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

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

Criterion 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.

Courses

Key for 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 3A, 3B, 3C, and 4B. 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-234) 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, created new co-requisite courses to support College Algebra (MATH 119 as a corequisite for MATH 130), Statistics (STAT 095 as a corequisite for STAT 200), and Quantitative Reasoning (MATH 098 as a co-requisite for MATH 128), and

further adjusted the math curriculum around Beginning and Intermediate Algebra (MATH 110/112) (NC-279 p. 65). 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 (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 an historically ad hoc approach to program review. This schedule emerged through evaluation of program health metrics on enrollment, completion, and other factors (NC-352). The College follows a six-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 4A and 4B) is currently in a pilot phase so that stakeholders can make informed and incremental improvements based on feedback.

The Academic Planning and Program Review (APPR) (NC-229) 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. 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 and coupling stackable credentials to improve workload balance and are in progress in AY 24-25. Looking ahead, later groups will address State Pathways and stackable credential clusters (Group 3), the General Education curriculum, transfer degrees, and stackable credential clusters (Group 4), programs as part of the HLC Assessment Academy Initiative, programs with previously established PLOs, and remaining stackable credential clusters (Group 5).

Curriculum Committee (CRD/AP)

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 p. 65).

Program revision and inactivation historically proceeded ad hoc in response to various issues. As they did not occur because of systematic program assessment and review, observed needs, changes in enrollment, or other factors would typically instantiate the process. On the revision front, for example, the Studio Art C; Business of Art CD; Fine Craft C were all adjusted in 2020 to accommodate 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 p. 70). 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 p. 75) 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 p. 22; 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 Criterion 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) is a Group 1 program whose review indicated needed program adjustments to address curricular obstacles to completion--rotation adjustment; role of pre-requisites; improved flexibility with program electives ENVS Program Review (NC-267). Another Group 1 program, the General Office Professional C, was determined to "lack relevancy in today's job market," and has been slated for sunset and inactivation (NC-355 p. 17). These adjustments, along with others for Group 1 programs, will be presented to CRD/AP for review and approval in AY 24-25.

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 p. 18), exemplifies the College responding 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; 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 will fulfill a portion of the lower-division general education requirements at participating four-year colleges or universities" (emphasis added).

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 so no clear way to establish student proficiency. As a result of Assessment Academy 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 to 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 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 (Preparing for PLO Assessment). This approach recognizes that as a two-year institution, there are fewer instances of pre-requisites 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, then the PLO is considered as having been met (NC-145).

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 32 associate and certificate programs (AAS, AGS, AA, AS, C, CD) and 15 associate degree 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 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 to ensure that program learning goals are clearly defined and that CLOs, PLOs, and ILOs align (NC-001). 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 (Business Management AAS Map; Animation C Map). 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). This PLO design and development is part of a broader HLC Assessment Academy project (NC-001), with a goal to establish defined PLOs and curriculum maps for all 47 programs by 2025. 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 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, 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 propose a new course submit a Master Course Syllabus (MCS) using a standard template (NC-390). The form's first section outlines instructional hours, 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. 15) and the Board of Trustees endorsed in Winter 2023 (NC-011 p. 156). 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 4B. 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 3A, 3B, and 4B.

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, regardless of mode or location (e.g., NC-258). 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 employs Simple Syllabus within its LMS, Brightspace, to ensure consistent quality in student learning. This application automatically populates course learning outcomes, standardizing curriculum across all course sections, delivery modes, and locations. Whether a course section is taught face-to-face or virtually, students engage with the same learning outcomes (NC-164).

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 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 in the modality.

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- and part-time), 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 to ensure quality and consistency for each course taught (*evidence*). 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 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-463; NC-464)

- Standard course syllabi templates through Simple Syllabus (NC-393)

Criterion 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 general education 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 or higher in that GE distribution area, with

Introductory (101) Natural Science courses 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 (Composition sequence) 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 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—hence, the PLOs are also presented there; master syllabi 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 (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 (faculty, staff, and students) about the college's institutional learning outcomes (NC-286 p. 246) with the faculty developing revised ILOs (NC-286 p. 223) based on this input for curriculum committee approval (NC-279 p. 22) and Board of Trustees review and approval (NC-011 p. 56). 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. Here, 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) require 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:

- Global Classroom: Expanding Educational Access to Forcibly Displaced Students (NC-036 p. 3)

- India: A Culturally Rich and Diverse Country (NC-036 p. 5)

- Celebrating the Human Fabric (NC-056 p. 11)

- Polish Family and Culture: Growing Up Polish in Southeast Michigan (NC-036 p. 11)

- Awa Odori: A Traditional Japanese Dance (NC-036 p. 10)

- AI, Biometric Surveillance & Smart Cities: Japan's Society 5.0 and the New Visions of Organization (NC-036 p. 2)

- Winter Is Coming: Russia, Ukraine and Us (NC-036 p. 12)

- Step Up for Ukraine (NC-036 p. 13)

- Sanditon & Bridgerton: Representing Race in the Regency (NC-036 p. 18)

- The Olympic Games and China's International Ambitions (NC-036 p. 14)

- Sacred Landscapes: Discovery and Memory in the Orkney Islands (NC-036 p. 7)

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. 7).

Dr. 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, Dr. Arsnoe has integrated *Project Monarch Health* (PMH) into the BIO 151 and BIO 152 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. Dr.

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, Dr. 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 area of community outreach and citizen science, David Rodgers, Professor of Chemistry and Physics, recently returned to his alma mater at the University of Texas – Dallas, which put on a day-long program highlighting the total solar eclipse of April 8, 2024 (NC-408 pp. 1-5). As a part of this, he participated in explaining to those who had come to campus that day the mechanisms of how solar eclipses occur in general, and special aspects associated with this particular event. (Note: The hyperlinked article mentions he also teaches "astrology," (when it should be "astronomy"), which he has attempted to correct by reaching out to the campus paper; they have yet to issue that correction.)

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-470).

- 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-470 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-470 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-470 pp. 28-35)

In addition to generating peer-reviewed publications, several 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 *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 wider community. In Winter 2023, 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, Instructor 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," Ms. 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). 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. 36). For further information, see Professor Haight's Sabbatical Proposal (NC-418).

Criterion 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 (f2f, online and total). The College employs 119 faculty (35 full-time and 84 part-time), 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 fifteen contact hours a semester (thirty 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 ten 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. 26), 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 (Board Policy #213, NC-066 p. 26)

- General Education (Board Policy #214, NC-066 p. 27)

- Program Review (Board Policy #215, NC-066 p. 27)

- Outcomes Assessment (Assessment of Student Learning) (Board Policy #216, NC-066 p. 28)

- Credit Hour Definition (*evidence* – pending BOT Policy 217)

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), which was most recently revised by 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 for 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 FT Faculty. For example, the recent development of Engineering and Technology curriculum utilized a CRD/AP sub-committee (NC-279 pp. 78-80). Another example provided is the sub-committee group for Early Childhood Education curriculum (NC-279 pp. 8-10). 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 FT 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 3A, 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 Institutional Research & Assessment (IR&A) office 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. 229).

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 web site 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. (from 2023 Interim Report: development of a faculty evaluation process and the evidence of the use of that process)

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-466). 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-467). 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 date of hire and at six-year intervals thereafter. Sabbatical leaves available include summer, full academic year, and 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 exceeds 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-471).

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 FT 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 support services staff are qualified, trained, and supported through professional development. Student services support staff positions generally require a minimum of an associate degree, showing the employee understands the process of applying to, working through requirements, and completing the requirements to be awarded the degree.

Higher level student support 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-459). 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 support services staff play active roles in related professional organizations. These employees contribute to state and national professional organizations through offering presentations, serving in leadership positions, and actively contributing to listserv questions from colleagues (NC-468).

In addition, student support services staff participate in an array of training. Three or more Annual SMART goals are developed per employee, along with 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, counselling, advising, life coaching, time and stress management, and other programs, videos, reading materials and sessions with trained professionals; to support them professionally and personally, including access to counselling 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 $2,500 annually are available for each employee 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).

Criterion 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 supports. 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. 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 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, safe living and learning environment that supports their academic success. Over the past three 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 the 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.

In the 2021-2022 academic year, TCC established a Learning Lab featuring a dedicated study area with whiteboards and resources. The space supports tutoring sessions, group or individual study, and serves as overflow for the math and writing labs.

TCC 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-465).

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.

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 pp. 1-2). North Central's current placement levels for Math and English courses are reflective of this practice. Over the last three 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-454 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-455) and registration day for all new-to-college students (NC-456), North Central Days (NC-457), participation in Student Senate (NC-458), 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-456 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-457). 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-460 p. 1). After each advising appointment, students receive a survey (NC-460 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 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-460 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-460 p. 5) to ensure comprehensive and effective appointment planning. They also develop *Degree Completion Plans* (NC-460 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-461). 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-462). 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-463).

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-464). This course is maintained so that it is available if needed again.

In the Winter 2024 semester, North Central launched Simple Syllabus (NC-393). This syllabus hosting platform integrates with the LMS and automatically prepopulates each syllabus with the current master course syllabus description and learning outcomes, current North Central policies and statements, and a condensed Student Support Services Resource Guide 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.

3.S

Summary

The institution 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 six years, addressing areas like persistence, enrollment, retention, completion, and learning outcomes. Faculty and advisory boards contribute to curricular relevance, leveraging industry insights to evaluate and refine programs. Changes, whether improvements or in-activations, 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.