (ILOs) as part of the master course syllabus form ([NC-390](#)).

In the GE program, curriculum mapping ensures alignment between course outcomes and GE program outcomes, while distribution area target proficiency levels establish a benchmark to assess whether students demonstrate proficiency in GE PLOs for each area. These target proficiency levels are defined as the overall proportion of students who demonstrate Meets or Exceeds Proficiency at the individual assessment of CLO proficiency in the course. To set these thresholds, faculty analyzed data from Historic Proficiency Results by General Education Distribution Area ([NC-284](#)). For instance, in

Mathematics, the target is for 75% of students to meet or exceed proficiency in each GE course ([NC-360 pp. 3-5](#)), while in Natural Science, the threshold is 70% ([NC-360 pp. 6-8](#)).

To ensure that the GE program provides the comprehensive intellectual, skill-based, and attitudinal education expected of college graduates, it is essential to demonstrate alignment between the taught curriculum and these outcomes and to measure student achievement. Curriculum mapping and target proficiency thresholds are two ways the College accomplishes this goal. Additional details on GE program assessment are available in sections on program review and assessment.

3.B.3.

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

As an educational and cultural center in Northern Michigan, the College embraces its role as an arena in which learners and the wider community engage with diverse perspectives and multicultural opportunities. This is especially embodied in the curriculum, both at the program level and in individual courses. Further, these learning opportunities extend beyond the classroom through the International Speaker Series, African American Read-In, and Holocaust Remembrance Essay contest.

Program-Level

At the program level, engagement with diverse perspectives is facilitated through holistic, interdisciplinary learning; issues, opportunities, and challenges may be examined differently across different fields, and comparing, contrasting, and integrating these perspectives in the context of intellectual inquiry and applied learning requires that engagement.

Two programs especially are structured on principles of interdisciplinarity: the Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ENVS) ([NC-031](#)) and Global Studies (GLBL) ([NC-034](#)) concentrations within the Associate of Arts. These programs further expand opportunities in the areas of human and cultural diversity through a focus on issues and perspectives that transcend borders. While all transfer degrees use the ILOs as their core program learning outcomes, concentrations additionally select a unique PLO ([NC-361](#)) that specifically addresses concentration content. For example, the Global Studies program learning outcome highlights these principles: "Produce potential solutions to global challenges from diverse interdisciplinary perspectives that promote well-being in the human and natural worlds." Similarly, the unique ENVS program learning outcome emphasizes the ability to communicate to diverse groups the multifaceted nature of ecological issues: "Develop effective communication around complex environmental issues to a variety of audiences."

Given the programs' emphasis on engaging diverse viewpoints and issues, while each includes courses in individual disciplines—in the ENVS AA ([NC-031](#)), for example, SOC 175: *Introduction to Sustainable Living*; and in the GLBL AA ([NC-034](#)), program electives from a range of traditional academic disciplines—core program requirements in both are themselves interdisciplinary.

In the GLBL AA ([NC-034](#)), these program requirements include GLBL 101: *Introduction to Global Studies* and GLBL 201: *Global Problems and Solutions*; students are also required to take a capstone and may choose between GLBL 285: *Global Studies Internship*, GLBL 295: *Field Studies*, and GLBL 297: *Special Topics - Global Studies*. In the ENVS AA ([NC-031](#)), interdisciplinary program requirements include ENVS 255: *Paradigms in Sustainability* and ENVS 265: *Environmental Policy in the 21st Century*. Several program electives are also interdisciplinary (ENVS 270: *Community-based Environmental Literacy* and ENVS 285: *Environmental Internships and Careers*). This interdisciplinarity, coupled with the programs' emphases on issues and topics that transcend borders, create systematic learning opportunities that facilitate students' abilities to successfully navigate a complex, multicultural world.

Course-Level

For learners pursuing other credential programs, many General Education courses have outcomes aligned to the intercultural competency ILO, including 25 in the Social Sciences and 33 in Humanities ([NC-399](#)). Given that the MTA requires two courses in each of these distribution areas, and the Associate of Arts (as well as concentrations therein) requires a third course in each area, the General Education program provides multiple opportunities and a solid foundation for student engagement with diverse perspectives ([NC-400](#)), as well as development of multicultural awareness and skillsets.

Co-Curricular Opportunities

Beyond the curricular context, the International Speaker Series creates opportunities for campus constituents and the wider community to engage with multicultural perspectives. Recent examples include:

- AI, Biometric Surveillance & Smart Cities: Japan's Society 5.0 and the New Visions of Organization ([NC-036 p. 2](#))
- Global Classroom: Expanding Educational Access to Forcibly Displaced Students ([NC-036 p. 3](#))
- India: A Culturally Rich and Diverse Country ([NC-036 p. 5](#))
- Sacred Landscapes: Discovery and Memory in the Orkney Islands ([NC-036 p. 7](#))
- Awa Odori: A Traditional Japanese Dance ([NC-036 p. 10](#))

- Polish Family and Culture: Growing Up Polish in Southeast Michigan ([NC-036 p. 11](#))
- Winter Is Coming: Russia, Ukraine and Us ([NC-036 p. 12](#))
- Step Up for Ukraine ([NC-036 p. 13](#))
- The Olympic Games and China's International Ambitions ([NC-036 p. 14](#))
- Sanditon & Bridgerton: Representing Race in the Regency ([NC-036 p. 18](#))

Diversity and multiculturalism are also celebrated via other educational opportunities. For the last two years, the College has hosted an African American Read-in, established in 1990 by the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English to encourage communities to engage together around African American texts and authors. Annually, the read-in has brought together approximately 40 students from humanities and social science classes to explore the legacy of the American Civil Rights Movement ([NC-113 pp. 4-5](#)).

A further example is the Holocaust Remembrance Essay/Video Contest, sponsored by the College's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee ([NC-113 p. 6](#)). Students are asked to respond to their choice of prompts: "As a nation, what can the United States learn from how it dealt with the refugee crisis during the Holocaust, and how can Americans apply those lessons to future global refugee crises?" OR "During the Holocaust, the Nazis positioned the Jews of Europe as others. As a nation, how can the United States ensure we do not treat people as others and ensure we develop an inclusive society?" In 2023, fifty-five entries were received ([NC-278](#)).

3.B.4.

The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Students and faculty are active in a range of scholarly, creative, and other endeavors that enhance the discovery of new knowledge.

Scholarship

North Central students and faculty actively engage in research dissemination through conference presentations, public talks, and knowledge-sharing networks. In 2023, a history student presented "*Tattoos through Time*" during the Student Scholars Lightning Talk session at the Liberal Arts Network for Development Annual Conference ([NC-403 p. 1](#)). In 2018, a Sociology student co-presented with Professor Kerri Finlayson at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference in New Orleans, focusing on Michigan archaeology ([NC-404 p. 97](#)), where Professor Finlayson also delivered a solo presentation. Additionally,

two Anthropology students recently shared their research on the Siebert family, former owners of the land now part of the College's Natural Area, in a community presentation ([NC-056 p. 10](#)).

Professor Isis Arsnoe integrates knowledge-collaboration opportunities into her BIO 151-152 General Biology sequence. One example is *Project Monarch Health* (PMH), a citizen science initiative led by the Altizer Lab at the University of Georgia. Since 2006, this project has tracked the prevalence of the protozoan parasite *Ophryocystis elektroschirra* (OE) in monarch butterflies across North America.

Since Fall 2019, Professor Arsnoe has integrated *Project Monarch Health* (PMH) into the BIO 151: *General Biology I* and BIO 152: *General Biology II* courses as a foundation for exploring biology concepts and practices. Students collect data, contribute it to a class database ([NC-405](#)), and use it to produce a final lab report. This process teaches students to perform statistical analysis (t-test), interpret results, and create visualizations (bar graphs) using Excel. Since 2019, students have submitted 65 monarch samples to PMH.

In addition to *Project Monarch Health* (PMH), BIO 151-152 students participate in Michigan State University Extension's *Eyes on the Forest* (EOTF) sentinel tree program ([NC-406 p. 1](#)). This program aims to establish a statewide network of sentinel trees, monitor their health, and detect new tree pests early. Since 2019, 37 sentinel trees in the North Central Natural Area have been enlisted in the EOTF program. Biology classes survey these trees at least once a year, entering data into the EOTF database to assess whether tree conditions are stable, improving, or deteriorating. In April 2021, BIO 152 students assisted the Walloon Lake Association and Conservancy (WLAC) in designating 23 additional sentinel trees. Professor Arsnoe and the BIO 151-152 classes oversee three EOTF tree clusters in Emmet and Charlevoix Counties ([NC-406 p. 2](#)).

In addition to fostering these learning opportunities, Professor Arsnoe has served as a peer reviewer (2019, 2020, 2021) for the academic journals *Ticks and Tickborne Diseases* and *Journal of Medical Entomology* ([NC-227 p. 7](#)) and currently serves as Membership Committee Chair of the Michigan Community College Biologists organization ([NC-227 p. 8](#)).

In another example of community outreach and citizen science, David Rodgers, Professor of Chemistry and Physics, recently returned to his alma mater, the University of Texas – Dallas, to participate in a day-long program highlighting the total solar eclipse of April 8, 2024 ([NC-408 pp. 1-5](#)). During the event, he explained the mechanisms behind solar eclipses and discussed unique aspects of this specific eclipse. (*Note: An article about the event incorrectly stated that he teaches “astrology” instead of “astronomy.” Professor Rodgers has contacted the campus paper to request a correction, which is pending.*)

While research is not a primary focus of the community college mission, several North Central faculty members have contributed to advancing knowledge. For 17 years,

Professor David Rodgers has served as the official weather observer for North Central Michigan College, participating in the National Weather Service's Cooperative Observer Program ([NC-408 p. 6](#)). Since the campus weather station's establishment in October 2007, Professor Rodgers has provided daily observations of weather elements, including maximum and minimum temperatures, liquid-equivalent precipitation (e.g., rain, snow, hail, graupel), 24-hour snowfall, and accumulated snow depth readings.

In other domains, several faculty and staff have contributed to the discovery of new knowledge through scholarly publications ([NC-293](#)).

- Glasgow, S.M. (2022). One Person's Dystopia: Competing Visions of Liberalism in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. *Children's Literature Quarterly*, 47(1), 86-107. ([NC-293 pp. 1-23](#))
- Glasgow, S.M. (2023). An Excellent Adventure..." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, 23(2), 393-399. ([NC-293 pp. 24-27](#))
- Schrauben, K. S., & Dean, A. J. (2019). "Cover-Copy-Compare for Multiplication With Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Brief Report." *Behavioral Disorders*, 45(1), 22-28. ([NC-293 pp. 28-35](#))

In addition to generating peer-reviewed publications, staff contribute to the peer review process through service as editorial board members. Dr. Stephen Strom and Dr. Erin Sonneveldt are both associate editors of *The Community College Enterprise*. ([NC-409](#)).

The College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) actively supports scholarship and student engagement. Recent highlights include chapter President Kira Miller's submission, "*Roots of the Poor*," which was published in the 29th edition of *Nota Bene*, PTK's premier national publication ([NC-410 p. 87](#)). The chapter also organized a special topics series featuring panel discussions and presentations on global travel ([NC-049](#)). Additionally, the 2023-2024 officers attended the national PTK convention, where they connected with community college students from across the country ([NC-411 p. 1](#)) and participated in educational forums on topics such as self-advocacy, leadership, dismantling microaggressions, community building, intercultural communication, ethical consumerism, and mitigating bias ([NC-411 pp. 2-4](#)).

Creative Work

North Central students and faculty actively contribute to creative endeavors. Each year, the College collaborates with the Crooked Tree Arts Center in Petoskey to showcase student artwork, featuring original pieces in drawing, painting, ceramics, glass, metals, photography, illustration, and video. Recent exhibitions include *Emerging Artists 2024: A Collection of North Central Student Works*, with an opening reception on April 13, 2024;

Emerging Artists 2023, with a reception on March 14, 2023; and the *North Central Student Show*, which ran from February 26 to April 9, 2022 ([NC-412](#)).

North Central faculty actively engage in creative work and promote the arts within the broader community. Anne Morningstar, Professor of Digital Art and Design, serves as Vice Chair of Crooked Tree Arts Center's Board of Directors, where she has been a member since 2015 and part of the Executive Team since 2018 ([NC-413 pp. 1-4](#)). Her classes emphasize experiential learning, connecting the art curriculum with community needs. For example, her communication design students recently collaborated with the Tip of the Mitt Mountain Biking Association (TOMMBA) to create 10th Anniversary jersey designs. TOMMBA representatives engaged with students throughout the semester, providing feedback and reviewing their design work ([NC-413 pp. 5-10](#)).

In Winter 2024, students in Professor Morningstar's ARTD 250: *Communication Design II* course collaborated with the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council on a grant-funded project to promote awareness about septic system maintenance and its impact on water quality. As part of the campaign, students developed a series of marketing materials, including print designs, a radio commercial, a television script, a storyboard, and a video ([NC-413 pp. 11-18](#)).

Digital art students also contribute to projects that benefit both the campus and the wider community. In Winter 2023, ARTD 150: *Communication Design I* students collaborated with the Colleges Natural Area Committee to develop signage for the walking trail on campus. One student's design series was selected to be printed and installed. Design work that was created includes wayfinding signage throughout the trails, QR code navigation with existing website information, as well as trail head signs for each entrance ([NC-413 pp. 19-26](#)).

On the creative writing front, Shaelynn Long-Kish, Professor of English, has several recent publications, including a novel and short story work; she has also served as an editor on the anthology, *The Carnation Collection* ([NC-414 pp. 1-6](#)). For her short story "Too Beautiful a Creature," Professor Long-Kish was nominated for the prestigious Pushcart Prize ([NC-414 p. 7](#)).

Supporting the Discovery of Knowledge: Professional Development and Sabbaticals

The College fosters knowledge discovery by supporting professional development and sabbaticals. Per Section 76 of the faculty bargaining agreement, full-time faculty receive \$950 annually for professional development, which may accrue up to \$3,800 over four years. These funds cover conferences, professional memberships, and academic resources. Additionally, the College allocates unused funds (up to \$5,000) to further support these initiatives ([NC-013 Section #76 p. 41](#)).

The Professional Development Committee ([NC-100 p. 7](#)) provides additional support for faculty through tuition reimbursement ([NC-415 pp. 1-3](#)) for pursuing academic training and *Excellence Funding* ([NC-415 pp. 4-8](#)) to attend workshops, seminars, and conferences. Recent meeting minutes document decisions on disbursements ([NC-416](#)), while specific requests and proposals, detailed in ([NC-417](#)), demonstrate alignment with the College's goal of expanding and enhancing knowledge discovery.

To support knowledge discovery, the College offers two types of sabbatical leave for full-time faculty with at least five years of service: an academic semester or year sabbatical and a summer term sabbatical. Details on these options, along with the application and reporting process, are outlined in Section 60 of the current bargaining agreement ([NC-013 pp. 31-35](#)). In 2024, a summer sabbatical was awarded to Erick Haight, Professor of Psychology and Humanities, to explore “domains of cultural diversity as it applies to the content areas of Psychology and General Humanities,” enhancing the quality of education at the College ([NC-011 p. 68](#)). For further information, see Professor Haight's Sabbatical Proposal ([NC-418](#)).

Core Component 3.C.

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

3.C.1.

The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

For Fall 2024, North Central's student/faculty ratio was 14:1. The College employs 119 faculty (35 full-time faculty and 84 adjuncts), 58 full-time administrators, 34 staff (31 full-time and 3 part-time), and 50 student workers.

Full-time faculty have a contractually mandated teaching load ([NC-013 p. 26](#)) of 15 contact hours a semester (30 per year). In addition, all Full-time faculty are contractually required to complete service as generally described in Section 7 of the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) ([NC-013 p. 9](#)). The College has a variety of standing committees, several of which relate to curriculum and student performance. For example, the College curriculum committee – Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee – is chaired by a faculty member and includes voting and non-voting members from faculty, administration, and staff; faculty hold the majority of the voting seats on the committee. Other committees focus on assessment, student success, institutional research, and strategic planning ([NC-100](#)).

In accordance with the CBA, full-time faculty may teach overload sections if they are qualified and if available sections exist ([NC-013 p. 36](#)). They may also accept leadership positions for a set of courses, a laboratory assignment, or an academic program ([NC-013 p. 23](#)).

Assessment data and evaluative measures (for example, consistency in student retention and performance) show that students taught by adjunct faculty are receiving an education commensurate with those in classes taught by full-time faculty ([NC-419](#)). Furthermore, the College enjoys a stable relationship with both its full-time and adjunct faculty. Nearly 45% of full-time faculty in 2024 have been teaching at North Central for at least 10 years, and 42% of 2024 adjunct faculty have been teaching here for at least five years ([NC-420](#)).

3.C.2.

The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning; and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.

Oversight of Curriculum and Expectations of Student Performance

Faculty hold and retain oversight and ownership of the College's curriculum through CRD/AP. This accountability is derived from various sources, including Board of Trustees bylaws ([NC-118 p. 1](#); [NC-118 p. 5](#)) and policies ([NC-066 p. 27](#)), faculty employment contracts ([NC-013 p. 23](#); [NC-421 p. 4](#)), and other College policies, procedures ([NC-421 p. 1](#)), and practices.

Through past practice, the Board has delegated work related to degrees, programs, and courses to the College faculty, staff, and administration. Formal Board policies are in place for:

- Academic Degrees, Programs and Courses (#213) ([NC-066 p. 27](#))
- General Education (#214) ([NC-066 p. 27](#))
- Program Review (#215) ([NC-066 p. 27](#))
- Outcomes Assessment - Assessment of Student Learning (#216) ([NC-066 p. 28](#))
- Credit Hour Definition (#217) ([NC-066 p. 28](#))

Within the Faculty CBA ([NC-013 p. 9](#)), faculty agree to a workload including teaching, service, and scholarship.

CRD/AP is primary to the faculty connection and interaction with the curriculum. As mentioned previously, the committee is chaired by Faculty ([NC-421 p. 4](#)). The chair typically meets with the Vice President of Academic Affairs two weeks prior to the committee meeting to discuss the planned agenda. The committee maintains a thorough electronic filing system in the College's intranet, SharePoint, that includes agendas, minutes, documents to review, and approved documents. Beginning in September 2022, the College implemented the use of a new program proposal template ([NC-119](#)). This template provides the CRD/AP Committee and other decision-makers at the College standard information to consider when new degrees or programs are considered.

Within this committee, faculty, administration, and staff provide oversight of curriculum development and policy. The mission of CRD/AP ([NC-421 p. 1](#)) was most recently revised by the Committee on November 15, 2024.

CRD/AP is structured to include 19 voting and non-voting members ([NC-100 p. 4](#)). Currently, the committee includes 14 voting members: eight faculty (including a faculty

chair) and six administrators; the majority of voting members are faculty. There are five non-voting members, including two administrators and three staff. Although voting membership is a majority faculty, quorum and voting procedures do not necessitate a majority faculty for a resolution to pass ([NC-421 p. 3](#)).

In addition to faculty oversight of curriculum, faculty also participate in curriculum development in several ways (e.g., CRD/AP sub-committees or divisional workgroups). Although CRD/AP policy does not require faculty participation in course/program development ([NC-421 p. 2](#)), CRD/AP sub-committees are often used to support curriculum development, especially in divisions where there are fewer full-time faculty. For example, the recent development of Engineering and Technology curriculum utilized a CRD/AP sub-committee ([NC-279 pp. 87-89](#)). Another example provided is the sub-committee group for Early Childhood Education curriculum ([NC-279 pp. 17-19](#)). In addition to CRD/AP sub-committees, academic leadership strongly encourages faculty involvement in program curriculum development. For example, as mentioned earlier, the College uses the Full Program Proposal Template ([NC-119](#)). In this template, faculty participation is noted (see Section 1.8). The Arts & Sciences division recently developed a program proposal using this template. Members of the Global Studies Workgroup included five full-time faculty, two adjunct faculty, and the Dean of Arts & Sciences ([NC-422](#)). Other recently completed and approved new program proposals included an Associate of Applied Science in Digital Art and Design ([NC-141](#)), Certificate in Practical Nursing (LPN) ([NC-142](#)), Certificate in Retail Management ([NC-143](#)), an Associate of Arts Concentration in Teacher Education ([NC-144](#)), and an Associate of Science Concentration in Medical and Health Sciences ([NC-423](#)).

Furthermore, as described in the previous section addressing Core Component 3.A., the HLC Assessment Academy Team engages faculty in curriculum through Welcome Back Weeks, Assessment Days, and adjunct faculty training. Faculty and deans recently completed the review and revision of course learning outcomes (CLOs) to ensure they are relevant and measurable ([NC-259](#)). Faculty and deans have also engaged in program learning outcome (PLO) development, curriculum mapping, and assessment planning ([NC-001](#)).

Assessment of Student Learning

North Central has a long history of faculty involvement in assessment committees. In the early 2000s, the College's Student Outcome Assessment and Core Competency Committee, comprising faculty and administrators, produced resources like the Student Outcomes Assessment and Core Competency (SOAC) Vocabulary Guide ([NC-424](#)). With the adoption of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) in 2011, faculty aligned course outcomes to DQPs, and the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (IR) managed the DQP-aligned assessment data, which was shared with the Research & Assessment Committee ([NC-428](#); [NC-429](#)). Recently, through participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, the College has been re-evaluating faculty engagement in assessment

committees. The HLC Assessment Academy Team now leads efforts to enhance assessment processes and foster faculty engagement, with a long-term goal of shifting from a compliance-based to an engagement-focused assessment culture ([NC-286 p. 274](#)). The Team has consistently received positive feedback from both the HLC Scholar and Mentor since joining in 2021 ([NC-225](#)).

The Academy Team currently comprises two chairs from administration, six full-time faculty members, and four additional administrators/staff, including three who also teach as adjunct faculty ([NC-430](#)). The Associate Dean of IR and the Dean of Arts & Sciences serve as co-chairs and recognize the importance of faculty leadership on the committee. Currently, a workgroup on the Team is leading succession planning efforts. The Team believes the future assessment committee should be comprised of faculty and staff and led by faculty and administrator co-chairs ([NC-431](#)).

To build interest and buy-in in assessment, the co-chairs have sought guidance from a peer institution recently completing an HLC Assessment Academy project (Kellogg Community College) and the College's HLC Assessment Academy Mentor and Scholar ([NC-225](#)). The Team uses faculty input and its integration into committee actions as a key strategy. One example involves the planning of an Assessment Day: meeting minutes show the committee discussing faculty input on finalizing Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO) statements ([NC-248 pp. 75-76](#); [NC-248 p. 31](#)). These discussions informed a December 2, 2022, faculty workshop where ILO statements were finalized, illustrating the implementation of faculty feedback ([NC-248 p. 75](#)).

Regarding faculty participation in assessment activities in general, the Team has several activities in progress or completed that have been informed by the larger faculty through surveys and workshop sessions ([NC-286](#)), which are also discussed in 3A, 4A, and 4B. Finally, the Institutional Research Committee (IRC) is another committee providing input into the use of assessment data. The IRC includes 12 members/participants from across the institution: with four faculty and eight administrators/Staff ([NC-432](#)). "The IRC is a cross-functional group of faculty, staff, and administrators. The IRC evaluates and attends to the data and research needs of the college by reviewing and recommending IR best practices; identifying, discussing, and realizing opportunities to improve stakeholder data literacy; supporting faculty and staff research initiatives; and increasing data informed decision-making for institutional planning and assessment activities" ([NC-100, p. 6](#)).

3.C.3.

All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.

All faculty, including the College's adjunct faculty, at all teaching sites are appropriately qualified and have a Faculty Qualifications Review (FQR) Assessment completed by the hiring divisional dean ([NC-273](#)). Part One of the FQR includes a comprehensive

Credentialing Requirement Checklist ensuring all proper documentation necessary to meet the HLC's guidelines has been obtained and located in the faculty personnel file. Part Two of the FQR form describes what makes the faculty member qualified, either by proper academic degrees, academic credits, and/or tested experience. Under this section, separate courses counted towards the 18 qualifying graduate hours are specifically listed along with an area to provide comments for further explanation where necessary. A similar section exists for tested experience, if applicable. This form then moves on to Part Three, which summarizes the courses the faculty member is deemed qualified to teach. The summary of these forms is included in a document maintained by each divisional dean and uploaded to SharePoint for the Academic Affairs administration team found under "Faculty Credential Review" ([NC-299](#)).

Subsequently, academic credentials held by full-time and adjunct faculty are listed by the faculty's name and contact information on the College's website directory ([NC-300](#)). Faculty qualifications are also discussed in detail in 4.A.4.

3.C.4.

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

Newly hired full-time probationary faculty complete a 4-year probationary process, which includes the assignment of a faculty Mentor ([NC-013 p. 15](#)).

The newly developed evaluation process for full-status faculty includes both a peer review evaluation and a dean/administrative evaluation ([NC-013 pp. 16-17](#); [NC-297](#)). This new evaluation process, which is in its first year, is completed every fourth year following the probationary period. The process is clearly communicated by both the Vice President of Academic Affairs and deans ([NC-433](#)) at the beginning of each academic year.

All adjunct faculty are observed on a three-year rotating basis by a dean or administrative director ([NC-407](#); [NC-296](#)). The initial observation is completed within the first semester of instruction.

3.C.5.

The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.

Full-time faculty may participate in a robust sabbatical program that offers several options as outlined in the CBA ([NC-013 p. 31](#)). Faculty are eligible for sabbatical leave after completing five years of service from the date of hire and at six-year intervals thereafter.

Sabbatical leaves available include summer, a full academic year, and a single academic semester.

The College also features a tuition-reimbursement program whereby faculty and staff may apply to receive partial reimbursement for coursework taken at other colleges ([NC-053 p. 58](#)). The application process requires faculty to connect the coursework to their teaching responsibilities, and reimbursement is contingent on completing the coursework with a suitable grade.

Full-time faculty have a yearly allotment of \$950 for expenses connected to professional development ([NC-013 p. 41](#)). In recognition of the fact that travel, housing, and registration for a national conference often exceed that allotment and that each faculty will not choose to attend a conference every year, full-time faculty may pool travel funds or accumulate funds for up to three years (\$3,800) to offset the cost of more expensive opportunities.

Finally, the faculty CBA makes clear that when the College requires faculty to attend professional conferences, seminars, or workshops, it will compensate the faculty for expenses incurred ([NC-013 p. 41](#)). This most recently occurred with two faculty (CRD/AP chair and HLC Assessment Academy lead faculty) attending the HLC Annual Conference in April 2024.

North Central also provides regular workshops for full-time and adjunct faculty. Three examples are the Welcome Back Weeks ([NC-434](#)), Assessment Days ([NC-286 p. 43](#); [NC-286 p. 2](#)), and Adjunct Professional Development Workshops ([NC-292](#)).

The CBA includes salary incentives for advanced degrees ([NC-013 p. 47](#)). Faculty who attain a second master's degree, a specialist's degree, or a doctorate degree receive raises on completion of the degree. This has served as an incentive for some full-time faculty and has led them to further their education, attain additional credentials, and remain current in their disciplines.

3.C.6.

Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

Faculty make themselves available for student inquiry in a number of different ways. By contract, full-time faculty are required to hold six weekly office hours and to make every effort to meet with students ([NC-013 p. 27](#)). Each full-time faculty is assigned an individual office, and there are a number of offices available for adjunct faculty use. Faculty offices are located throughout the College classroom buildings, making it convenient for students to drop in on their way to or from class.

Faculty are also available electronically. All faculty have a college email address with a standard address protocol. Additionally, the College's learning management system,

Brightspace, allows students to email their instructors directly, and in online courses, faculty are required to incorporate “General Questions” and “Private Questions” discussions in their course shells ([NC-435](#)).

While adjunct faculty are not required to hold office hours, they are encouraged to make themselves available to students before and after individual classes and to use the same electronic resources available to full-time faculty.

3.C.7.

Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and cocurricular activities are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

Staff Qualifications

North Central has many Student Affairs positions providing student support services ([NC-436](#)). The College ensures Student Affairs staff are qualified, trained, and supported through professional development. Student Affairs staff positions generally require a minimum of an associate degree, showing the employee understands the process of applying to college, working through requirements, and completing the requirements to be awarded the degree.

Higher-level Student Affairs administrator positions responsible for advising students, student life, financial aid, transfer of credentials, and student support and student learning experience require a bachelor's degree. The field of study of the degree must be relevant to the work to be performed and is outlined in each job description ([NC-372](#)). Years of experience working in a specialized profession may be considered in lieu of obtaining an education credential. For supervisory positions, supervisory experience is required.

Training and Professional Development

The College's Student Affairs staff play active roles in related professional organizations. These employees contribute to state and national professional organizations by offering presentations, serving in leadership positions, and actively contributing to listserv questions from colleagues ([NC-295](#)).

In addition, Student Affairs staff participate in an array of training. Three or more annual SMART goals are developed per employee, along with an evaluation of each employee's achievement of them ([NC-451](#)). These goals focus on identifying and completing departmental and professional development goals and are developed and reviewed in consultation with each employee's supervisor. In addition, staff engage in professional development by participating in one or more College committees ([NC-100](#)). Finally, all staff

have access to a confidential Employee Assistance Program through a College-paid membership for personal relationship training, counseling, advising, life coaching, time and stress management, videos, reading materials, and sessions with trained professionals to support them professionally and personally, including access to counseling for dependents.

The College also monetarily supports training and professional development. For example, Professional Development training is paid for by the College and funded through departmental funding. Alternatively, Excellence Funds, which provide for further professional development up to \$3,000 annually, are available for employees to request through an application process. In addition, the College provides a tuition waiver for courses at North Central and tuition reimbursement for courses taken at other colleges and universities in Michigan ([NC-053 p. 58](#)).

Core Component 3.D.

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

3.D.1.

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

North Central provides valuable and timely support for student success. The College does this through a comprehensive array of support services offered by Student Affairs and Academic Affairs aligned with the mission of the College.

Accessibility Services

The Accessibility Services Coordinator supports students, faculty, and staff in creating a learning environment where students with disabilities have equitable access and opportunities ([NC-425](#)). A student seeking these services self-identifies, completes an application, and meets with the coordinator to determine an appropriate system of support. Outreach to and communication with the instructor ensures that the accommodation will be appropriately offered. Students receive support, guidance, and advising from the coordinator regarding any questions, difficulties, or adjustments that may arise.

Athletics

Student-athlete academic support systems include regular meetings with a college completion coach, mandatory study table hours, and academic progress monitoring by the athletic director and coaches ([NC-460](#)). First-year student-athletes and those below a 2.5 cumulative grade point average complete a minimum of four documented study table hours each week. These study table hours occur in the Tutoring and Testing Center, Library, or with coaches. This same cohort of students meets bi-weekly with the college completion coach, who regularly monitors attendance and achievement in each student's courses through Starfish and Brightspace reporting.

For student-athletes in need of medical and health-related support, the College contracts with Northern Michigan Sports Medicine for an athletic trainer. Student-athletes work with the athletic trainer for injury evaluation, rehabilitation, fatigue, and muscle recovery, as well as any other sport-related injury or illness. These services are of no cost to the student-athlete. The College also carries a secondary medical insurance policy for all student-athletes, including a catastrophic plan.

Career Services

The Career Services Department, established in 2019 through a partnership with the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians via a three-year grant, continues to support students, alumni, and community members with career development resources. Designed to assist students experiencing career uncertainty, services such as career assessments, job shadowing, internships, and career exploration provide tailored guidance to help students identify career pathways through research and practical experiences ([NC-437](#)).

The department also manages the College Central Network job board ([NC-438](#)), a key platform for connecting local businesses with students and offering extensive job opportunities. This initiative creates a seamless pathway to career opportunities and workplace experiences. North Central further supports career connections by hosting Career Fairs in 2023 and 2024, facilitating networking opportunities between local employers, students, alumni, and community members.

Tracking of appointments, assessments, outreach, and job placements is handled by the Career Development Specialist ([NC-439](#)). To enhance services, a student feedback survey has been implemented to gather insights ([NC-440](#)). Additionally, a strategically placed hallway monitor now showcases open job and career positions, increasing visibility for all who enter and exit the building.

Counseling

North Central provides in-person, virtual, or phone mental health counseling support for all enrolled students through a full-time counseling faculty member ([NC-441](#)). This service is provided at no cost, and insurance is not billed. During the 2023-24 academic year, support was provided to approximately 10% of the eligible students individually. The counselor assists with connecting students to local resources and provides appropriate referrals as needed. The counselor also provides mental health education and wellness presentations to faculty and staff, early childhood education students, dorm residents, honor society members, and scholarship recipients ([NC-208 p. 2](#)).

Financial Aid

The Financial Aid Office provides quality assistance to students and their families in finding ways to pay for college. In the last three years, the office has had clean audits from state programs and for veterans' benefits ([NC-116](#)). In 2023, North Central completed Recertification with the Department of Education for the next 5 years ([NC-426](#)). The office provides outreach to prospective students and parents through community financial aid information sessions and focused FAFSA completion workshops at area high schools. On campus, a Financial Aid office member attends each new student registration day to discuss the financial aid process and expectations for remaining in good standing for continued financial aid. Students can also schedule a financial aid appointment through their student portal, and walk-in assistance is available.

North Central advises students carefully on the student loan process and encourages students to limit borrowing and explore all other financing options first. In doing so, in 2022 the Financial Aid Office created a resource list of all available aid starting with completing the FAFSA, state aid programs, and other community resources ([NC-427](#)). North Central's 2020 3-year cohort default rate for student loans was 0% due to no required payments during the COVID-19 pandemic. The College's 2019 cohort default rate was 2.1%, lower than the 2019 national cohort default rate average for 2–3-year public colleges of 3.7%. In 2023-2023, 62.9% of first-time, full-time students received Pell grants with an average amount of \$4,854.

Registrar/Records Office

The Registrar/Records Office ensures the accurate maintenance and documentation of student records while upholding North Central's policies and procedures. The Registrar and Assistant Registrar oversee student registration, academic record-keeping, transcript requests, semester scheduling, graduation audits, the graduation ceremony, and updates to the academic catalog. The Registrar is also a member of the CRD/AP Committee.

Students access the student information system (SIS), Jenzabar, through a single sign-on portal, enabling them to complete transactions such as admissions applications, registration, and payments online. The Registrar's Office coordinates the collection of grades from faculty and provides students with access to final grades, including academic honors.

Additionally, the office manages international student SEVIS records, maintenance, and academic advising, and oversees campus-wide FERPA compliance ([NC-442](#)). The Registrar also maintains several key online resources for students, including the MiTransfer.org college webpage and transfer pathway program, the Pure Michigan Talent Connect website (a Michigan Works collaboration), and the National Student Clearinghouse for enrollment and graduation reporting.

Residence Hall

North Central is one of the few community colleges in Michigan offering on-campus housing, providing students with a fun and safe living and learning environment that supports their academic success. Over the past 3 years, the residence hall has housed an average of over 112 students per semester.

The director of campus housing oversees residence hall operations with the support of six resident assistants (RAs). RAs organize social and educational events throughout each semester, hold weekly meetings with the Director, and serve as campus security authorities. They also work up to 20 hours per week at the front desk, which is staffed 24/7 to ensure a secure and monitored environment. Policies and guidelines for residents are detailed in the *Residence Hall Handbook* ([NC-443](#)).

Starfish Software (communication between faculty and Student Affairs)

North Central adopted EAB's Starfish Early Alert software in January 2021 and rolled it out to the North Central community in Fall 2021. The faculty use the system to identify struggling students using specific tracking items (Flags, Referrals and Kudos). Three times each semester the faculty respond to a Progress Survey (Week 1 Attendance Survey) ([NC-444 pp. 1-2](#)), Early Alert Survey (Week 5) ([NC-444 pp. 3-5](#)), and End of the Semester Survey (Week 15) ([NC-444 pp. 6-7](#)). The Student Success Coordinator monitors the tracking items for students who have two or more tracking items. Additional support is offered to those students by one of the academic coaches directly via email and/or text. Michigan Reconnect students; student athletes; first time in any college (FTIAC) students; and students on Financial Aid warning, probation or ineligible have a Completion Coach assigned to them. During the semester, coaches complete weekly outreach to these students through email, daily outreach in an ongoing rotation, one on one appointments and/or three to four in-person workshops.

Student Organizations and Clubs

North Central offers student engagement opportunities through an array of student clubs and organizations, fostering a vibrant campus community ([NC-445](#)). The College provides funding opportunities, resources, and dedicated faculty and staff advisors to help student groups succeed. Advisors work closely with clubs to guide their development, assist with event planning, and ensure smooth operations. Student clubs and organizations are also supported by our Marketing department to provide event communication through social media as well as intercampus digital communication outlets ([NC-446](#)). These foundations allow student organizations to grow and succeed, enriching the overall campus experience.

Tutoring and Testing Center

The function of the Tutoring and Testing Center (TTC) is to provide services and resources that assist all students in achieving their academic goals. The TTC is the home of the Math, Reading, and Writing Labs ([NC-030](#)), the Zen Den ([NC-223](#)), and Women's Resource Center advising and support ([NC-447](#)). The TTC also offers a wide range of proctored testing services ([NC-448](#)) that serve current students, area high school students, and the community. Approximately 2,000 tests are proctored each academic year ([NC-448 p. 6](#)).

TTC offers writing and math tutoring labs staffed by professional and peer tutors. Peer tutors, current students with a 3.0 GPA and proven subject expertise, complement professional support, and since 2021, tutors have been embedded in nursing and select math courses ([NC-449](#)). North Central also partners with NetTutor to provide 24/7 online tutoring in various subjects ([NC-450](#)).

Space was created for a Learning Lab during the 2021-2022 academic year. The area includes a dedicated study area with whiteboards and materials that can be utilized for tutoring sessions, group or individual study times, and overflow space for the math and writing labs.

TTC also includes the Zen Den ([NC-223](#)), a relaxation and meditation room created in response to growing student mental health needs. Opened in Winter 2024, the Zen Den offers 30-minute reservable sessions and serves as a private space for student mothers to pump. It provides a tranquil environment with resources for practicing healthy coping methods and strategies.

Veteran Support Services

North Central prioritizes the needs of veteran and military students returning to the classroom. Upon registration, veterans receive a College Financing Plan from the Financial Aid Office ([NC-452 pp. 1-2](#)), outlining costs and resources. A designated academic advisor supports veterans with course registration, degree completion plans, and certification paperwork each semester. Veterans also benefit from priority registration at the start of each semester. Beginning in the 2023-2024 academic year, all students complete a VA Benefits Acknowledgment Form ([NC-452 pp. 3-4](#)).

North Central has an active Student Veteran Association (SVA) with an experienced staff advisor who advocates for the concerns of student veterans. In the spring of 2019, the College dedicated a space in the Student Community Resource Center for veterans to read, study, relax, and host the SVA meetings ([NC-298](#)).

Women's Resource Center of Northern Michigan

Since 1977, the Women's Resource Center of Northern Michigan (WRCNM) has operated on North Central's campus, serving women, children, and families in northern Lower Michigan. The WRCNM Educational & Employment Services (EES) office provides support and financial assistance for tuition, books, supplies, childcare, transportation, and other education-related needs. Additionally, the *Working Wardrobe* program offers work and interview clothing, including required uniforms for North Central health programs, to students and community members ([NC-447](#)).

3.D.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.

North Central degree seeking students are placed into the appropriate Math and English courses to ensure academic needs are met, and they are adequately prepared to succeed in their programs of study. Students may submit scores from ACCUPLACER, COMPASS,

ACT, SAT, a writing placement test, or High School or High School GPA to satisfy the College's assessment requirement. North Central's Placement Tables illustrate the scores associated with each level of Math and English Placement ([NC-453](#)).

Since 2021, North Central has worked to remove developmental course barriers and redesigned a co-requisite model for Math and English instruction—an initiative supported by the Michigan Community College Association ([NC-454](#)). North Central's current placement levels for Math and English courses are reflective of this practice. Over the last 3 years, fewer students have placed into developmental Math and English courses and instead have placed into courses that are supported with co-requisites and that count toward graduation ([NC-453 p. 3](#)).

North Central knows student success depends on how well students acclimate and adjust to college life, both before arriving on campus and throughout their academic journey. To foster this adjustment and develop a sense of belonging, the College implements several intentional activities. These include a mandatory online orientation ([NC-376](#)) and registration day for all new-to-college students ([NC-375](#)), North Central Days ([NC-374](#)), participation in Student Senate ([NC-373](#)), and a growing list of student organizations ([NC-098](#)).

In Winter 2022, North Central transitioned from mandatory in-person to online orientation for new-to-college students, providing baseline college readiness information in a more accessible format. After completing the online orientation, students can sign up for a Registration Day, where they participate in a College resource fair ([NC-375 pp. 2-3](#)), meet with an academic advisor, receive a North Central ID, tour the campus, and finalize their schedule with information about costs and payment plan options before leaving.

Recognizing the need for “just-in-time” information before the fall semester, the College introduced North Central Day, held the week before classes begin. This event includes student support workshops and opportunities to engage with faculty ([NC-374](#)). Workshops cover topics such as Financial Aid, using the North Central Portal, and a New Dual Enrollment Orientation.

3.D.3.

The institution provides for academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.

Academic advising helps students with educational planning and informed decision-making. Advisors assist students in understanding their programs, planning academic pathways, and achieving educational goals. They monitor progress, offer personalized support for transfer planning and skill development, and refer students to support services. For consistency, advisors follow the *Academic Advising Syllabus* ([NC-371 p. 1](#)).

After each advising appointment, students receive a survey ([NC-371 pp. 2-3](#)) to assess learning outcomes outlined in the syllabus.

North Central's Academic Advising team consists of two full-time advisors and one part-time advisor, who also serves as the Accessibility Services Coordinator and advises students at both the Petoskey and Gaylord locations. Additional student services staff provide advising and support, including a full-time counselor, a dual enrollment and Early College coordinator, a Student Success Coordinator, a Career Services Development Specialist, two Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) College Completion Coaches, and a CCAMPIS Advisor and Activity Coordinator. The Director of Admission and the Registrar also assist with advising during peak times.

In 2020, North Central introduced online booking for advising appointments, enabling students to schedule conveniently through the student portal. Walk-in advising is also available during the week before each semester and the first week of classes, providing students with easy access to advisors for registration or last-minute schedule adjustments before the add/drop period ends.

To ensure consistent advising, all advising staff participate in bi-weekly professional development meetings guided by an *Advising Meeting Agenda* ([NC-371 p. 4](#)) for structure and focus. These meetings often include stakeholders from departments such as the Registrar's Office, Academic Department Coordinators, and Financial Aid to stay informed about policies and procedures. Advisors also meet monthly with Academic Deans to discuss new programs and updates to existing ones. Additionally, they regularly engage with transfer representatives from North Central's top transfer institutions and visit these institutions for continued professional development.

Advisors use an *Advising Checklist* ([NC-371 p. 5](#)) to ensure comprehensive and effective appointment planning. They also develop *Degree Completion Plans* ([NC-371 p. 6](#)) to map a student's educational journey, providing a visual tool to track progress and plan degree completion. Advising is mandatory for students placed in developmental courses, requiring them to meet with an advisor each semester before registration.

3.D.4.

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

North Central prioritizes continuous improvement to provide students and instructors with the infrastructure and resources needed for effective teaching and learning. In response to campus community needs during and after the pandemic, the College made significant

investments to address immediate challenges and build a scalable infrastructure to support evolving technology and resource demands.

North Central focused on enhancing instructional and support technology as part of these improvements. Classrooms were upgraded with high-fidelity mobile microphones and HD webcams with instructor tracking capabilities, enabling seamless engagement for students both in-person and virtually ([NC-242](#)). The IT Department also installed a robust Wi-Fi system in campus buildings and extended high-speed internet access, ensuring reliable connectivity for the entire campus community.

In addition to its traditional IT Department Help Desk's live and on-demand ticketing system, North Central continues to maintain the addition of 24/7 student and instructor support services in its Brightspace contract, including 24/7 live phone and chat support and a help desk ticketing system. New in 2024 is the addition of a frontline AI-driven live support chat. This innovation has reduced the time for resolution and the number of issues requiring escalation to a higher level of support. The AI was prepopulated with responses to common problems unrelated to the LMS, including registering for classes, accessing Microsoft Office applications, requesting advising appointments, and more.

North Central maintains a contract with BlackBeltHelp to provide holiday, weekend, and after-hours support to students and instructors for troubleshooting common technical issues.

To provide resources to support student learning and success, the College purchased 101 graphing calculators, 150 MacBook laptops, 82 Dell laptops, 33 iPads with keyboard cases, 20 Apple Pencils, and Wi-Fi hotspots for distribution to students through the Library at no cost to ensure equitable access to resources for successful learning ([NC-070](#)). Library study rooms are available through walk-up or online reservations made in advance.

In addition to providing online teaching training and support discussed in 3.A.3., Distance Learning and Instructional Design provides all students and faculty with the training and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning. North Central hired a full-time instructional designer in 2022 to support the increasing need for instructional technology and design support.

Distance Learning and Instructional Design offers students two online self-paced courses to support the successful use of learning technologies. The first course, Brightspace 101, provides students with tutorials on the tools in the LMS, as well as opportunities to practice their use in a low-stakes environment ([NC-370](#)). Introduction to Online Learning introduces students to the expectations of the virtual classroom, as well as provides a self-assessment of whether the environment fits their learning style ([NC-369](#)). Students can revisit these as needed, ensuring ongoing access to resources for their success.

To support the effective use of technology for teaching and learning for all faculty, regardless of teaching modality, self-paced Brightspace Orientation and Teaching

Resources courses are offered. The Brightspace Orientation is structured to allow faculty to learn and demonstrate basic LMS skills, such as posting a syllabus, creating modules and uploading content, building a gradebook, and posting student grades in a sandbox course shell ([NC-387 pp. 1-3](#)). The Brightspace and Teaching Resources course provides orientation materials on utilizing advanced LMS functions and support for effectively integrating teaching and learning technologies, such as Panopto for lecture capture, Zoom for class meetings and virtual office hours, creating accessible course materials, LMS settings to promote academic integrity, and an introduction to open educational resources (OERs), and more ([NC-368](#)).

In addition to the self-paced training options, Distance Learning and Instructional Design offers one-on-one support and other personalized training options on demand. At the start of the pandemic, faculty were enrolled in a self-paced Rapid Guide to Online Teaching course focused on the basics of remote learning and utilizing tools in the LMS to engage students effectively ([NC-367](#)). This course is maintained so that it is available if needed again.

In the Winter 2024 semester, Distance Learning and Instructional Design launched Simple Syllabus ([NC-393](#)). This syllabus hosting platform integrates with the LMS and automatically prepopulates each syllabus with the current master course syllabus course description and learning outcomes, current North Central policies and statements, and a condensed Student Support Services Resource Guide, all without needing faculty intervention to maintain currency. All other syllabus areas are available for instructors to customize. The platform also provides a historical library of syllabi for students, instructors, and administration.

Core Component 3 Summary

North Central provides rigorous and high-quality education, aligning its courses and programs with current standards and performance expectations. Course and program currency is maintained through structured review cycles, faculty involvement, curriculum mapping, and assessment. Master course syllabi (MCS) and consistent course learning outcomes (CLOs) reflect these efforts, ensuring consistent educational quality. Student learning outcomes are designed with Bloom's taxonomy, ensuring clarity, measurability, and alignment with institutional goals. Assessments use proficiency scales for consistency in evaluating student performance.

Programs undergo review every 6 years, addressing areas like program structure, learning outcomes, resources, and student success outcomes. Faculty and advisory boards contribute to curricular relevance, leveraging industry insights to evaluate and refine programs. Changes, whether improvements or inactivation, are informed by data, community needs, and workforce demands. Similarly, the College uses a comprehensive

program proposal process, driven by data and stakeholder input, for new program development.

The College supports diverse learning modes, including face-to-face, online, and dual enrollment, maintaining consistent standards across modalities. Faculty qualifications and support systems uphold teaching quality, and co-curricular activities complement formal learning, fostering skills in inquiry, analysis, and cultural competence. These comprehensive efforts underscore the institution's commitment to academic excellence.

Criterion 4 – Teaching & Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

Core Component 4.A.

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

4.A.1.

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

Program Review Process

As noted by HLC during the College’s 2019 Mid-Cycle Assurance Argument, the Academic Planning and Program Review (APPR) template offered consistency in the review process of programs, but its use and effectiveness were limited by several factors. The first is the lack of an established timeline to routinize program review across the entire curriculum to ensure that all credentials are evaluated appropriately. The second and most significant limitation of the APPR process is the template’s structural weakness: no component of program-level assessment informing the review. This lack of a systematic approach to program assessment as a defined element of the APPR necessarily limited program review effectiveness to guide decision-making and curricular adjustments.

Recognizing the weaknesses of the APPR, and the concomitant need to define systematic program assessment processes to guide decisions and curricular changes resulting from program review, the institution joined the 2021 cohort of the HLC Assessment Academy. The purpose of doing so was to develop program assessment protocols to support systematic structures and processes for program review ([NC-226 p. 405](#)). Criterion 3 includes an in-depth discussion of these refined assessment processes.

In 3.A.1. and 3.A.3. of this Assurance Argument, the College’s program review process and connections to other programmatic and curricular processes are discussed in detail. As mentioned earlier in 3.A.3., North Central ensures program quality through its

comprehensive program review process for all programs (Certificates of Development, Certificates, Associates (including pathways)). The College defines program review as the systematic, cyclical process that involves collecting program information to analyze and evaluate a program's effectiveness, vitality, relevancy, and resource needs. Program Review occurs every six years ([NC-234](#)). The six-year timeframe consists of assessing program learning outcomes (PLOs) in years 1-4; coordinating with stakeholders, reviewing data, and completing the Review of Academic Programs (RAP) form ([NC-203](#)) in year 5; and receiving and discussing administrative feedback provided on the RAP form ([NC-229](#)) and planning change initiatives in year 6. New programs are scheduled to undergo a mid-cycle, abbreviated program review after three years ([NC-234](#)). To complete a program review, program stakeholders (e.g., Faculty and Academic Deans) use the RAP form, which includes an evaluation of program structure, learning outcomes, resources, and student success outcomes. After faculty and/or academic deans finalize the RAP, the Vice President of Academic Affairs reviews the completed RAP and provides feedback using the administrative response feedback form ([NC-205](#)). As noted in 3.A.1., the program review process is currently in a pilot phase with planned improvements. For example, the HLC Assessment Academy Team is considering implementing a peer review process in which faculty members from outside the program being evaluated review and provide feedback on the RAP before it is submitted to the Dean and the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Use of Program Review Outcomes and Data

The program review process provides stakeholders the opportunity to confirm quality, improve quality ([NC-205 p. 1](#)), or sunset a program ([NC-205 p. 3](#), [NC-205 p. 4](#)). When the recommended outcome is to sunset a program, the Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) committee reviews this and provides a final recommendation to the President of the College. For example, the General Office Professional C, was determined to “lack relevancy in today’s job market,” and was approved for sunset and inactivation ([NC-355 p. 17](#); [NC-279 p. 14](#); [NC-011 p. 1](#)). In contrast, the AA in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ENVS) program review ([NC-267](#)) indicated needed program adjustments to address curricular obstacles to completion such as rotation adjustment, role of pre-requisites, and improved flexibility with program electives. CRD/AP reviewed and approved faculty recommendations to improve the ENVS program ([NC-279 pp. 1-3](#)). Lastly, to limit redundancy, programs with third-party accreditation use their external accreditor’s review in place of the internal RAP process ([NC-185 p. 3](#)).

4.A.2.

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

North Central Michigan College Award of Credit

North Central fully evaluates credits transferred to the College, offering a variety of methods for students to receive credit for prior learning and credits earned at other higher education institutions.

More than 90% of credits awarded annually to North Central students are taught by North Central Faculty. Credit awarded for courses taken at North Central are approved and periodically revised through CRD/AP. Faculty and deans review the master course syllabi (MCS) every 6 years as part of program review ([NC-203](#)). North Central adheres to the guidelines established by the State of Michigan as detailed in the Activities Classification Structure (ACS) manual ([NC-230](#)). ACS provides guidelines for all areas at the College, including instructional design. The major points related to instructional design are:

- Classification of instructional areas and topics ([NC-231](#))
- Classification of various disciplines ([NC-230 p. 10](#))
- Contact hour and credit hour standards ([NC-230 p. 36](#))

Award of Credit from Other Institutions and Credit for Prior Learning

The remainder of credits (10%) awarded annually to North Central students are a result of credits transferred to North Central from other higher education institutions or through some form of credit for prior learning.

North Central provides clear guidelines for transferring credits to the College ([NC-238](#)). These guidelines include specific rules regarding the transfer of credits from other higher education institutions. In addition to College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) and Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) testing for credit, the College also considers test results from Advanced Placement (AP) testing and American Council on Education (ACE) evaluations of Education Experiences in the Armed Forces recommendations.

The Board of Trustees Credit for Prior Learning Policy (#212) ([NC-066 p. 26](#)) provides the direction, opportunities, and limitations for awarding credit for prior learning. Students are awarded credit for CLEP and DSST testing, and Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) ([NC-232 pp. 2-3](#)). Through CPL, North Central recognizes that current licensure or certification represents learning for which credit may be granted. Finally, working with the State of Michigan Department of Education, North Central is an active participant in the Michigan

Statewide Postsecondary Credit Agreement initiative; the College is part of 14 CTE discipline-specific agreements ([NC-270](#)).

4.A.3.

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

The College's Registrar follows professional guidelines for evaluating and accepting transfer credits set forth by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and its Michigan affiliate, the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO) ([NC-243](#)). The Registrar is active in the MACRAO organization, serving on the Conference Planning Committee, and takes advantage of various available professional development opportunities.

North Central's policies regarding the incoming transfer of credits are published in the online 2024-2025 catalog ([NC-238](#)).

The College has several consortia and contractual agreements whereby entire blocks of credit—not as individual credits—are transferred in for credit towards certain applied degree programs. Examples include two Law Enforcement programs in which a police academy experience is credited and Welding ([NC-269](#)).

4.A.4.

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

North Central maintains and exercises authority over its curriculum including rigor, student learning, and faculty qualifications. The College's highly qualified faculty develop appropriate course content, learning outcomes, and rigorous learning experiences.

Rigor of Courses

Primary control of course design, expectations, prerequisites, and rigor is the purview of the Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee. The College's faculty are responsible for chairing the CRD/AP Committee. Other faculty, instructional deans, associate deans, the VP for Academic Affairs, the VP for Student Affairs, and the Registrar complete the Committee's membership. The mission of the CRD/AP Committee is to review and approve new, revised, or deactivated programs; review and recommend to the College President new or deleted programs; review and

recommend to the College President new, revised, or deleted academic policies; participate in the annual college catalog revision process ([NC-100 p. 4](#)).

All course approvals (new, revised, or inactivated) by the CRD/AP Committee are implemented without further approval by the President or Board of Trustees; likewise, all approved program revisions do not require further approval by the President or Board ([NC-421](#)). New programs (associate degrees, certificates, and certificates of development) require President or Board approval as outlined in Board of Trustees Policy 213: Academic Degrees, Programs & Courses ([NC-066 p. 27](#)).

The academic policies reviewed and recommended by the CRD/AP Committee are forwarded to the President and Board for approval; for example, BOT Policy 215: Program Review ([NC-066 p. 27](#)) and BOT Policy 216: Outcomes Assessment (Assessment of Student Learning) ([NC-066 p. 28](#)).

Expectations for Student Learning

The College's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) set expectations for student learning at the College. The development process of the ILOs is detailed in 3A. The ILO statements are displayed in the College Catalog ([NC-061](#)) and shared at campus presentations ([NC-286 p. 42-56](#)). Course learning outcomes (CLOs) are aligned to Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and PLOs are aligned to ILOs. Faculty and staff use curricular and co-curricular maps ([NC-258](#)) to align learning outcomes, which is discussed further in 4.B. These maps illustrate expectations of student learning and provide a road map for assessment. These tools, as well as others ([NC-213](#); [NC-272](#)), help to measure, maintain, and inform decisions about student learning expectations.

Access to Learning Resources

The College maintains authority over Learning Resources to ensure the quality of educational programs, learning environments, and support services. Examples include:

Nursing Programs

The Nursing Department offers students several support resources: Hurst NCLEX test prep, tutoring, resilience coaching, and the iPad 1:1 initiative. Tutoring is led by working nurses from the community, while resilience coaching, provided by two coaches, helps students build confidence, develop coping skills, and strengthen resilience for both the program and their future careers ([NC-333](#)). Through donor support, the College also offers nursing students a Hurst review, with a coach providing in-person instruction over four days for RN and PN students in their final semester. Additionally, the IT and Nursing departments created a program providing iPads to RN students upon acceptance, addressing technology access inequities and supporting electronic testing to prepare students for the NCLEX.

Library

The Library actively collects and provides access to physical and electronic resources that support and enhance the college curriculum, including licensed materials, open-access content, and Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) resources ([NC-157](#); [NC-334](#); [NC-335](#)). In collaboration with the College's IT department, the Library also supports student access to technology through a lending program that offers semester-long checkouts of laptops, WiFi hotspots, and graphing calculators ([NC-336](#); [NC-337](#)).

Student Success Coordination (Starfish)

In 2021, the College implemented Starfish software, a communication tool that enables faculty and Student Affairs to identify and support struggling students. Faculty can flag, refer, or give kudos to students, and they complete three student-progress surveys each semester (Weeks 1, 5, and 15) ([NC-338](#)). The Student Success Coordinator trains faculty on the use and application of Starfish. The coordinator also monitors and supports students with two or more tracking items, and academic coaches provide additional support to these students through email or text. This process is further detailed in section 3.D.

Tutoring and Testing Center

The College ensures quality learning environments through its tutoring and testing services. The Tutoring & Testing Center Manager ensures all proctors pass certification exams from each testing entity to adhere to testing standards and procedures ([NC-339](#)). In addition, the manager hires experienced Part-Time Tutors for the Math and Writing Labs, and Student Peer Tutors must meet specific criteria, including passing the relevant course with a B+ or higher, maintaining a 3.0 GPA, interviewing, and obtaining a recommendation from the course professor. To enhance quality, the College is aligning tutor training with College Reading & Learning Association (CRLA) standards, aiming for CRLA certification ([NC-340](#)). Additionally, every tutoring session is documented, and the College provides 24/7 online tutoring through Net Tutor ([NC-341](#)). Tutoring is also part of Cocurricular Assessment, with student feedback from the Math Lab guiding improvements ([NC-258 p. 7](#)).

Faculty Qualifications

All Faculty, including the College's adjunct faculty, at all teaching locations have a faculty Qualifications Review (FQR) Assessment completed by the hiring divisional dean ([NC-273](#)). Part One of the FQR form includes a comprehensive Credentialing Requirement Checklist ensuring all proper documentation necessary to meet the HLC's and the College's guidelines has been obtained and located in the faculty personnel file. Part two of the FQR form describes what makes the faculty member qualified, either by proper academic degrees, academic credits, and/or tested experience. Under this section, separate courses counted towards the 18 qualifying graduate hours are specifically listed along with an area to provide comments for further explanation where necessary. A similar section

exists for tested experience, if applicable. This form then moves on to Part Three which summarizes the courses that the faculty member is deemed qualified to teach.

The summary of these forms is included in a document maintained by each divisional dean and uploaded to SharePoint for the Academic Affairs team found under “Faculty Credential Review” ([NC-299](#)). Subsequently, academic credentials held by faculty are listed by the name and contact information on the College’s website directory (examples – [NC-300](#)).

The onboarding process of all new faculty has been amended to require completion of the FQR before the individual can be processed and sent to payroll. This ensures as administrative staff change, the process is maintained.

North Central has offered Dual Enrollment to local area schools within its service district area for the past 36 years. Dual Enrollment has continued to grow to include North Central Now! (NCN) concurrently enrolled courses. Concurrent courses are held at the local high schools and taught by qualified faculty on site at the local schools during the daytime while high school classes are in session. All dual-enrolled faculty, including NCN faculty, are treated the same as full-time and adjunct faculty; therefore, the same process outlined above is applied. All faculty have an FQR ([NC-273](#)) completed and filed and are included in the “Faculty Credential Review” document ([NC-299](#)).

All faculty, regardless of teaching location or modality, follow the most current master course syllabus (MCS) for each course taught ([NC-291](#)). These MCS documents are initially approved by the CRD/AP Committee ([NC-212](#)) and periodically reviewed during program review ([NC-203](#)).

4.A.5.

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

North Central maintains specialized accreditation for two programs.

The College’s Emergency Medical Services – Paramedic Program recently received continuing accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) ([NC-185](#)). The Michigan Bureau of EMS, Trauma & Preparedness states, “a Paramedic education program must have a Letter of Review from the Committee of Accreditation of the EMS Professions (CoAEMSP) or full accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) ([NC-235 p. 4](#)).”

The College’s Nursing Associate of Applied Science Program (RN) recently received initial accreditation through the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) ([NC-](#)

[184](#)). Michigan Code R.338.10303d ([NC-233](#)) requires any nursing education program approved by the Board to be accredited by a board-recognized nursing accreditation organization.

Periodic evaluations conducted as part of these specialized accreditations are used in lieu of the College's program review process ([NC-234](#)). Advisory Committees for these programs also periodically review program objectives and outcomes ([NC-103](#); [NC-107](#); [NC-108](#); [NC-109](#); [NC-110](#); [NC-111](#); [NC-112](#)).

North Central is also pursuing two additional specialized accreditations/endorsements. The College recently received grant funding to pay for our Early Childhood Education programs accreditation by the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) ([NC-280](#)). In addition, following the completion of the Health Education and Science Center (HESC) addition in 2026, the College will finalize the application for full International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) Healthcare Simulation Standards endorsement for our nursing simulation labs ([NC-281](#)).

4.A.6.

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

For associate degrees, certificates, and certificates of development, North Central defines student success as the summation of completion and transfer rates ([NC-176 pp. 2-3](#)). The College's Persistence, Enrollment, Retention, and Completion (PERC) dashboard includes two-, three-, and four-year success rates ([NC-176](#)). These rates are based on cohorts' time-of-entry to the institution. This is the same definition and methodology used by Michigan's Center for Education Performance Indicators (CEPI) ([NC-240 p. 3](#)). As illustrated in the PERC and CEPI dashboards, North Central's four-year success outcomes increased four percentage points (46% to 51%) from 2016-2017 to 2020-2021, while the average for the state of Michigan increased one percentage point (39% to 40%) ([NC-268](#)). To further evaluate student success, the College disaggregates success by degree attainment and transfer to four-year university ([NC-268](#)).

When students apply for graduation, they are asked to complete a brief survey, summarizing their experience at North Central and their immediate plans for the future. Overwhelmingly, students feel they have met their personal goals (~95%), which is especially remarkable when one considers the percentage who reported working full- or part- time while attending (~89%). The anticipated transfer rate (~62%) is also higher than that of the students in general. Furthermore, at the time of applying for graduation, around 40% of students already have employment in their field of study ([NC-236](#)).

For occupational programs, such as nursing and EMS/paramedic, the College closely monitors licensure exam pass rates of graduates to ensure program objectives and outcomes result in high pass rates ([NC-044](#); [NC-287](#)). These pass rates are also available on the College's website.

North Central ensures credentials prepare students for advanced study or employment through transfer articulation agreements ([NC-316](#)), including 10 MiTransfer Pathway degrees (statewide articulation agreements) ([NC-228](#)). These agreements simplify the transfer of credit and create a more efficient process for students to complete baccalaureate degrees.

As mentioned in 2.B.2., the College's Fast Track programs ([NC-037](#)) have provided opportunities for over 350 students in the last two years to meet workforce training demands in the region. Of these 350+ students, over 75% have completed since June 2022.

Core Component 4.B.

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

4.B.1.

The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.

North Central's HLC Assessment Academy Team ([NC-244](#)), along with the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (IR), guide the College's assessment processes. In 2011, the College adopted the Lumina Foundation-supported Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) as its outcome assessment platform, establishing goals for participation and student learning ([NC-206 p. 1](#)). This new infrastructure introduced faculty to standard assessment processes, requiring course assessments to be submitted via the Assessment Record Sheet ([NC-206 p. 2](#)). Participation increased across students, sections, and disciplines ([NC-206 p. 5](#)). The College demonstrated achievements in the five broad DQP areas in the 2019 mid-cycle report ([NC-206 p. 6](#)). Additionally, by integrating the DQP framework, it developed a learning outcome assessment data system through the College's SIS and LMS.

These infrastructure developments positioned North Central to effectively use assessment data to enhance teaching and learning both now and in the future. However, the 2019 HLC Open Pathway Mid-Cycle Review noted that the College did not fully meet its expectations ([NC-245 p. 46](#)). Following this feedback, new leadership in Academic Affairs and IR, and recent participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, North Central identified improvement opportunities and began focused efforts to strengthen its student learning assessments ([NC-001](#)).

North Central is committed to continuously enhancing its student learning assessment processes, basing improvement decisions on evidence and collaboration with stakeholders. In 2021, the Team identified key areas needing improvement:

- limited shared understanding of DQPs, program outcomes, and institutional learning outcomes ([NC-246](#); [NC-247](#); [NC-248 p. 57](#); [NC-248 pp. 55-56](#))
- an incomplete assessment process ([NC-206](#); [NC-245 p. 46](#));
- a compliance-focused rather than engagement-driven assessment culture ([NC-248 p. 57](#); [NC-286 pp. 276-279](#));
- a lack of defined learning goals and processes for co-curricular assessment ([NC-245 p. 46](#)).

With input from faculty ([NC-286 pp. 42-56](#); [NC-249](#); [NC-250](#); [NC-246](#)) and guidance from HLC Assessment Academy Mentors ([NC-225](#)), the Team began addressing these issues while maintaining ongoing student learning assessments ([NC-286 pp. 248-251](#); [NC-252](#)).

Process for Learning Outcome Alignment

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the Team created new curriculum mapping processes and guided faculty, academic deans, and co-curricular leaders through the mapping ([NC-253](#); [NC-286 p. 129-245](#); [NC-286 p. 117-128](#)). The Team introduced a curriculum map template ([NC-255](#)) to help stakeholders align course and activity learning outcomes with program and institutional outcomes. For new general education courses, CLOs are also mapped to General Education PLOs and recorded in CRD/AP course approval forms ([NC-254](#)).

Learning is structured so that course learning outcomes (CLOs) or co-curricular learning outcomes (CoLOs) align with program outcomes (PLOs) ([NC-145](#); [NC-255](#); [NC-256](#); [NC-257](#); [NC-258](#)). PLOs align to the College's institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) ([NC-237](#)).

Process for Writing and Revising Learning Outcomes

As discussed in 3.A., in 2022-2023, the Team launched a multi-year project ([NC-001](#)) to revise and develop course ([NC-259](#)), co-curricular ([NC-064](#); [NC-260](#)), program ([NC-286 p. 246](#)), and institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) ([NC-249](#); [NC-041](#)) using Blooms Taxonomy and outcome writing guides ([NC-266](#); [NC-261](#)). The Team also trained faculty and staff on these resources during Assessment Day workshops ([NC-260 pp. 1-16](#); [NC-286 p. 246-289](#); [NC-262](#)). With this large project nearly complete, the Team is planning sustainable outcome review and revision processes "post-academy" ([NC-225](#); [NC-248](#)).

Process for Curriculum Mapping

The Team is implementing improved assessment processes through a scaled approach, as outlined in the Team's goals and timeline ([NC-001](#)). For curricular assessment, the Team began with the General Education Program and several high-demand occupational programs. In 2024-2025, the Team is working with faculty to map all remaining transfer and occupational programs ([NC-001](#)). For co-curricular programs, Team leaders are working with high-impact areas like Library, Tutoring Services, Phi Theta Kappa, Career Services, with plans to expand to programs like Athletics ([NC-064](#)). This approach balances workload for faculty, co-curricular leaders, and the Team, and allows feedback to refine assessment processes.

The curriculum map template ([NC-255](#)) will be an essential tool for faculty and co-curricular leaders, helping them identify opportunities to reinforce and enhance student learning throughout a program's curriculum. The Team will make any necessary refinements as a result of the Team's pilot work.

Process for Measuring Learning

For over a decade, faculty have assessed student learning for institutional purposes ([NC-279 pp. 72-73](#); [NC-206](#)), primarily using direct assessments and submitting learning outcome data to IR via the Academic Record Sheet ([NC-206 p. 6](#)). As part of the HLC Assessment Academy, the Team improved learning measurement processes through pilots, starting with assessment planning. From Fall 2021 to Fall 2023, full-time faculty submitted CLO assessment plans via Survey Monkey ([NC-264](#); [NC-265](#)), specifying which CLO(s) to assess, methodologies, and proficiency targets. Academic deans and the Associate Dean of Institutional Research & Assessment informed adjunct faculty of these plans so instructors could assess and submit results for the selected CLO. IR provided “Learning Outcome Reports” with aggregated learning outcome data at section, course, and institutional levels, allowing faculty to compare proficiencies ([NC-252](#); [NC-286 pp. 248-251](#); [NC-286 pp. 141-142](#)). An interpretation guide accompanied the reports ([NC-263](#)). This approach enabled faculty to intentionally plan CLO assessments and allowed the Team to refine data collection methods while designing PLO assessment planning.

From there, the Team developed, and is currently piloting, PLO assessment plans that integrate CLO assessment, replacing the CLO assessment plan process previously discussed ([NC-286 p. 16](#)). Introduced in Winter 2024, full-time faculty completed annual PLO assessment plans ([NC-213](#)) to be implemented in the 2024-2025 academic year ([NC-286 pp. 17-23](#)). These plans require full-time faculty to select at least one PLO to assess annually (aiming to assess all PLOs before program review) ([NC-286 p. 92](#)) and to identify aligned courses, assessment methods, CLO and PLO proficiency targets, timelines, and involved stakeholders ([NC-272](#)). Faculty assess CLOs aligned with the chosen PLO and submit proficiency data via Brightspace. Based on faculty feedback, PLO assessment plans are now submitted through a shared, accessible form on the College’s SharePoint, facilitating easier collaboration than Survey Monkey. The Team is piloting this process with full-time faculty and will integrate adjunct faculty as the process is refined. A subgroup of the HLC Assessment Academy Team is currently planning adjunct faculty integration.

Historically, the College used a three-tiered proficiency scale (beginning, developing, advanced) to measure learning proficiency. Evidence showed that faculty had varied interpretations of this scale at the CLO level ([NC-286 p. 78](#); [NC-282](#)), so, as discussed in Core Component 3.A., faculty and the Team revised the scale to Below/Meets/Exceeds proficiency for greater clarity and consistency, establishing an expected minimum proficiency level ([NC-286 pp. 50-51](#); [NC-286 p. 33](#); [NC-283](#)). At the program level, the College adopted a binary scale (meets/does not meet), applied through proficiency targets in assessment planning and curriculum maps ([NC-286 pp. 50-51](#); [NC-286 p. 34](#)). Using historical assessment data ([NC-284](#)), faculty determined the percentage of learners they expect to meet the PLO being assessed in 2024-2025. For example, 2015-2023 assessment data showed that 72% of learners in Business Management AAS courses met or exceeded CLO proficiency across the curriculum. In the 2024-2025 Business Management AAS assessment plan, stakeholders will consider PLO 4 (“construct and

present effective oral and written forms of professional management communication”) met if 75% or more of Business Management AAS students assessed meet or exceed the CLOs mapped to PLO 4 ([NC-213](#)). Given this is the first iteration of this PLO assessment process, the Team will gather feedback and make necessary improvements.

The College is leveraging its Learning Management System, Brightspace, for CLO and PLO assessment. Each course in Brightspace includes the newly revised CLOs and proficiency scale. When faculty complete their assessments, instead of manually inputting data into the antiquated Assessment Record Sheet ([NC-206 p. 2](#)), they can now easily select “Below/ Meets/Exceeds Proficiency” for the assessed CLO for each student in their Brightspace course ([NC-239](#)). Aggregated CLO data will be used to determine whether students are meeting the PLO target. This technology will be used for faculty teaching online and in-person courses. The Team provided training and resources for faculty in Winter 2024 ([NC-286 pp. 13-26](#); [NC-251](#)).

Faculty will complete the PLO assessment plans each year in the Winter term using data from previous years’ assessment to inform decisions. Given this is a new process, the Team is testing these processes with full-time faculty courses only and will integrate part-time faculty courses once the evidence has been collected and revisions made as necessary.

For co-curricular assessment, co-curricular groups are also completing 2024-2025 assessment plans ([NC-258](#)). Like curricular assessment, the Team will use feedback from stakeholders involved in testing the redesigned assessment structures to improve the process.

Processes for Data Reporting and Use

Historically, North Central provided periodic reports on DQP proficiency achievement at the institutional level ([NC-206](#)). In 2022, the Team introduced “Learning Outcome Reports” to better link teaching, learning, and assessment for faculty ([NC-263](#)). Now, the Team is developing processes to report CLO data in the College’s learning management system, Brightspace. Since all courses, regardless of modality, have Brightspace course shells every semester, Faculty can submit student-level CLO assessment data ([NC-239](#)) and review a summary of their CLO proficiency results directly within Brightspace. Utilizing the reported CLO data and PLO mapping, IR will develop and provide PLO proficiency reports to indicate whether PLO targets are met. Faculty can use Brightspace reporting tools to analyze areas where CLO proficiency fell short of expectations and apply a data interpretation tool to identify improvement areas ([NC-301](#)). These processes are currently being designed and tested through the HLC Assessment Academy project.

Lastly, Brightspace is currently improving its learning outcome reporting features. The College’s Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design (and a member of the Team) participates on Brightspace’s Advisory Board for this project ([NC-271](#)). Our

intention is to inform Brightspace decisions and be as knowledgeable as possible so that we can leverage new Brightspace learning outcome features at the College. This work is currently in the research and development phase.

Processes for Assessment Training

Effective student learning assessment relies on robust stakeholder training. North Central's participation in the HLC Assessment Academy has provided key "train-the-trainer" opportunities. Team members, including curricular and co-curricular representatives, attended the HLC Assessment Academy Orientation, Midpoint Roundtable ([NC-288](#)), and Annual Conferences, gaining insights into benchmarking, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) research ([NC-305](#)), and HLC assessment resources. Working closely with their HLC Mentor and Scholar, the Team provided SPARQ updates and engaged in productive third-year consultations, receiving positive feedback on both process effectiveness and team productivity ([NC-225](#)).

The HLC Assessment Academy Team aims to shift the assessment culture from compliance to engagement. To support this, the College introduced regular assessment days, held 2-3 times each fall and winter semester, where faculty and co-curricular staff gather to learn, design, practice, and provide feedback ([NC-286](#); [NC-258](#); [NC-260](#); [NC-262](#)). Each session focuses on gathering input for proposed changes, training on previously agreed changes, and practicing new processes.

4.B.2.

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

Course Assessment

Faculty use formative and summative assessments to measure and improve student learning in the classroom, no matter the modality. Several examples are below.

Faculty use the results of student learning to inform curricular and/or pedagogical improvements. In NUR 231: *Acute Care Concepts*, for example, students present weekly on topics recently covered by faculty. Each student assumes a role in a 10-minute skit presented to classmates and provides evidence-based patient education materials. This assignment, modeled after "grand rounds" in hospitals, fosters teamwork and uses an interdisciplinary, best-practice approach ([NC-342](#)). Students have responded positively, noting its value in reinforcing material understanding and teaching skills—both essential for nursing. The frequent nature of this assignment enables faculty to regularly assess comprehension ([NC-342](#)) and adjust instruction as needed.

A key learning outcome for PHY 231: *Physics for Scientists & Engineers II* is for students to “apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills to the analysis of physical behaviors.” To achieve this, careful problem formulation, solution, and interpretation are essential. Following subpar solution submissions in Winter 2023, the faculty member collaborated with Instructional Design to create a problem-solving rubric for PHY 231 ([NC-343 p. 1](#)). This initiative led to a marked improvement in solution quality from Winter 2023 (weak) to Winter 2024 (strong) ([NC-343 p. 2](#)). A former student now at Michigan Technological University noted, “I feel more prepared than my peers here at MTU and have a better understanding of problem-solving.” This example demonstrates the faculty member’s use of student outcomes and feedback to refine instructional methods.

In ENG 265: *Modern Mythology*, the faculty member noticed students struggling to apply (post)modern concepts to characters, events, and settings in mythological texts, particularly in the Loki discussion board and analytic writing assignments. To address this, the instructor introduced an AI-based assignment to help students grasp these theories. Students generated 200-word summaries of key modernism and postmodernism features with AI, then identified these concepts in the readings. This approach significantly improved students' analytical papers, with mean scores on the Loki analysis paper rising from the mid-B range (85-87) to an A- (90) after implementing the theory map activity.

In ENG 111, faculty teach students research, critical thinking, rhetoric, organization and writing skills which are aligned to three CLOs:

- Demonstrate skill with linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling such as it does not distract readers often.
- Paraphrase the main ideas of a diverse range of text from both academic and nonacademic sources.
- Apply strategies for giving and receiving feedback on writing.

To measure student learning, a faculty member used an essay writing assignment with multiple drafts, peer review, class presentation, class discussion, faculty/student conferences, and then the final draft. Based on results of previous semesters, the faculty member wanted to improve students’ research skills. To do so, they had the College librarian provide a hands-on research demonstration in the classroom on how to use databases. The faculty member also revised assignment expectations and provided more resources (e.g., examples of successful papers and YouTube videos on I-Search essays) while also modifying the assignment schedule to allow for an extra week to work on research writing. As a result of these changes, the faculty member observed improved scores on the final writing assignment.

In SPAN 111: *Elementary Spanish I*, students learn to describe their personal interests and hobbies. Typically, the faculty member asks students to demonstrate learning through a writing activity and oral practice via Zoom. Through these activities, the faculty member

observed the students' application of the learned vocabulary and grammar as well as clarity in verbal communication. Based on results of these assessments, the faculty member modified the oral practice document by changing, simplifying and adding new questions, as well as adding textbook page numbers to help students go back to course material instead of Google. By assessing the overall results of the whole class and by giving feedback individually to students, the faculty member has confirmed the changes are helpful for students.

A new faculty member at the College is using student outcome data to enhance learning in MATH 128: *Quantitative Reasoning*, focusing on an assignment about buying a home that aligns with the course outcome, "Analyze situations using estimation and calculation." Students submitted their work electronically, and analysis showed that around 81% of students in MATH 128 A and MATH 128 C met or exceeded proficiency in quantitative reasoning and analytical estimation (CLO-3 and CLO-5) ([NC-344](#)). While most students performed well, a few submitted inadequate or no work. To address this, the faculty member plans to introduce weighted assessments earlier in the semester, including rough drafts and individual progress meetings. Additional data will be gathered next semester to complete the improvement cycle.

Another faculty member who teaches Art History and Computer Information Systems shared reflections on data used to improve student learning across these varied disciplines ([NC-345](#)).

In ESC 121: *Physical Geology*, a faculty member teaches a lesson on mining and mineral resources, aligned to the CLO "Interpret Earth processes and natural hazards/resources with the use of experimental/observational data, remote sensing data, charts, and maps." The faculty member uses exam questions to measure student learning, and over time observed that students struggled with questions about processes that form ore deposits (i.e. how are metal deposits formed?). The faculty member had previously skipped a lab for this topic (mineral/rock resources) because it falls on the same class meeting and calendar day as a peer-review activity for one of the projects in the class. Since students worked on the peer-review in class, the faculty member did not have time for a lab or learning activity that focused on mineral/rock resources. The faculty member devised a new learning opportunity where students could do a take-home lab with practice questions about mining/rock resources to see whether extra practice would lead to improved results on related exam questions. The exam with these questions is later in the Fall 2024 semester and the faculty member will monitor whether this instructional adjustment helped improve student learning on this topic.

Institutional Assessment

North Central is committed to enhancing the use of assessment data to improve student learning. As one example, discussed in 3.A. and 4.B.1., faculty used 8 years of program and general education assessment data ([NC-284](#)) to set PLO proficiency targets in the 2024-

2025 assessment plans ([NC-213](#)). In addition, IR has provided faculty with CLO assessment outcome reports, showing proficiency achievements at section, course, and institutional levels ([NC-252](#)), along with a faculty-designed interpretation guide ([NC-263](#)). Guided by an HLC mentor and scholar ([NC-225](#)) and participation in a Brightspace advisory board ([NC-271](#)), the HLC Assessment Academy Team is creating processes for faculty and staff to leverage learning outcome data for program and institutional improvement. These efforts include Assessment Days focused on data review and advanced Brightspace features, like a learning outcome dashboard.

Program Review

The HLC Assessment Academy Team is developing processes to integrate assessment data into program review ([NC-203 p. 6](#)). The Team launched a revised program review process in Fall 2023, establishing a 6-year cycle for each program, with dedicated time for assessment planning, assessment, and data utilization across all program learning outcomes ([NC-234](#)). To reduce stakeholder burdens, programs are reviewed in groups determined by program health (e.g., enrollment and completion), curriculum, and key stakeholders.

In the program review process, program stakeholders complete the Review of Academic Programs form (RAP) ([NC-203](#)). The RAP is an improved version of the Academic Program Planning and Review template (APPR) and improvements to this process are expected over the next year. For example, results from the 2024-2025 PLO assessment year will be incorporated into program review starting 2025-2026 after completion of the PLO assessment pilot. Additional revisions to the program review process will be made based on Groups 1 and 2 feedback. The program review process is further explained in section 3.A. and 4.A. as well.

4.B.3.

The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

As discussed previously, North Central's HLC Assessment Academy Team uses benchmarking research to inform processes and methodologies. For example, when first starting the Assessment Academy, Team members researched the assessment processes of colleges that had already completed an HLC Assessment Academy ([NC-289](#)). Other team members benchmarked assessment resources like guidebooks for faculty ([NC-248 p. 60](#)) and assessment planning ([NC-285](#)). The Team also benchmarked program review processes at peer institutions to inform APPR template criteria and the College's program review schedule ([NC-302](#)).

The Team actively seeks best practices from reputable assessment organizations, such as NILOA. They use resources like the American Association of Higher Education's Principles on Assessment ([NC-303](#); [NC-304 p. 3](#)), supported by NILOA ([NC-305](#)), and rely on HLC resources, including Susan Hatfield's videos on curriculum mapping ([NC-253](#)), and Mentor and Scholar feedback ([NC-225](#)). Team members also attend the Annual HLC conference, bringing back valuable insights and storing presentation notes and materials in their shared MS Teams folder for ongoing reference ([NC-306](#)).

The College prioritizes stakeholder input in designing assessment processes, aiming to shift from a compliance-focused to an engagement-centered culture. Regular assessment days are central to this strategy, gathering insights and feedback from curricular and co-curricular stakeholders through discussions, polls, and surveys ([NC-286](#); [NC-258](#); [NC-260](#); [NC-262](#)). These sessions have fostered curiosity, enthusiasm, and stakeholder buy-in. This commitment is reflected in the Team's progress toward ambitious goals and in the steady engagement of faculty and staff on the HLC Assessment Academy Team ([NC-001](#); [NC-244](#)).

Core Component 4.C.

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

4.C.1.

The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.

The College began systematically collecting retention, persistence, and completion data during participation in Achieving the Dream (AtD) ([NC-307](#)). Although no longer part of AtD, North Central advanced the collection and use of these metrics, regularly reviewing outcomes to set ambitious yet attainable goals. Recently, the College underscored this commitment by developing a 5-year Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan ([NC-169](#)) in collaboration with internal stakeholders ([NC-100 p. 7](#)) to align goals with its mission, student demographics, and educational offerings. The SEM's primary objective is to foster a student-centric approach, promoting inclusive access, persistence, and success for all students ([NC-169 p. 1](#)). To support this initiative, the College hired a data analyst ([NC-115 p. 22](#)) to develop PERC PowerBI dashboards, accessible on SharePoint ([NC-176](#)), furthering its strategic goal of enhancing student success ([NC-002 p. 7](#)).

The PERC data dashboard plays a central role in advancing the College's strategic goal of improving student success by enhancing persistence, enrollment, retention, and completion ([NC-002 p. 7](#)). This tool allows stakeholders to set and track outcomes for the SEM Plan, disaggregating PERC data by student cohorts (e.g., new-to-North Central, FTIAC, Dual) and demographics ([NC-308](#); [NC-075](#)). The dashboard also provides four to five years of historical data, enabling trend analysis across admissions, course success, transfer, and graduation outcomes. This enhanced tracking capability allows the College to monitor student population outcomes more effectively and better target strategies to support student success.

The College has refined its timeline for achieving its goals. Between 2015 and 2021, it did not meet its three-year persistence and retention targets ([NC-309](#)). Now, with a five-year timeline and collaboratively designed action items through the SEM planning process, the College is confident in meeting the goals established in the SEM plan.

Using the data dashboards, the College has set the following five-year goals for degree-seeking students ([NC-169](#)):

- Persistence (Fall-to-Winter): increase by 4% to a 79% persistence rate.

- Retention (Fall-to-Fall): increase by 4% to 55% retention rate.
- Three-Year Completion Rate (degree completion): increase by 4% to 35% three-year completion rate.

4.C.2.

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

The College regularly collects and analyzes success outcomes for its overall student population, specific programs, and various cohorts, such as new-to-North Central, degree-seeking, Early College, and dual-enrollment students. These cohorts are further analyzed by demographics, including gender, race/ethnicity, age, Pell status, and first-generation status. Analysis is conducted on weekly, semesterly, yearly, and 5-year cycles as described below.

The PERC data dashboards are updated continuously as new outcome data becomes available ([NC-176 p. 2](#)). However, SEM goal monitoring is conducted annually by the Student Success Committee and the Cabinet. Additionally, IR is developing other dashboards, including a Program Review dashboard, to further support strategic insights ([NC-092](#); [NC-234](#); [NC-310](#)).

In addition, student outcome data is analyzed through the program review process. Historically, the College used the Academic Program Review Planning (APPR) template when conducting a program review ([NC-311](#)). The APPR included analysis of enrollment (disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and age), course pass rates, course success rates, graduates, transfers, and completion rates.

As mentioned earlier in 3.A. and 4.A., the College is enhancing its program review process through a pilot process, an essential step in effective change management ([NC-312](#)). With new policies in place ([NC-234](#); [NC-313](#); [NC-203](#); [NC-314](#)), including an updated schedule, timeline, and resources, the College is testing and revising its practices. This trial spans two cohorts: Group 1 completed program review on September 1, 2024, and Group 2 will complete it by September 1, 2025. Based on Group 1 feedback, the process, now called Review of Academic Programs (RAP), emphasizes reflection, prompting faculty and academic deans to consider how program outcomes inform improvements in student learning, a change implemented for Group 2 ([NC-204](#); [NC-203](#)). Additionally, the new 6-year program review schedule aligns with the course, program, and institutional learning outcome assessment cycle, supporting a comprehensive, systematic assessment of student learning ([NC-234](#)).

Various groups across the College actively analyze student outcome data. For example, the Registrar's Office distributes persistence and retention reports at the start of each

semester, sharing these by email with all faculty and staff ([NC-315](#)). Additionally, IPEDS and CEPI STARR (Michigan) student outcomes are posted on the College website and intranet ([NC-317](#); [NC-176](#)). IR also reviews the annual IPEDS Data Feedback Report and CEPI STARR dashboards with the Cabinet ([NC-114](#)) as well as other faculty and staff ([NC-209](#)). The Academic Affairs Leadership Team ([NC-318](#)) and the Cabinet ([NC-319](#)) monitor application and enrollment through weekly reports ([NC-320](#); [NC-321](#)).

4.C.3.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted college success rates nationally, statewide, and at North Central ([NC-322 p. 1](#); [NC-322 p. 10](#); [NC-268](#)). However, since then, North Central has seen steady increases in persistence, retention, and completion over the past three years ([NC-268](#)). Several initiatives were implemented during this period to enhance student success outcomes.

Application Tracking: Timely conversion of applicants to registered students is essential for building enrollment, so the College tracks this process in several ways as students progress through the pipeline. As mentioned previously, Cabinet and the Academic Affairs Leadership Team monitor applications by student type, acceptance status, location, division, and program each week ([NC-320](#)). When trends show a particular student group or program falling behind compared to the previous year, targeted interventions are planned. For example, now, IR provides additional reports to academic deans which include applicant enrollment rates and applicant contact information ([NC-346](#)). Deans and faculty use this information to send letters to students ([NC-323](#)). Other improvements have been made to the application process including integrating Salesforce's JRM admissions software and adding a first-generation student question to the application for dual students.

Enrollment Tracking: During enrollment periods, the College carefully compiles and tracks student registrations. One element of this is a running comparison of the current semester with the same semester (Fall or Winter) one year previously. The College developed a useful report for comparison ([NC-321](#)) with which one can quickly compare the current semester's progress with last year's. Graphs are prepared to compare headcount, credit/contact hour, and revenue year-to-year. These weekly reports are shared with the Cabinet and Academic Affairs Leadership Team ([NC-318](#); [NC-319](#)). The College also tracks semester enrollment and adjusts courses scheduling prior to the start of the term. At the course cancelation meeting which occurs prior to the term start date, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs staff meet to determine which courses need to be canceled. From 2019 to 2023, the number of courses the College canceled during these meetings has decreased by 35% ([NC-347](#)). After count date reporting, the Registrar's office compiles several enrollment reports (e.g., [NC-348](#); [NC-012](#)). These reports spur

discussion and lead to improved processes, for example, in course scheduling and declared-major policy.

Returning Student Analysis and Intervention: In addition to weekly enrollment reports, the College does "checks" on current students returning in the following semester by comparing current and subsequent student enrollments, considering graduations. IR provides these persistence and retention reports to the Student Success Coordinator who then reaches out to students. This is typically done several times both for fall-to-winter and winter-to-fall retention ([NC-324](#)).

Workshops: IR hosts workshops for employees across campus to learn about student outcomes data. Workshop topics include Dashboard Data Literacy, Course Completion and Withdraw Rates, Challenging Assumptions with CCSSE Student Services Data ([NC-209](#)).

Persistence and Retention Efforts: The College uses the enrollment data described above to inform strategies and tactics to improve persistence and retention. In 2021, following the COVID-19 pandemic and a decline in enrollment, the College hired its first student success coordinator ([NC-115 p. 16](#)), and in 2023 and 2024, partnered with the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) ([NC-325](#)) to place three student completion coaches on North Central's campus. As described in 3.D., these positions provide critical support for student learning and success. For example, the Student Success Coordinator utilizes the Starfish Early Alert software which the College adopted in 2021 to monitor student success tracking items and provide additional support to students.

In addition, the College established the Student Success Committee, a cross-functional group of faculty, staff, and administrators focused on stabilizing enrollment by recruiting new students and retaining current students. As outlined in the Committee Charge, this group is guided by a commitment to student success aligned with North Central's mission ([NC-100 p. 7](#)). Several recent outcomes of this committee are:

- Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (2023-2024) ([NC-169](#))
- Employee Professional Development Survey ([NC-167](#))
- Center for Teaching & Learning Proposal 2022-2023 ([NC-455](#))
- Course Withdraw Survey (2021-2022) ([NC-286 pp. 68-70](#))

Within the SEM Plan ([NC-169](#)), action items aimed at increasing persistence, retention, and completion are listed along with indicators of success and the applicable time frame. For example, to increase retention by 4%, the College will implement the following ([NC-169 p. 15](#)):

Action Step	Indicators of Success	Time Frame
Develop and implement a minimum of two Express Registration Walk-in days for current North Central students in the fall and winter semesters during the first two weeks of open enrollment.	Weekly enrollment reports, attendance reporting of express registration days.	Implement over the five years and evaluate annually.

Another recent example of using enrollment data to improve persistence and retention is the College's registration button and banner campaign which started in 2023 (NC-349). During course registration periods, employees wear magnetic registration buttons which remind students to register for classes. Since this intervention, enrollment, persistence, and retention have steadily increased (NC-321; NC-326).

Lastly, the College uses a program review process to review student persistence, retention, and completion of academic programs and act upon findings. This process and its outcomes are detailed in 3.A.1, 3.A.3, and 4.A.1.

4.C.4.

The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Retention, persistence, and completion data are collected and maintained with validity and reliability, grounded in the Jenzabar (J1) database, which stores all student information. Data are collected using parameters defined by Michigan's Center for Education Performance Indicators (CEPI) (NC-327; NC-328) and the National Center for Education Statistics (IPEDS) (NC-329). Data are collected throughout the year for various CEPI and IPEDS surveys (NC-330).

The College uses CEPI (NC-327; NC-328) and IPEDS (NC-331) as its primary tool and guide for data analysis methodology. Within both the CEPI and IPEDS reports, validation systems are in place to identify anomalies and errors.

The College also uses CEPI and IPEDS definitions and methodology to guide internal research. For example, when the College analyzes “student success” it uses the CEPI definition and methodology to analyze the rates at which degree-seeking cohorts complete a credential at the College or transfer to a four-year university or college. Internal analysis is validated by comparing with CEPI outcomes ([NC-332](#)). Internal data analysis is also shared and tracked through the PERC dashboard ([NC-268](#)).

In addition, the College uses additional external data reports, such as the College Scorecard and Michigan’s Pathfinder, to inform its analysis of student enrollment, retention, and completion ([NC-209](#); [NC-114](#); [NC-317](#)). CEPI, IPEDS, the College Scorecard, and Michigan’s Pathfinder each provide useful tools for comparing and benchmarking student outcomes by institution.

IR is currently evaluating additional benchmarking tools including joining the National Community College Benchmark Project, participating in the Richmond Fed Survey of Community College Outcomes, and utilizing the Aspen Prize Community College Benchmarking Tool.

Core Component 4 Summary

North Central is committed to teaching, learning, and continuous improvement of educational programs, environments, and support services. The College ensures program quality through a systematic, 6-year program review cycle involving faculty, deans, and administrators. This process assesses learning outcomes, program vitality, and resources, using data to guide decisions, improve quality, or inactivate programs. Specialized accreditation, such as for Nursing and EMS, complements internal reviews, ensuring high standards.

Assessment processes align course (CLO), program (PLO), and institutional (ILO) learning outcomes, supported by new curriculum mapping and assessment plans piloted through the HLC Assessment Academy. Faculty-led initiatives include revising learning outcomes, enhancing assessment methodologies, and integrating data collection in the Brightspace LMS to improve learning. Reports guide faculty in identifying areas for improvement, such as revising assignments or instructional methods.

The College tracks persistence, enrollment, retention, and completion through PERC data dashboards and aligns goals with its Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan. Efforts like early interventions, student success coordinators, and data-informed decision-making have yielded progress, increasing success rates.

North Central leverages external standards, like IPEDS and CEPI, for data validation and benchmarking, ensuring methodologies reflect best practices. Stakeholder engagement,

professional development, and an evolving culture of assessment underscore the College's commitment to educational excellence and student success.

Criterion 5 – Institutional Effectiveness, Resources & Planning

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

Core Component 5.A.

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

5.A.1.

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

North Central is committed to collaborative governance which begins with the Board of Trustees whose duties are outlined in their Bylaws ([NC-118](#)). These bylaws set forth rules and directions for the functioning and government of the Board and for the control and governance of the College.

The Board meets monthly in public sessions. Agendas and subsequent minutes are posted on the College website ([NC-011](#)). At the Board meetings, representatives from faculty, staff, and students provide reports, as reflected in the minutes ([NC-011](#)). These meetings offer opportunities for public comment and updates on College initiatives and student success. Student success items include hearing from student organizations such as Phi Theta Kappa ([NC-011 p. 72](#)), Residence Hall Advisors ([NC-011 p. 69](#)), and Student Senate leadership ([NC-011 p. 196](#)). Employees and departments who have executed a significant project or program are recognized and report on their successes ([NC-011 p. 45](#)).

Shared governance is practiced across campus through various committees, task forces, and working groups ([NC-100](#)) and student groups. The President's Cabinet, which includes Vice Presidents and the HR Director, meets regularly to bring insights from different areas of the College ([NC-319](#)). The Strategic Planning and Assessment Team (SPAT) leads strategic planning efforts, updating the College's mission, vision, and goals with input from

key campus leaders who represent a broad spectrum of constituencies ([NC-010](#)). The curriculum committee (CRD/AP) reviews, approves, and recommends curriculum and academic policy while the HLC Assessment Academy team collaborates with stakeholders to design and implement assessment and program review structures ([NC-001](#)). The Institutional Research Committee (IRC) recommends research protocols and supports data-informed decision making ([NC-168](#); [NC-153](#)), and the Student Success Committee provides direction on strategic enrollment and student success ([NC-169](#); [NC-170](#)). The Distance Learning Committee provides oversight on quality standards for online learning at the College ([NC-173](#)). Regarding student governance, the Student Senate meets regularly with the President and advocates for student concerns ([NC-188](#)). Other student groups, like Phi Theta Kappa ([NC-178](#)), the Student Nurses Association ([NC-174](#)), and others, also contribute to governance through their advisors.

5.A.2.

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

The administration uses data-driven decision-making to benefit the College and its stakeholders. The College, through various committees and teams, reviews student success data ([NC-170](#)), financial reports ([NC-038](#)), and student ([NC-081](#)) and employee surveys ([NC-117](#)) to inform planning. Weekly reports from the Associate Dean of Institutional Research and Assessment help the College stay updated on key metrics like enrollment and application trends ([NC-175](#)).

North Central also uses the PERC Data Dashboards ([NC-176](#)), which provide 4-5 years of data to monitor student persistence, enrollment, retention, and completion. The Institutional Research Committee supports data literacy and research needs across campus. The PACE Climate Survey ([NC-117](#)), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) ([NC-076](#)), state and federal reports including CEPI ([NC-177](#)), IPEDS ([NC-128](#)), and the College Scorecard ([NC-179](#)) help in understanding student and employee experiences, guiding improvements ([NC-114](#)).

These data tools inform decisions that support the institution and its constituents. For example, the College uses regional and national labor market data to plan to expand curricular offerings ([NC-020](#)). When developing programs, academic deans submit a proposal to the CRD/AP Committee that details potential areas/sectors of employment for graduates ([NC-142 p. 7](#)). As part of the program review process ([NC-213](#)), academic deans and faculty complete a Review of Academic Programs (RAP) form ([NC-203](#)) which includes student enrollment, outcome, and program efficiency data. Previous iterations of this process were called Academic Planning and Program Review (APPR) ([NC-216](#)).

Student Success Committee members track strategic enrollment and outcome targets using the PERC data dashboard ([NC-176](#)) and the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM)

plan ([NC-169](#)). Data is also used to inform student success equity initiatives such as the Indigenous Learner Excellence Initiative ([NC-215](#)) in development by a 10-person group from North Central attending the 2024 MCCA Student Success Summit.

When applying for institutional grants, data is used to demonstrate purpose, demand, and targets for improving student success. For example, in a recent Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) grant proposal to remove barriers for student-parents, the College demonstrated the need to support student-parent success using enrollment, success outcomes, and survey data ([NC-200 pp. 6, 7, 10](#)). In another proposal through the State of Michigan's Diversified Workforce Grant ([NC-214](#)), the college used regional poverty, employment, income, demographics, cost of attendance, financial aid, and licensure completion data to demonstrate the need to support EMS student tuition costs.

The College also uses data to monitor and strengthen campus climate. In 2024, the College administered the PACE climate survey. Findings show that employee teamwork, focus on students, and commitment to the College mission positively impact campus climate. Climate factors to improve include institutional structure, change readiness, and a greater focus on student success outcomes. Within the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan, the College has used the PACE climate survey data to set targets, plan action, and monitor success ([NC-002 p. 29](#)).

5.A.3.

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

Faculty, staff, and students play an active role in setting academic requirements and policies. The Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee ([NC-100 p. 4](#)) oversees course and program revisions, working closely with faculty and administration. This Committee reviews and recommends new programs and policies, ensuring they align with our academic goals. CRD/AP functions under several Board policies related to academics, including (#213) Academic Degrees, Programs & Courses, (#214) General Education, (#215) Program Review, and (#216) Outcomes Assessment ([NC-066 pp. 27-28](#)).

Core Component 5.B.

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

5.B.1.

The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

North Central's resource base is comprised of three major components: (1) the faculty, staff, and administration of the College – the human capital; (2) cash and investments – the financial capital; and (3) infrastructure – the physical and technological capital. Each component supports the delivery of academic and co-curricular programs and helps build for the future.

The development of a qualified workforce at North Central begins with Human Resources, which uses a standardized position description to ensure all positions, regardless of type, have clear job descriptions outlining duties, responsibilities, and minimum qualifications ([NC-189](#)). Hiring is conducted by committees that recommend candidates to supervisors, with some hires requiring Board approval. Background and reference checks, including academic transcripts, are standard.

Human Resources provides annual campus-wide training ([NC-190](#)), while other professional development includes programs like Real Talk ([NC-060](#)), the HLC Assessment Academy ([NC-001](#)), and leadership development with Libby Wagner ([NC-191](#)). The Campus Security Committee also conducts periodic safety training ([NC-192](#)).

The College supports professional development for its faculty and staff. Faculty professional development at North Central is outlined in the collective bargaining agreement, with \$950 allocated annually per full-time faculty member, allowing them to accumulate up to \$3,800 over 4 years ([NC-013 p. 41](#)). Faculty can also apply for sabbatical leave, following the collective bargaining guidelines ([NC-013 p. 31](#)). Vice presidents also allocate professional development funds for their staff in their budgets. The College offers additional support through Educational Excellence and Tuition Reimbursement funds, which are open to all employees ([NC-194](#)). The College actively uses professional conferences for the continuous development of our employees, such as the HLC Annual Conference, the Michigan Community College Association Student Success Summit, and the Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching ([NC-193](#)).

Since 2019, the College has made significant capital and infrastructure investments:

- **Borra Learning Center (BLC):** A \$7.4 million renovation and expansion completed in 2021, funded by State Capital Outlay and Foundation matching funds to improve the College’s primary classroom and administration building ([NC-068](#)).
- **BLC HVAC:** A \$1.7 million project, using federal HEERF funds and College reserves, completed in 2023-24 ([NC-171 p. 77](#)).
- **CATEE Project:** A \$22 million renovation of the Health Education and Science Center building and construction of a new Technology Center building, funded by grants, reserves, and bond proceeds, set for completion in 2026 ([NC-133](#)).
- **ITEMS Funding:** \$470,000 in state funding for deferred maintenance and electric vehicle charging stations in 2023-24 ([NC-198](#)).
- **Classroom Technology:** \$1 million in HEERF funds were invested in 2022 for classroom tech upgrades ([NC-171](#)).
- **Technological Infrastructure:** Over \$1 million will be spent in 2023-24 on software and hardware, funded by student fees and reserves ([NC-199](#)).

The College submits annual infrastructure reports to the State, including the 5-year Capital Outlay Plan ([NC-020](#)) and Facilities Condition Assessment ([NC-456](#)), which are posted on the website.

5.B.2.

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

The goals presented in North Central’s Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002 p. 7](#)) are growth-oriented and focused on moving the College forward: (1) increase student success; (2) update and expand academic programming (3) foster employee engagement; and (4) grow to be the region’s community leader in areas of sustainability and community collaboration. SPAT designed these strategic goals using an environmental scan, SWOT analysis, and a detailed action plan that they regularly monitor and update to ensure goals are realistic.

Through the College’s Strive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002](#)), we advance student success by strengthening student support systems and services. For example, the College has committed financial resources to people to accomplish this work. The 2024-25 budget ([NC-039](#)) reflected a 5.7% increase from the previous year in salaries and benefits, including new positions to support student success ([NC-115](#)).

The CATEE Project ([NC-133](#)) is a commitment to build infrastructure to advance health sciences and career/technical education. CATEE significantly expands North Central's healthcare, manufacturing, and skilled trades programs, focuses on updates to the College's Health Education and Science Center (HESC), and develops a state-of-the-art Technology Center.

The College has fostered employee engagement by successfully implementing actions from the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan, such as a Flexible Work Options Policy (#425) ([NC-066 p. 79](#)) and the Persistence, Enrollment, Retention, and Completion (PERC) data dashboard ([NC-176](#)). Actions such as these provide a greater sense of belonging for employees at the College.

The College is the leader in a variety of community initiatives, such as the Comprehensive Child Care Initiative (CCI) ([NC-023](#)) through fundraising and providing expertise. CCI is leading the development of a community-centered plan for a sustainable, viable local childcare system in Emmet County, Michigan.

5.B.3.

The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.

The Director of Business Services and the Vice President of Finance and Facilities are charged with the development of the General Fund Budget. They work independently with budget managers from across the College ([NC-180](#)) to create our \$19 million budget. Each year in March, budget managers receive a planning document with multi-year data for their accounts ([NC-195](#)), which they use to create the next fiscal year's budget and adjust the current one ([NC-207](#)). During March and April, the Director of Business Services and the Vice President of Finance and Facilities meet with each budget manager to ensure their financial plans support operations.

The Director of Business Services and the Vice President of Finance and Facilities update the budget for salary increases based on percentage and step increases from the collective bargaining agreements; proposed percentage increases for non-union employees; realistic and conservative revenue projections for tuition and fees (based on 5-year trend data and the approved tuition rates), property taxes (based on the prior year adjusted valuations), and State appropriations (the most difficult given the fact that the State budget is never finalized until much later). This results in a first draft of the budget. Many rounds of adjustments follow until a balanced budget is finalized.

The Board's Finance and Facilities Committee reviews and recommends the proposed budget to the full Board of Trustees ([NC-172](#)). At the May 2024 Board meeting, for example, the Committee chair made a motion to approve the budget, and the full Board approved

the fiscal year 2024/25 budget ([NC-011 p. 50](#)). Tuition and room and board rates are set for the following academic year at January Board meetings as demonstrated in the January 2024 Board minutes ([NC-011 p. 90](#)).

Overall, the General Fund Budget process is supportive, informative, and productive. Budget Managers can monitor their accounts in real time using a portal that grants access to only their budget items. The Business Office staff produce monthly financial statements that are reviewed and analyzed by the Director of Business Services and the Vice President of Finance & Facilities. Then, the financial statements for all funds ([NC-182](#)) are reviewed at the Finance Committee meetings each month. Finally, a financial report on the General Fund is made at the Board meeting each month by the Vice President of Finance & Facilities, ensuring accountability and transparency ([NC-183](#)).

5.B.4.

The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

As demonstrated in the 2022-2023 Michigan Community College Data Inventory (MCCDI) ([NC-201](#)), the College allocates most of its expenses (54.41%) to instruction and student services ensuring achievement of the College's educational purpose. Examples of instructional and student services financial allocations include:

- The College has allocated resources to improve student persistence and retention through student success coaches and other support staff ([NC-115](#)). Persistence and retention are key metrics in the College's Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan ([NC-169](#)).
- Since May 2022, the College has offered Fast Track non-credit workforce training programs ([NC-037](#)). The combination of State grants and Foundation financial support helped make many of these certification and credentialing programs free or low-cost to students ([NC-129](#)).
- The College allocates financial resources to ensure Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) ([NC-184](#)) and the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accreditation for Nursing and EMS/Paramedic programs ([NC-185](#)).
- Through the Library, the College purchases and loans laptops, hotspots, and calculators to students, increasing access and success ([NC-070](#)).

The College has a strategic goal to improve facilities and technology to increase student success (Action Plan 1.3.a.) ([NC-002 p. 28](#)). The MCCDI inventory report also illustrates the College's fiscal commitment to this goal ([NC-201](#)).

Core Component 5.C.

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

5.C.1.

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

As described in 5.B.4., the College allocates resources in alignment with the mission statement and institutional goals, while remaining focused on commitment to its people (#1), programs (#2), and places (#3). The alignment and integration of the College's Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan, operations, and budget are depicted in the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan Alignment graphic ([NC-186](#)). This graphic is used by members of the President's Cabinet and SPAT and has been presented and discussed during All Campus Meetings.

The College's Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002](#)), outlined in Criterion 1.A., ensures resource alignment through quarterly monitoring and updates. The year-to-year strategic performance instrument ([NC-006](#)), managed by Vice Presidents, tracks progress toward the College's four strategic priorities: student success, academics, investment in people, and leadership. The instrument demonstrates progress toward meeting the College's mission and priorities.

5.C.2.

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

The College connects its assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, and planning and budgeting through the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan. Assessment of student learning informs strategic goals and annual objectives. Committees, program reviews, and student surveys are used to evaluate student learning, guiding decisions on operations, planning, and budgeting.

The Student Success Committee created the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan ([NC-169](#)), which sets targets and outlines operations needed to achieve persistence, enrollment, retention, and completion (PERC) targets; these targets are embedded in the College's Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan in Strategic Goal 1: Increase Student Success ([NC-002 p. 27](#)). Specific departments and divisions plan and implement these actions and are supported by a budget. As one example, the College is evaluating the efficacy of a student 1:1 technology initiative currently being piloted in the Nursing program. The Office of

Institutional Research & Assessment monitors the impact on student learning and success ([NC-202](#)).

Stakeholders across the College use student outcome data (e.g., enrollment, persistence, retention, completion) to inform operational decisions on how to improve student learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the College used Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) to purchase technology equipment (e.g., laptops, hotspots, webcams) for students to check out from the library ([NC-070](#)). As enrollment declined ([NC-217](#)), these resources were critical for offering education and for fostering a sense of belonging ([NC-219](#)). The College continues to collect data ([NC-220](#); [NC-336](#); [NC-459](#)) to monitor the impact on student learning and inform operational, planning, and budget decisions ([NC-181](#)).

Faculty and divisional leaders review programs every 6 years, including program learning outcomes, course and program success metrics, scheduling, and resources. As discussed in 3.A. and 4.A., reviewers use program metrics to consider opportunities to improve student learning, including operations and allocation of resources; they find this data very useful in the program review process ([NC-204 pp. 15, 19](#)). In some cases, faculty and deans request operational funding ([NC-205 p. 1](#)), and in other cases, they recommend sunseting a program ([NC-205 p. 4](#)). The Vice President for Academic Affairs reviews these requests and provides feedback ([NC-205](#)). The Nursing Faculty, through the scholarship of discovery, continually develops and proposes curricular changes to keep the program up to date on best practices. As a result of program review ([NC-218 p. 31](#)), the College invested in Hurst Review Services. The Nursing Program often achieves a 100% pass rate for its graduates ([NC-021](#)). These assessments of student learning are linked to the strategic goal of updating and expanding academic programming ([NC-002 p. 29](#)).

The College uses surveys to gauge students' perspectives on their learning and engagement. These survey results guide operational, planning, and budgeting decisions. For example, in the Winter 2022 Student Support survey ([NC-221](#)), students expressed a need for mental health support. In response, the College's Phi Theta Kappa chapter now hosts mental health workshops with the College's counselor ([NC-222](#)), the library hosts therapy dogs at the end of each semester ([NC-208](#)), and the College offers a Zen Den for students ([NC-223](#)). The College also administers the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), which revealed a need to strengthen tutoring services. Based on CCSSE results ([NC-076](#)), and additional focus groups ([NC-224](#)), the Institutional Research Committee and the Tutoring and Testing Center Manager are reviewing potential opportunities for operational and budget improvements. These surveys also highlight the need to support students' sense of belonging, leading to continued investment in Real Talk pedagogy ([NC-093](#)). These assessments align with the strategic goal of improving student success ([NC-002 p. 27](#)).

To evaluate quarterly progress toward these Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan goals, the College utilizes a Progress Review Performance Tracker ([NC-005](#)). The Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan

provides an example of how action plans are linked to key performance indicators, including assessment of student learning, evaluations of operations, planning, and budgeting ([NC-002 p. 27](#)).

5.C.3.

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

The planning process at the College includes input from all internal constituents as referenced in Core Components 1.A.1., 1.A.2., and 5.A.1.

The publicly elected Board of Trustees represents both internal and key external constituents, overseeing college operations from the public's perspective. Additionally, over 30 faculty and staff engage with more than 125 community organizations, representing the College and addressing important local issues, often giving presentations to community groups ([NC-139](#)).

External constituent groups, such as program advisory committees ([NC-103](#); [NC-107](#); [NC-108](#); [NC-109](#); [NC-110](#); [NC-111](#); [NC-112](#)), business and industry partnerships, state, local, and community partnerships, and the President's Commission ([NC-104](#)) also have input. The President's Commission is made up of community and business leaders who convene twice annually at the College. Participation takes the form of working sessions to provide a context for strengthening our regional thinking, visioning, and influencing the College's future ([NC-104](#)).

5.C.4.

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

As noted throughout 5.B., the College endeavors to ensure that proposed budgets are reasonably accurate and developed using conservative revenue estimates for tuition, local taxes, and state appropriations. The College also uses a variety of other resources to fully understand current capacity, including any fluctuations in the institution's revenue sources and enrollment.

Campus Master Plan: Making use of the Campus Master Plan is one way to understand North Central's capacity. The current Campus Master Plan was revised in 2019 to guide future campus planning and address academic change and aging facilities ([NC-009](#)).

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan: To increase our persistence, enrollment, retention, and completion (PERC), which is outlined in Strategic Plan Goal 1.1, a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan was created ([NC-169](#)). The SEM Plan utilizes

disaggregated PERC data ([NC-209](#)) selected by the Student Success Committee to identify the greatest opportunities for improvement.

Application and Enrollment Reports: North Central's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment prepares weekly application and enrollment reports that are utilized to continually adjust marketing and recruitment efforts. These reports compare numbers of weekly applications and enrollments to prior years by headcount, contact hours and credit hours as well as by various types of student profiles ([NC-175](#)). North Central's Registrar also prepares weekly enrollment reports that compare numbers of weekly enrollments to prior years by headcount, contact hours, and credit hours. These reports include data on the number of students who have been advised, enrollment comparisons by county, and the number of students enrolled in each of North Central's three locations in Petoskey, Gaylord, and Cheboygan ([NC-315](#)). To positively impact possible enrollment shortfalls in advance of semester enrollment windows closing, these reports are studied and then discussed during the standing enrollment/retention portion of every weekly Cabinet meeting, along with action plans to proactively address potential issues.

Millage Expansion: In 2016, Emmet County taxpayers passed two operating millages for North Central. The next Emmet County operating millage will appear on the ballot in 2026. Consideration has also been given to adding Charlevoix County to the College's service area through an annexation vote possibly appearing on a 2027 ballot. If passed, this would enhance the College's service to Charlevoix area residents and provide additional resources for the College.

Career and Technical Education Enhancement (CATEE) project: North Central is expanding to increase its capacity for tomorrow's workforce through its \$22 million Career and Technical Education Enhancement (CATEE) project ([NC-133](#)) to revolutionize education in healthcare, manufacturing, and skilled trades – three pivotal sectors shaping our regional, state and national economies. Michigan's call for healthcare professionals is urgent with a projected 33% increase in healthcare jobs over the next decade. North Central's expansion is more than desirable; it is essential. The College's existing programs excel, but to meet rising demand, additional space is needed. The CATEE project will provide for:

- **High Fidelity Lab Expansion:** Doubling the College's simulation drill capacity for hands-on, practical learning.
- **Classroom Growth:** Four new classrooms for larger student cohorts, dedicated EMS space, and specialized nursing programs.
- **Skills Lab Innovation:** A cutting-edge skills lab to ensure the College's students are industry ready.

The College, therefore, initiates plans and continually monitors progress based on a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.

5.C.5.

Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.

A reference list of resources used to aid in the strategic planning process is included in the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan in the References section ([NC-002 p. 33](#)). Technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy, and state support inform environmental scans and SWOT analyses and are used to continually update the College's Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan ([NC-002](#)) as evidenced in Core Component 1.A.2.

Demographic shifts, in part, can impact class sizes, campus locations, and programming. North Central's planning includes anticipation of demographic factors to stay current with the environment. Extension centers in Cheboygan and Gaylord were opened in 1973 ([NC-196](#)). In September 2017, North Central moved its Gaylord center to a new location in part due to an increasingly strong Early College relationship with Gaylord public schools. This new facility occupies a renovated elementary school on the same campus as the middle school in Gaylord.

Effective August of 2021, North Central's Cheboygan Center relocated to Cheboygan Area High School due, in part, to a move that will provide Cheboygan High School students with direct access to North Central courses and college advising, which is an essential part of student satisfaction and retention. The partnership between the College and Cheboygan Area Schools will make CAHS the hub for secondary and collegiate education in Cheboygan County. The College's move back to CAHS will enhance our ability to provide onsite advising and support services to both our incoming and current students, and the partnership opportunities presented by this move will benefit the entire Cheboygan community.

5.C.6.

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

The institution tracks the implementation of its plans in a number of ways. The College monitors the implementation of the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan through the Progress Review Performance Tracker ([NC-005](#)). The Performance Tracker identifies to whom the action is assigned and when the action is due, and tracks quarterly progress updates and year-end performance outcomes. As illustrated in the Year-to-Year Strategic Performance instrument ([NC-006](#)), the College fully implemented (Met) 49% of the 2023-2024 strategic

objectives and partially implemented (Partially Met) another 23%. The College shares these resources and progress updates with stakeholders at All-Campus meetings ([NC-210](#)) and Board of Trustees meetings ([NC-011 p. 127](#); [NC-011 p. 184](#)).

The HLC Assessment Academy Team follows its Goals, Objectives, and Timeline plan ([NC-001](#)) to guide its work and update stakeholders on progress. As one example, in Winter 2024, the Team implemented its plan to have faculty design their 2024-2025 assessments using HLC Assessment Academy resources. Through a series of assessment days ([NC-286](#)), the Team, in collaboration with faculty, achieved this objective ([NC-213](#)). Feedback from the HLC Assessment Academy mentor and scholar ([NC-225](#)), along with the Goals, Objectives, and Timeline, indicates the Team is successfully enhancing the College's assessment structures. The Team shares this plan on the College SharePoint ([NC-211](#)) and during All Campus Meetings ([NC-210 p. 70](#)).

As outlined in 5.C.2, the Student Success Committee identified ways to improve enrollment, persistence, retention, and completion (PERC) in the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan ([NC-169](#)). To monitor the progress of these PERC metrics, the College created the PERC data dashboard. Beginning with the first year of the plan (2024/2025), the Committee will monitor progress through the PERC dashboard and a newly developed SEM report card. These updates will be shared with Cabinet liaisons, who oversee the divisions responsible for implementing the SEM actions.

Systematic technology planning and implementation occurs in several ways. The College is required to comply with the federal Graham Leach Bliley Act, a data security plan, which specifies required provisions. Auditors test it annually to ensure that it works as designed ([NC-038](#)). The Information Technology Department also developed a Classroom Technology Plan ([NC-242](#)) in conjunction with the vendor, AVI. The College used this plan as part of a \$1 million project to upgrade classroom technology using HEERF funding. There is a multi-year network plan to upgrade the campus network ([NC-241](#)). As noted in the plan, upgrades have been implemented in the dormitories as well as other spaces.

Core Component 5 Summary

North Central excels in institutional effectiveness through collaborative governance, data-driven decision-making, and strategic resource planning. Governance engages administrators, faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Trustees in decision-making, with key committees such as the Strategic Planning and Assessment Team (SPAT) and the Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee guiding academic and operational policies. The administration uses comprehensive data systems, including the PERC data dashboard and surveys like CCSSE and PACE to evaluate progress and shape initiatives to improve student success.

Resource allocation aligns with the College's mission to support people, programs, and places. Major investments include the Borra Learning Center, classroom technology upgrades, and the \$22M Career and Technical Education Enhancement (CATEE) project, expanding facilities and programs for healthcare, manufacturing, and skilled trades. Budgeting processes prioritize transparency and sustainability, with the majority of resources directed toward instruction and student services. Data-informed decisions shape program development, enrollment strategies, and workforce training programs.

Strategic planning integrates input from internal and external stakeholders, leveraging demographic analysis and community partnerships. Progress is systematically tracked using tools like the Strategic Plan Tracker and Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) report card, ensuring continuous improvement. North Central's comprehensive approach enhances operations, strengthens student outcomes, and solidifies its role as a regional leader in education, community, and workforce development.