

# Criterion 1 – Mission

## Criterion 1.A.

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

### Argument 1.A.1.

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

North Central Michigan College's mission statement ([NC-003 p. 3](#)) was crafted through a process reflective of our rural community. Led by the Strategic Planning and Assessment Team (SPAT), which includes representatives from various college divisions ([NC-002 p. 20](#)), we engaged various community groups and listened carefully to stakeholders throughout its development.

The 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. 12](#)), 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.

### Argument 1.A.2.

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**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 members, SPAT members, and employees. The 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 strategic 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 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 and business/industry partnership, educational partnerships, and community services.

### Argument 1.A.3.

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**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 forms at multiple locations and online. The vision statement emphasizes our commitment to being a student-centered college, aiming to support our students' varied needs.

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 integrity, excellence, compassion, and inclusion ([NC-003 p. 3](#)).

### Argument 1.A.4.

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***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](#))
- 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](#))
- Child care ([NC-023](#))
- AA in Environmental and Sustainability Studies ([NC-031](#))
- New programs 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 ([NC-020](#))
- 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.

### Argument 1.A.5.

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**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](#)), along with documents like annual reports and strategic plans.

We display these elements on banners stationed on all campus locations. They are also 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-114](#)).

## Criterion 1.B.

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

### Argument 1.B.1.

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**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 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, while boosting the social and economic vitality of its communities.

The College ensures the relevancy of its courses and programs to the public through established academic processes like outcomes assessment ([NC-041](#)), program review ([NC-015](#)), 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/Academic Policies (CRD/AP) committee process (*evidence*) 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 Colleges 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, and exploration of academic and career pathway, 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 Childcare Initiative and CCAMPIS address the childcare shortage with CCAMPIS Advisor services ([NC-046](#)) and activities like North Central playgroups 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. 3](#)). Since first offering the program in May 2022, the program had 80 graduates. A concurrent phlebotomy-only training program had 26 graduates.

### Argument 1.B.2.

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**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 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. 30](#)), Communication ([NC-011 p. 52](#)), History ([NC-011 p. 10](#)), and Nursing ([NC-011 p. 44](#)), 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 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](#)).

### Argument 1.B.3.

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

Goal 4 of the College's 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](#)).

## Criterion 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.

### Argument 1.C.1.

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**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](#)).

The College offers various curricular activities to prepare students for citizenship and workplace success. For example, the College’s curriculum 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 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. ENVIS students have also contributed to local government efforts, identifying a rare, invasive plant species in the College's Natural Area. ([NC-059 p. 73](#))

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 Phi Theta Kappa recently won the national and state "Distinguished Chapter Officer Team Award" in 2024 ([NC-150](#)). 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 to institutionalize curriculum maps, assessment structures, and systematic program ([NC-001](#)) and cocurricular reviews ([NC-064](#)). The HLC Assessment Academy Team holds "Assessment Days" for stakeholders to develop assessment tools that ensure students are well-prepared for citizenship and workplace success ([NC-065](#)).

## Argument 1.C.2.

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### **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 ([NC-066 #300](#)) promote access for all applicants, while its Non-Discriminatory ([NC-066 #408](#)), Title IX Sexual Harassment ([NC-066 #415](#)) and Student Code of Conduct policies ([NC-066 #308](#)) 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 in 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 in 2021 ([NC-068](#)), reflect the College's commitment to access and inclusion. Essential student services like financial aid and advising were centralized for ease of access ([NC-067](#)), learning pods and a Student Commons were added, classroom technology was upgraded ([NC-069](#)), and a 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-072](#)).

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 services staff members; early student success impact data is promising ([NC-048](#), [NC-047](#)).

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 ([NC-066 #413](#)) 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. 30](#)), 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 and employee populations ([NC-043](#)), advocating for inclusive and equitable practices ([NC-075](#); [NC-076](#); [NC-077](#)).

### [Argument 1.C.3.](#)

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**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 ([NC-053 p. 18](#)). The DEI Committee also promotes respect through various initiatives, as highlighted in 1.C.2.



The College recently launched Real Talk ([NC-060](#)), a professional development initiative for student services 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 services, 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 international travel ([NC-049](#)).

Additionally, 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](#)).