

North Central Michigan College

HLC ID 1353

OPEN PATHWAY: Reaffirmation Review

Review Date: 3/10/2025

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Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

3/10/2025

Review Type:
Reaffirmation Review

Scope of Review

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

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

On March 10th and 11th, a team of five peer reviewers conducted a comprehensive evaluation for North Central Michigan College (NCMC). Reviewers had access to NCMC’s assurance argument in advance of the on-site review. The on-site review included both open forum sessions as well as more focused sessions related to updates of the efforts described in the interim report to confirm compliance with Core Components 3A, 3C, 4A, and 4B. The evaluation also included a Federal Compliance Review.

Interactions with Constituencies

HLC Team Visit – North Central Michigan College

March 10, 2025

Board of Trustees Meeting

President

Three board members

Cabinet Meeting

President

VP of Academic Affairs

VP of Finance & Facilities

VP of Student Affairs

VP of Marketing & Strategy

VP for Advancement/Executive Director

Human Resource Director

Executive Assistant to President and Board of Trustees

Open Forum: Criteria 1 & 2

President

VP of Academic Affairs

VP of Finance & Facilities

VP for Advancement/Executive Director

Associate Dean of Institutional Research & Assessment

Annual Giving and Alumni Coordinator

Human Resource Director

Human Resources Administrator

Gift Officer

Outreach Recruiter

Registrar

Assistant Registrar

Director of Manufacturing

CCAMPIS Advisor & Activity Coordinator

Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design

Gift Officer

Executive Assistant to President and BOT

Executive Assistant to VP of Academic Affairs

VP of Student Affairs

Admission Specialist

Financial Aid State Program Administrator

Interim Director of Financial Aid

Financial Aid Associate

Custodian

Professor of Mathematics

Professor of Political Science

Career Development Specialist

CNC Instructor

Communications Instructor

Professor of Early Childhood Education

Administrative Assistant to the VP of Finance & Facilities

Instructional Specialist

Dean of Arts & Sciences

Academic Advisor

Dean of Business, Education, and Adjunct Faculty

Outreach Recruiter

Director of IT

Systems Engineer

Mathematics Instructor

Tutoring and Testing Center Manager

Librarian

Grants Manager

VP of Marketing & Strategy

Communications and Public Relations Manager

Digital Marketing Manager

Athletic Director

EMS Instructor and Program Director

Dean of Corporate and Community Education

Digital Marketing Administrator

Sports Information Director

Instructional Designer

Outreach Recruiter

Counselor

Professor of Nursing

Director of Campus Housing

Professor of Marketing

Professor of Human Biology

Nursing Instructor

Dean of Nursing, Health Sciences and Public Safety Programs

Student Success Coordinator

Professor of Psychology

Assessment Session

VP of Academic Affairs

VP of Student Affairs

Director of Manufacturing

Administrative Assistant to the VP of Finance & Facilities

Instructional Specialist

Registrar

Institutional Research & Assessment Data Analyst

Associate Dean of Institutional Research & Assessment

Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design

History - Faculty

Professor of Political Science

Professor of Economics

English – Faculty

CNC Instructor

Professor of Art and Design

Dean of Business, Education, and Adjunct Faculty

Professor of English

Dean of Arts & Sciences

Nursing – Faculty

Director of Campus Housing

Nursing-Faculty

Librarian

Professor of Mathematics

Mathematics – Faculty

EMS Instructor and Program Director

Professor of Human Biology

Tutoring and Testing Center Manager

Professor of Psychology

Computer Information Systems – Instructor

Student Success Coordinator

Professor of Accounting

Counselor

Dean of Nursing, Health Sciences and Public Safety Programs

Professor of Chemistry

Professor Nursing

Professor of Biology

Professor Earth Science

Adjunct Faculty – Accounting

Criteria 3 & 4

Custodian

Professor of Nursing

Professor of Nursing

Nursing – Faculty

VP of Student Affairs

VP of Academic Affairs

Human Resources Director

Executive Assistant to the VP of Academic Affairs

Executive Assistant to the President and BOT

EMS Instructor and Program Director

English – Faculty

CIS – Faculty

Professor of Art and Design

History – Faculty

Professor of English

Director of Admission

English – Faculty

College Completion Coach

College Completion Coach

English – Faculty

Institutional Research & Assessment Data Analyst

Director of Manufacturing

Gift Officer

Associate Dean of Institutional Research & Assessment

Instructional Designer

Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design

Registrar

Librarian

CCAMPIS Advisor & Activity Coordinator

Grants Manager

Professor of Early Childhood Education

Professor Economics

Professor of Office Administrative Services

Instructional Specialist

Administrative Assistant to VP of Finance & Facilities

Instructional Specialist

Dean of Arts & Sciences

English – Faculty

Gift Officer

Professor of Chemistry

Professor of Human Biology

Nursing – Faculty

Professor of Biology

Professor of Sociology, Anthropology

Professor of Accounting

Marketing Administrative Manager

Professor Nursing

Student Success Coordinator

Director of IT

VP of Finance & Facilities

Tutoring and Testing Center Manager

Systems Engineer

Dean of Corporate and Community Education

Academic Advisor

VP for Advancement/Executive Director

Digital Marketing Administrator

Communications and Public Relations Manager

Admissions Specialist

VP of Marketing and Strategy

Digital Marketing Manager

Financial Aid State Programs Administrator

Interim Director of Financial Aid

Human Resources Administrator

Counselor

Outreach Recruiter

Sports Information Director

Accessibility Services Coordinator

Professor of Marketing

Professor of Political Science

Mathematics – Faculty

College Completion Coach

Director of Campus Housing

Career Development Specialist

CNC Instructor

Dean of Nursing, Health Sciences and Public Safety Programs

Program Review

CIS – Instructor

VP of Academic Affairs

Professor of Human Biology

Nursing – Faculty

Professor of Biology

Professor of Psychology

EMS Instructor and Program Director

Mathematics – Faculty

Professor of Marketing

Professor of Nursing

Dean of Nursing, Health Sciences and Public Safety Programs

Professor of Nursing

Nursing – Faculty

Professor of Nursing

Professor of Nursing

Instructional Specialist

Administrative Assistant to the VP of Finance & Facilities

Professor of Accounting

VP of Student Affairs

Professor of Sociology, Anthropology

Professor of English

Professor of Communications

History – Instructor

Professor of Chemistry

English – Instructor

Dean of Arts and Sciences

Dean of Business, Education, & Adjunct Faculty

Professor of Office Administrative Services

Professor of Economics

Professor of Early Childhood Education

Registrar

Associate Dean of Institutional Research & Assessment

Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design

Director of Manufacturing

Institutional Research & Assessment Data Analyst

Executive Assistant to the VP of Academic Affairs

Student Luncheon

PTK – 3 students

Student Senate – 14 students

Presidential Scholars – 14 students

Athletes – 7 students

Student Clubs – 7 students

Residence Hall Advisor – 1 student

Student Employees – 6 students

HLC Team Visit

NCMC Community Partner Breakfast – RSVP

March 11, 2025

Professor Emeritus, FSU

President, The Petoskey Chamber

The Manthei Group

College Foundation Board Member

College Foundation Board Member

Executive Director for Little Traverse Bay of Odawa Indians

Former COO Boyne Resorts

Executive Director Harbor Springs Chamber

VP of Patient Care Services, Munson Hospital

President of Harbor Brenn Insurance Agencies

LSSU Professor, Member of Advisory Board at NCMC

President Charlevoix County Community Foundation

Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation

Library Director, Petoskey

Women's Resource Center

Char-Em ISD, CTE Director

Director, Charlevoix Public Library

Grantham Building & Remodeling

Boyne District Library

Human Resource Manager, Moeller Aerospace

VP of Patient Care Services, McLaren

Administrator, Bay Bluffs

Senior Controls Engineer, EJ Foundry

Rotarian and Trustee

Assistant to Rep. Jack Bergman

Charlevoix Area Chamber of Commerce

HLC Team Visit – North Central Michigan College

March 11, 2025

Staff Session

Dean of Business, Education & Adjunct Faculty

Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design

Athletic Director

IT Director

Instructional Designer

Human Resources Administrator

Outreach Recruiter

Library Specialist

Associate Dean of Institutional Research & Assessment

Grants Manager

Instructional Specialist

Administrative Assistant to VP of Finance & Facilities

Instructional Specialist

Dean of Arts & Sciences

Academic Advisor

Career Development Specialist

Director of Training for Corporate and Community Education

CCE Administrative Assistant

Director of Manufacturing

Registrar

Assistant Registrar

Director of Campus Housing

Tutoring and Testing Center Manager

Student Success Coordinator

Accessibility Services Coordinator and Academic Advisor

Director of Admission

CCAMPIS Advisor & Activity Coordinator

Interim Director of Financial Aid

Financial Aid State Programs Administrator/Academic Advisor

Gift Officer

Annual Giving and Alumni Coordinator

Gift Officer

Director of Corporate and Community Education

Admission Specialist

Financial Aid Associate

Institutional Research and Assessment Data Analyst

Systems Administrator

Systems Engineer

Senior Computer Technician

Network Administrator

Communications and Public Relations Manager

Digital Marketing Manager

Co-curricular Assessment Session

Instructional Specialist

Administrative Assistant to VP of Finance & Facilities

Instructional Designer

Outreach Recruiter

Human Resources Administrator

IT Director

Associate Dean of Institutional Research & Assessment

Dean of Arts & Sciences

Career Development Specialist

Registrar

Director of Manufacturing

Dean of Business, Education, & Adjunct Faculty

Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design

Director of Campus Housing

Director of Admission

Tutoring and Testing Center Manager

Student Success Coordinator

Academic Advisor

Accessibility Services Coordinator and Academic Advisor

CCAMPIS Advisor & Activity Coordinator

Financial Aid State Programs Administrator/Academic Advisor

Librarian

Interim Director of Financial Aid

Financial Aid Associate

Counselor

Dean of Nursing, Health Sciences and Public Safety Programs

VP of Academic Affairs

VP of Student Affairs

Mathematics – Instructor

Grants Manager

Professor of Economics

Open Forum: Criterion 5

VP of Student Affairs

VP of Academic Affairs

VP of Finance & Facilities

Executive Assistant to VP of Academic Affairs

Executive Assistant to President and BOT

Dean of Corporate and Community Education

Athletics Director

IT Director

Instructional Designer

Systems Engineer

Human Resources Administrator

VP of Marketing & Strategy

EMS Instructor and Program Director

Digital Marketing Manager

Communications and Public Relations Manager

Interim Director of Financial Aid

Financial Aid State Programs Administrator/Academic Advisor

Dean of Nursing, Health Sciences and Public Safety Programs

Professor of Human Biology

Human Resources Director

Professor of Nursing

Instructional Specialist

Administrative Assistant to VP of Finance & Facilities

Financial Aid Associate

President

Professor of Marketing

Nursing – Instructor

Grants Manager

Professor of Political Science

Librarian

Professor of Biology

Mathematics – Instructor

Professor of Mathematics

Annual Giving and Alumni Coordinator

Outreach Recruiter

VP for Advancement/Executive Director

Director of Admission

Professor of Biology

Gift Officer

Gift Officer

Academic Advisor

Student Success Coordinator

Director of Campus Housing

Tutoring and Testing Center Manager

Accessibility Services Coordinator and Academic Advisor

CCAMPIS Advisor & Activity Coordinator

Network Administrator

Dean of Arts and Sciences

Professor of Psychology

Career Development Specialist

Associate Dean of Institutional Research and Assessment

Registrar

Dean of Business, Education, & Adjunct Faculty

Director of Manufacturing

Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design

Professor of Early Childhood Education

Systems Administrator

Institutional Research & Assessment Data Analyst

Student Services Session

VP of Student Services

Career Development Specialist

Financial Aid Associate

Accessibility Services Coordinator and Academic Advisor

College Completion Coach

College Completion Coach

Financial Aid State Programs Administrator/Academic Advisor

Assistant Registrar

Registrar

Director of Admission

Director of Campus Housing

Academic Advisor

Athletic Director

Interim Director of Financial Aid

Student Success Coordinator

CCAMPIS Advisor & Activity Coordinator

Admission Specialist

Counselor

Sports Information Director

Outreach Recruiter

Dual Enrollment Coordinator

Care Coordinator

Additional Documents

Addendum Files Received

- NC-038-Audited-Financial-Statements-2021-24.pdf
- NC-458-Syllabi-Course-Modalities_-ESC_101__ECO_111__BIO_133.pdf
- NCMC_2024-25_Strategic_Plan_Details_and_KPIs.pdf
- NCMC_Addendum_to_3.C.1_Argument.pdf
- NCMC_Addendum_to_3.D.4_Argument.pdf
- NCMC_Deferred_Maintenance_Plan_2026-2030.pdf
- NCMC_Supplemental_Financial_Information.pdf
- Winter-2025-B-200-A-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-B-200-OLA-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-BIO-101-A-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-BIO-101-OLA-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-BIO-101-XAH-North_Central_Now_Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-CJ-102-OLA-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-CJ-102-XAN-North_Central_Now_Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-ENG-112-A-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-ENG-112-XAH-North_Central_Now_Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-ENG-210-A-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-ENG-210-OLA-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-HST-232-A-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-HST-232-XAH-North_Central_Now_Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-MATH-128-A-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-MATH-128-OLA-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-PSY-161-A-Syllabus.pdf
- Winter-2025-PSY-161-OLA-Syllabus.pdf

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Upon reviewing the assurance argument, it became evident that the provided information did not directly address whether the institution's mission was publicly articulated and operationalized throughout the College, aside from its presence on the website. The argument focused primarily on the involvement of faculty, staff, and students in academic policy and curriculum development, but did not elaborate on how the institution's mission is communicated or applied across various areas of the College. However, during the on-site visit, it became clear to reviewers that the mission is not only publicly articulated but also actively operationalized. Multiple displays of the mission, vision, values, strategic plan, and institutional learning outcomes can be found throughout the college buildings. Moreover, during all sessions, staff, faculty, and students were able to clearly demonstrate how the mission is implemented and practiced in their respective areas.

Both the assurance argument and discussions on-site clearly demonstrate that the College's administration has worked diligently to involve and engage faculty, staff, and students in the process of designing and affirming the mission. The mission serves as a foundation for establishing academic requirements, policies, and processes. This is achieved through ongoing collaboration with staff, faculty, and students.

The mission clearly drives strategy as it emphasizes key areas such as instruction, scholarship,

research, public service, and economic development. The 2020-2035 Strategic Plan, which includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), is reviewed annually, with action plans updated every 2-3 years. Strategic goals are set every five years, while strategic directions are established every 15 years. The planning process involves collaboration among the Board of Trustees, President, Cabinet, SPAT members, and employees, and it is aligned with Michigan Public Act 144 of 2022.

An open-access institution offering both credit and non-credit programs across multiple locations, NCMC is student-centered, prioritizing fast-tracked programs in fields such as nursing, licensed practical nursing, and workforce training and development. The College's intended constituents are described as "all," which is further supported by enrollment data that provides a disaggregated breakdown of the student body.

In conversations with the college president, trustees, and other constituents during the site visit, further evidence was provided regarding the institution's recruitment strategy and the geographic areas from which students are drawn. The president emphasized that the College's primary purpose is to serve the county and surrounding community, particularly a location four miles west of Bay Harbor, where residents live in significant poverty and face limited employment opportunities. It is in this area that the College focuses its recruitment efforts and workforce training programs.

During the on-site visit, reviewers heard students share reasons for attending the College, citing its strong educational offerings, trade programs, and the opportunity to secure employment. One student, in particular, mentioned that while some students complained about poor Wi-Fi access, she found the Wi-Fi to be excellent, as she had never had access to Wi-Fi before.

The institution's mission, "to provide exceptional, accessible, relevant higher education to the benefit of all," is reflected in its offerings and services. The Assurance Argument, supported by numerous discussions with staff, faculty, and students, confirms that the institution has an outstanding nursing program, characterized by high student satisfaction and engagement. The College provides accessible learning formats, including in-person, hybrid, and online instruction, along with fast-track programs, scholarships, athletics, tutoring, a testing center, and dedicated support services for veterans and active military personnel.

Additional programs, such as Early College, Future for Frontliners, and Michigan Reconnect, further demonstrate the institution's commitment to accessibility. The College's academic programs are highly relevant, with a focus on nursing, childcare, an Associate of Arts in Environmental and Sustainability Studies, and the introduction of new programs. The institution also offers resources aimed at workforce development and community engagement, reinforcing its mission to serve all students.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The College's mission, as articulated in the Assurance Argument, "to provide exceptional, accessible, relevant higher education to the benefit of all," underscores a strong commitment to the public good. This mission clearly defines the institution's core purpose—delivering exceptional, accessible, and relevant education—while also emphasizing its broad target audience, "to the benefit of all." The College's Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan further reinforces this commitment to serving the public through its mission, vision, and values.

In both the Assurance Argument and the Peer Review campus visit, staff, faculty, and students provided concrete examples of how the College prioritizes accessible, relevant, and exceptional education. They also highlighted the institution's support for workforce development and promotion of lifelong learning. Key community-oriented initiatives, such as offering scholarships, supporting local schools, and launching programs like the Child Care Initiative, were shared as examples of the College's impact. Additionally, discussions focused on how the College's emphasis on sustainability, collaboration, and reinvesting in student success further exemplifies its dedication to the public good.

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

The College's Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan, as detailed in the Assurance Argument and affirmed through the Peer Review campus visit discussions with staff, faculty, and students—both in one-on-one conversations and group sessions addressing Criteria 1 and 2, Assessment, Program Review, Students, Cabinet, and the Board of Trustees—demonstrates its strong commitment to serving the public. This commitment is reflected in the College's mission, vision, and values. As a student-centered institution, the College is dedicated to offering exceptional, accessible, and relevant education, with a particular focus on career and technical education, transfer education, workforce development, and lifelong learning.

This commitment was clear during the student session, where students shared positive feedback about

their educational experiences. They provided numerous examples of how their education has impacted their lives—whether living in residence halls, attending classes, working in work-study positions, participating in clubs, being Presidential Scholars, or being members of Phi Theta Kappa. One student shared an example of how she emailed a faculty member at 3:04 a.m. and received a response by 3:09 a.m., highlighting the faculty’s dedication to student success and responsiveness.

The College contributes to the social and economic vitality of the region through well-established academic processes, including outcomes assessment, program reviews, and collaborative committee work. This is evident in the development of programs such as the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Certificate, Communications, Political Science, and Advanced Manufacturing. Furthermore, the College emphasizes its strong connections with local community schools, fostering dual enrollment opportunities and encouraging high school students to pursue higher education at the community college level. The College also provides scholarships, including Michigan Reconnect, to help remove barriers to higher education. Additionally, it supports childcare initiatives and offers non-credit and workforce development programs through its Corporate and Community Education Division.

The College’s ongoing commitment to the public good and its role in serving the community is reflected in its strategic initiatives, which focus on enhancing accessibility, workforce development, and lifelong learning. These initiatives, a few of which are listed below, have a direct and positive impact on the public and contribute to the region’s economic and social well-being.

- The Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan aligns the College’s mission with regional and economic needs, as exemplified by the development of the LPN Certificate program and childcare initiatives.
- The College strengthens educational pathways by collaborating with local schools through Early College programs and scholarships, while addressing barriers to higher education through programs such as Michigan Reconnect and the Timberwolves Thrive initiative.
- The College actively supports working adults through non-credit programs, including Fast-Track workforce programs designed to prepare graduates for high-demand fields.
- Initiatives like CCAMPIS and the Child Care Initiative further reinforce the College’s role in addressing community needs beyond the classroom.

As outlined in the Assurance Argument and confirmed through meetings with the President, Board of Trustees, and Cabinet, the College is a non-profit public entity established under the Michigan Community College Act of 1966. The College’s Board of Trustees provides governance and oversight. The institution’s budget prioritizes expenditures that support education and student success, with any surplus revenue reinvested into the College.

In recent years, the budget has been allocated to create new positions aimed at enhancing student success, both in staff and faculty roles. The College is also in the process of constructing two new buildings, including one dedicated to technological training. Additionally, the College has introduced new programs and certificates in response to labor market demand since Fall 2023. These new offerings are developed based on careful analysis of both student demand and labor market needs.

As described in the Assurance Argument and confirmed through discussions with the President and the Board of Trustees, Goal 4 of the strategic plan emphasizes the institution’s commitment to being a leader in sustainability and collaboration within the community. The College actively engages with various community groups, addresses the needs of external constituencies, and launched the Child Care Initiative in 2022. The institution continues to be a valued and active community partner.

Through its partnerships, the College demonstrates its responsiveness to challenges affecting the broader community. These partnerships enhance the College's reputation and influence, positioning it as a leader in civic responsibility and stewardship. The institution plays an active role in contributing to solutions that support the long-term well-being of the community. The following are examples:

- The College collaborates with local organizations through Program Advisory Groups and the President's Commission, which provides input on strategic directions, emerging trends, and expanding the College's outreach and reputation.
- The College offers learning enrichment opportunities, including short-term credit and non-credit workforce programs, to address the needs of the community. It provides cultural enrichment and recreational opportunities that benefit community members.

The College maintains a strong emphasis on sustainability, with civic-mindedness and stewardship as central components of its mission.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Upon reviewing the Assurance Argument, the peer review team noted difficulty in identifying the institution's approach to "civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and a globally connected world," as it pertains to the College's mission and the constituencies it serves. The evidence presented indicated limited diversity in terms of race and ethnicity, with the exception of local indigenous populations. A significant portion of the student body consists of non-resident students. However, it was unclear whether this refers to students from other areas within Michigan, other states, or other countries.

In the Assurance Argument, the College emphasizes its commitment to inclusive practices through policies focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The institution offers programs aimed at serving a diverse population, asserting a strong dedication to fostering civic engagement through initiatives that support a multicultural society and a globally connected world. The College outlines both curricular and co-curricular offerings, such as the Global Studies program and the International Committee, which promote global awareness. Additionally, the College provides Career Services to support students' professional development.

Through on-campus sessions with the president, Board of Trustees, Cabinet, and discussions on Criteria 1 and 2, the College's commitment to civic engagement, global connections, and DEI became more apparent. The College has successfully attracted students from outside its borders, in part due to the establishment of sports teams like basketball and volleyball. Faculty, particularly in the Political Science Department, and staff emphasized the importance of civic engagement, such as educating students on the significance of voting and how to participate in elections. Students highlighted their learning experiences in cultural awareness through courses in Social Science and Anthropology.

According to the Assurance Argument and confirmed through sessions on Assessment, Program Review, and Criteria 1 and 2, as well as one-on-one discussions, the institution participated in the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Assessment Academy in 2021. This participation led to the

development of new Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs).

The College offers a diverse array of curricular programs, including an Associate of Arts (AA) in Global Studies, an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Digital Art and Design, and a Practical Nurse Certificate. In addition to its academic programs, the institution provides co-curricular activities such as the International Committee, which promotes global awareness, and Career Services. These initiatives were further developed as a result of the Assessment Academy, contributing to the ongoing enhancement of student learning and success.

Although the Assurance Argument outlines the institution's commitment to inclusive and equitable treatment, the peer review Team found it challenging to see clear evidence of how the institution's processes and activities fully demonstrate this commitment to diverse populations. The institution stated that it was dedicated to ensuring inclusive and equitable treatment through policies aligned with its mission and values of excellence. It operates under an open admission and enrollment process, adheres to Title IX regulations, and enforces a Student Code of Conduct. The Human Resources department integrates diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by diversifying the candidate pool and offering support programs, such as an employee assistance program.

The Assurance Argument also noted the College's recent facility improvements, including the Borra Learning Center, Student Commons, and upgrades to classroom technology, all aimed at enhancing the campus environment. The institution further highlighted its robust learning services, which include writing and math labs, tutoring, disability accommodations, and access to free laptops and Wi-Fi. Initiatives such as the Real Talk Initiative and Library Decolonization were mentioned as efforts to foster inclusivity across the campus community.

Additionally, the College cited wrap-around services such as a campus cupboard, childcare, veterans' assistance, and faith-based groups. The Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation Team, DEI Committee, and various surveys are used to gather data that supports continuous improvement in the campus climate, ensuring respect and support for all community members.

However, it was during the Peer Review Team's on-campus sessions, one-on-one discussions, and campus tour that the institution's commitment to DEI became more evident. Staff, faculty, and students shared their understanding and experiences, illustrating the College's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Students, in particular, emphasized the strong sense of belonging and camaraderie among peers. One student specifically noted the value of having a club dedicated to Gender and Sexuality Association (GSA) students, which she mentioned was not permitted at her high school. She expressed appreciation for the College's support in creating and maintaining such a club.

Both the Assurance Argument and sessions with staff, faculty, and students confirmed that the institution fosters a climate of respect among students, faculty, staff, and administrators from diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives. This commitment is reinforced through policies outlined in the Employee Handbook and supported by the DEI Committee. The Employee Engagement Committee plays an active role in building community among staff by organizing events such as Take Your Child to Work Day, Employee Appreciation activities, and a Years of Service Luncheon.

Initiatives such as *Real Talk* actively promote inclusivity across the campus. Student organizations, including the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Student Veterans Association, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Phi Theta Kappa, offer support for diverse student groups. The library further

enhances the sense of belonging by hosting exhibits, games, and discussions on a variety of topics, encouraging engagement and dialogue among the campus community.

The strong community engagement underscored the institution's commitment to fostering "a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff, and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives." In every session with the peer review team, there was standing room only, with nearly every staff member and faculty member present. Participants not only answered questions but also built upon and confirmed one another's responses. Particularly noteworthy was the Faculty Senate President's enthusiastic support, which highlighted the strength of the community and the collective willingness to work together in advancing the College's mission.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Rationale

The institution's mission is clearly articulated and operationalized throughout the College, as evidenced by displays of the mission, vision, values, strategic plan, and institutional learning outcomes throughout the campus. Staff, faculty, and students demonstrated how the mission is implemented in their respective areas. The College's administration has worked closely with faculty, staff, and students to develop and affirm the mission, ensuring its relevance to the institution's academic policies and processes. The mission, "to provide exceptional, accessible, relevant higher education to the benefit of all," emphasizes instruction, scholarship, research, public service, and economic development. The mission is supported by a strategic planning process involving regular reviews and updates, with goals set every five years and strategic directions established for 15 years.

The College serves as an open-access institution, offering credit and non-credit programs across multiple locations, particularly focusing on serving the surrounding community with programs in fields like nursing, medical and health sciences, and workforce training. The institution's academic offerings, student support services, and enrollment profile reflect its mission to provide accessible education. Programs like Early College, Michigan Reconnect, and resources for veterans and military personnel further demonstrate this commitment. The College clearly communicates its mission through the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan, which is shared publicly through the website and banners across campus, making its commitment to the mission visible to all.

The College demonstrates a strong commitment to the public good by prioritizing accessible, relevant, and exceptional education for the broader community. Through initiatives like scholarships, workforce development, and community engagement, the College contributes to the region's social and economic vitality. Additionally, the College engages with external constituencies through partnerships, addressing community needs through programs such as the Child Care Initiative and workforce development programs. The institution prioritizes education over financial returns, as evidenced by its non-profit status and reinvestment of surplus revenue into student success.

The College is committed to fostering civic engagement, global awareness, and inclusivity, though the diversity of its student body is somewhat limited. It offers programs such as Global Studies and initiatives like the International Committee to promote global awareness. The College also supports diverse populations through policies and initiatives focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), including programs for underrepresented groups and support services for veterans and LGBTQ+ students. Staff, faculty, and students shared their experiences, highlighting the College's commitment to fostering a respectful and inclusive climate. Various student organizations and events promote a sense of belonging and community among diverse groups, reinforcing the institution's values of respect and inclusivity.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As evidence related to the development and adoption of its institutional mission statement, NCMC's assurance argument references a February 2020 meeting of the board during which time the administration recommended adoption of the "long-range 2020 NCMC Strategic Plan." The associated Thrive 2035 document does include a statement of the mission "[t]o provide exceptional, accessible, relevant higher education to all." Discussion with members of the elected board of trustees during the on-campus visit provided further evidence that NCMC's mission was developed with appropriate input from a variety of stakeholders. Trustees indicated a high degree of awareness regarding its development and also verified that the board formally adopted the mission at an open meeting.

NCMC presents as evidence for subcomponent 2A2 a number of policy manuals and documentation. For example, the board's actions are guided by a board policy, and an Employee Handbook outlines expectations for all aspects related to employment at the college. Reviewers also noted consistent commitment among all campus stakeholders to collective bargaining agreements. Academic integrity is addressed in NCMC's student handbook, and discussions on campus with faculty and staff indicated a high degree of awareness of institutional policy and practice related to the enforcement of academic honesty expectations. To provide assurance of integrity of operations related to its financial functions, NCMC references a recent Moody rating and links to its 2020 and 2021 audited financials. Reviewers also noted board policies in place to ensure integrity financial functions such as bidding and handling of funds. Also worthy of note is a history of clean audits which were made available to the review team. While campus stakeholders could not identify in discussion what auxiliary functions the college sustains, reviewers noted that NCMC's bookstore and residence hall revenues are included in the institution's single audit.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

NCMC's electronic catalog is easily accessible on the college website and provides access to a wealth of information regarding academic offerings and requirements. The catalog also includes a comprehensive list of faculty and provides information regarding their credentials. The assurance argument notes a "Federal Net Price Calculator" as its method for accurately representing costs associated with attending NCMC. While not specifically addressed in the assurance argument, reviewers noted public information on the website regarding the role the board of trustees plays in relation to governance, and the college's website provides appropriate and transparent information related to the trustees, bylaws, and meeting information. NCMC makes clear its accreditation relationship with the Higher Learning Commission.

Additionally, the institution highlights its educational contributions, community engagement, and recent initiatives, such as the introduction of Fast Track Programs and the Child Care Initiative, demonstrating a clear presentation of its offerings and impact to both students and the public. The Fast Facts page provides access to the Economic Impact Report and the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan. NCMC also noted it invested in fostering a sense of belonging through the research-based Real Talk pedagogy.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Rating

Met

Rationale

NCCMC's Board of Trustees is elected in accordance with Michigan's 1966 Community College Act. Evidence demonstrates that the Board of Trustees' Bylaws are in place and reviewed regularly by trustees. The Bylaws comprehensively address areas such as the responsibilities of Board membership, meetings, committees, procedures, contact with college personnel and the public, and conflicts of interest. Discussions with trustees during the visit provided additional verification that board members have access to training facilitated by a statewide organizations. While trustee responses varied in regard to their participation in this training, it was apparent that trustees are knowledgeable about their fiduciary and legal responsibilities. They also indicated a strong degree of knowledge about college operations as each trustee serves on a college committee.

Evidence provided in the assurance argument included board agendas, which outline discussions and decisions related to institutional priorities, resource allocation, and policy development. A review of the meeting minutes further demonstrates the board's active engagement in governance, oversight, and strategic planning. Evidence of the board's focus on fiduciary responsibilities is reflected in the work of its Finance and Facilities Committee, which reviews and oversees budgeting, financial reporting, infrastructure investments, and long-term fiscal planning to maintain the institution's stability and growth. Longer-term planning is evident through the board's role in shaping and guiding strategic initiatives, such as multi-year capital improvement plans, sustainability efforts, and workforce development strategies that align with regional economic needs.

The board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies by actively engaging with stakeholders, aligning institutional priorities with community needs, and fostering transparency in decision-making. Evidence includes the strategic plan (Thrive 2035), which has a defined focus on the people it serves. Two of the four strategic

priorities directly address stakeholder needs: (1) updating and expanding academic programming by strengthening workforce development and lifelong learning, ensuring programs align with industry demands, and (2) expanding community leadership and support, fostering partnerships, and responding to regional challenges. The board incorporates stakeholder input through structured opportunities for voices to be heard during board meetings, including public comment sessions, engagement with faculty and staff leadership, and consultations with industry and community representatives. This ensures that institutional policies and initiatives reflect a broad spectrum of perspectives, supporting the college's role as a responsive and community-centered institution. A meeting with community members during the site visit validated a strong support for the college among external stakeholders who appear to be highly engaged and able to provide input through such avenues as advisory boards and a presidents commission.

The board preserves its independence from undue influence by donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties through clearly defined governance structures, policies, and financial oversight mechanisms such as a conflict of interest policy.

During the on-site visit, reviewers noted the trustees' specific attention to note that they delegated day-to-day management of the college to the president. Further, trustees noted an involvement with the college's curriculum development process, but they also demonstrated awareness of the college's Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) committee which has primary responsibility for oversight of academic matters. The Board of Trustees provides final oversight and governance, ensuring that academic policies align with institutional priorities, regulatory requirements, and long-term strategic goals. While the Board does not engage in curriculum development, it is responsible for reviewing and approving new or inactivated programs and major academic policies to ensure alignment with the College's mission and fiduciary responsibilities. This distinction in responsibilities allows faculty to maintain academic integrity and responsiveness in curricular matters while ensuring that the Board maintains appropriate oversight at the policy level.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Academic freedom and freedom of expression are both addressed appropriately and comprehensively in NCMC's board of trustees policy manual, the student handbook, and also in the collective bargaining agreement with the college's faculty and professional staff. Discussion with various constituents during the on-campus visit also validated that NCMC meets expectations for Core Component 2.D.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The college demonstrates through documentary evidence that its policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students. While research is not primary to the mission of the institution, publication and scholarship are specifically acknowledged in the academic responsibility section of the faculty collective bargaining agreement and in the college's detailed intellectual property policy. Oversight of human subject research at or involving NCMC is provided by the Institutional Research and Assessment Office through a standards-based proposal review model. The college uses a partner institution's Institutional Review Board for the few non-exempt research requests it receives.

Direct assistance to faculty and students conducting research is provided by the Institutional Research office, the tutoring center, and the college library. Evidence was provided of well-developed information and research literacy materials customized for students based on faculty requests. For example, reviewers noted the work of library staff to create and deliver direct instruction in the responsible use and citation of source material. Reviewers also noted during conversation with faculty that campus-wide conversations regarding the ethical use of artificial intelligence include faculty, staff, and students.

Guidance for students in ethical research and use of information was primarily demonstrated through policies that prohibit unethical practices, such as plagiarism and improper use of artificial intelligence. These policies are clearly stated and placed appropriately in the student handbook and course syllabi. The college does not show where ethical practices are defined and promoted specifically. Enforcement of academic dishonesty policies was demonstrated with two anecdotal examples of well-written communications, and faculty demonstrated a responsibility for the enforcement of these policies.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Rationale

Reviewers noted strong evidence both in the assurance argument and in discussions with various internal and external constituents during the on-site visit to verify that NCMC meets expectations for Criterion 2. All aspects of the college's operations appear to be characterized by integrity and ethical, responsible behaviors. For example, mature policy manuals are in place to guide board deliberations, employment matters, and student conduct. Trustees receive training and appear to be operating without influence and in the interest of the college. NCMC's website offers a wealth of information all of which appears to be accurate and current. Further, faculty and staff proactively create materials and deliver instruction specifically designed to help students conduct research in an ethical manner.

Reviewers note that NCMC does not offer its employees an Institutional Research Board to support ethical approaches to primary research. Apparently, discussion of such support as arisen in recent past, and the development of this function may represent improvements. At the same time, reviewers understand that NCMC's mission does not prioritize faculty research, and the college's utilization of third-party support for research may be sufficient to meet the college's needs.

Another improvement may be warranted in relation to tracking instances of academic integrity violations as a way of informing systematic interventions to identified trends. Faculty at NCMC indicated that they are primarily responsible for enforcing academic integrity policies, and they expressed comfort in the college's current approach. Reviewers noted, however, that NCMC may be missing an opportunity to share information about such violations with other faculty and student services staff. Aggregated data related to academic integrity infractions may inform more systematic interventions.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

The college demonstrates appropriate rigor in its academic offerings.

In term of its courses, the college maintains master course syllabi (MCS) through a structured process of review and revision driven by faculty. Course learning outcomes (CLOs) were a major focus of the college's recent Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy work; a major review and revision of CLOs in 2022-23 resulted. Evidence was provided and on-campus meetings confirmed that faculty participated significantly in revising CLOs and mapping CLOs to program and institutional learning outcomes to ensure appropriate rigor and currency. The college also participates in state curriculum projects such as Michigan Reconnect. Evidence shows that the college updated its math curriculum to align with the co-curricular remediation strategies employed by the state.

At the program level, the college's revised program review process ensures that program learning outcomes (PLOs) are regularly reviewed for appropriate rigor. A faculty-driven Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee oversees the creation, maintenance, revision, and discontinuation of academic programs for the college. Evidence also demonstrated that programs linked to baccalaureate partners through the MiTransfer initiative share the appropriate level of rigor. Finally, minutes of advisory boards indicate that industry partners provide input regarding the needed rigor for successful employment.

The college ensures that student performance levels are appropriate as well. Evidence indicated that student performance expectations are aligned for 100 and 200 level courses based on the expectations

of receiving institutions for transfer programs. The recent review of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) included analysis of performance levels expressed through Bloom's Taxonomy. In addition, the college faculty drove a revision of proficiency scales and targets for course and program outcomes. Evidence indicated that as a result of the HLC Assessment Academy, the college refined proficiency levels for CLO assessment, changing the scale from Beginning/Developing/Advanced to Below/Meets/Exceeds Proficiency. This revision clarifies the minimum expected proficiency ("Meets") and enables a more nuanced performance analysis while maintaining a three-tiered structure. A binary proficiency scale ("Meets Proficiency" / "Does Not Meet Proficiency") is used to assess PLOs, helping students achieve expected performance levels.

The college's undergraduate programs are differentiated based on credit requirements and transfer vs. occupational focus. The college offers Associate of General Education, Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees for transfer; Associate of Applied Science, certificates, and certificates of development are offered for occupational focus. Evidence was provided detailing the college's move from aligning curriculum with the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile to the internal development of aligned course, program, and institutional learning outcomes. The college offers sequences of certificates that lead into AAS programs. PLOs in these programs are aligned and differentiated in terms of levels of Blooms Taxonomy as well as the level of complexity and technical sophistication. Co-curricular learning outcomes are also articulated by the college.

The college provided significant evidence of Board and college policies and structures to ensure consistent design of programs and courses across all modes of delivery and all locations. As described in the assurance argument, the college is a member of Quality Matters and uses those best practices as a foundation for online course design. Online course development is guided both by Quality Matters and several academic policies. Faculty participate in mandatory training for teaching online and meet with the Instructional Design team to review their course design. Approval oversight is by the Associate Dean of Distance Learning and the Instructional Design team prior to online delivery. The Instructional Design Team confirmed in campus interviews that online course shells have a consistent look and feel across all courses.

The use of the Simple Syllabus platform ensures that all syllabi display the approved course learning outcomes and other elements from the master course syllabi. Review of the following sample syllabi confirmed that course outcomes and grading standards are the same across locations and modalities:

- Introduction to Earth Science - on-campus and online modalities
- Macroeconomics - on-campus and online modalities
- Human Biology with Lab - on-campus, hybrid, and online modalities

The Master Course Syllabus contains a recommended textbook, but individual instructors select texts and materials for their courses based on departmental discussions. Faculty shared that these discussions involve not only rigor but also finding the most economical solutions for students. Evidence indicated that online instructors receive consistent training and course design guidance, and online courses are aligned with the Quality Matters rubric.

Dual Enrollment courses, also referred to as concurrent enrollment and North Central Now! courses, are taught primarily by regular and adjunct NCMC faculty and can take place on campus or online. For courses taught in the high schools by high school faculty, instructors are required to follow the same syllabus, course learning outcomes, grading, evaluation, and assessment standards according to the North Central Now! guidebook provided in evidence. High schools may continue using their own textbooks if approved by the college. Review of sample syllabi for Introduction to Biology,

Introduction to Criminal Justice, English Composition II, and Survey of Later Western Civilization confirmed that course outcomes, rigor of assignments, and grading standards are the same between on-campus sections and North Central Now! sections.

In addition, high school faculty teaching dual enrollment courses are assigned a mentor who is a full-time college instructor in the same subject area. The mentor introduces the high school instructor to Simple Syllabus and reviews the instructor's proposed syllabus before each course is taught. The mentor also supports the high school instructor throughout the term to ensure their course aligns with on-campus sections. During the campus visit, multiple students who had taken courses in multiple locations and modalities including dual enrollment stated that they experienced the same level of expectations and rigor in their courses wherever and however they were taught.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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.
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.
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.
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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

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

Consistent with the college's mission to provide "exceptional, accessible, and relevant education to the benefit of all," general education at the college includes a broad range of course offerings in communication, mathematics, humanities, science, and social sciences. General education courses target the needs of both transfer and occupational programs. At the transfer level, course requirements in the AA and AS degrees are closely aligned with the Michigan Transfer Agreement, allowing 30 credits of general education to transfer seamlessly to two- and four-year institutional partners. The curriculum committee-approved process sets transfer criteria, and the general education program is updated frequently. The college also offers an innovative Associate of General Studies degree that allows students with occupational certificates to carry those credentials as electives to a transfer institution.

At the occupational level, evidence indicated that general education requirements in the AAS degrees vary from 12 to 25 credits depending on the discipline. Faculty shared in interviews that because students often move between AAS and AA or AS programs, many of the same general education courses from the distribution areas are included in AAS degrees. Industry advisory committees also inform the selection of general education courses. It was reported that certificates embed general studies courses, most often a communication course such as English Composition 1 and/or Speech or

Communications.

The framework for the college's general studies program shifted following the recent Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy work. Formerly aligned with the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile, the general education program is now structured around five locally developed institutional learning outcomes that serve as the program learning outcomes for general education. The revised ILOs align with the institution's philosophy, emphasizing critical inquiry, practical application, ethical reasoning, cultural skills, and communication skills to prepare students for active citizenship, personal and professional growth, and respectful engagement across diverse cultures. Curriculum maps were provided showing the alignment of course learning outcomes with these ILO/PLOs. At the same time, the Michigan Transfer Agreement distribution requirements inform the framework of general education at the college as well, providing consistency among partners statewide and appropriate breadth to the general education program.

The college provided two interdisciplinary program examples to demonstrate the diverse perspectives student encounter in general education: Environmental and Sustainability Studies and Global Studies are specifically designed around interdisciplinary principles. At the course level, general education courses align with the intercultural competency Institutional Learning Outcome with 25 courses in social sciences and 33 in humanities supporting this focus. Information gathered on campus confirmed that students in certificate programs will also encounter human and cultural diversity in their general education courses, which map to all five ILOs. The college provided a robust list of co-curricular activities such as lectures and essay contests that offer students the opportunity to engage with issues of cultural diversity. Educational initiatives like the Black Caucus, National Council of Teachers of English, read-ins, and programs exploring the American Civil Rights Movement also contribute to celebrating diversity. Additionally, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee organizes events like the Holocaust Remembrance Essay/Video Contest to promote multicultural awareness.

The college described many examples of scholarship and creative work by faculty and students across many disciplines. They participate in research dissemination through conference presentations, public talks, and knowledge-sharing networks. Several faculty and staff have contributed to new knowledge through scholarly publications, supported by peer review processes. Creative work is also emphasized, with students and faculty contributing to artistic endeavors. The college also supports a generous sabbatical program for faculty to advance the creation of knowledge.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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.
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.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
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.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

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

The college makes appropriate efforts in recruitment and hiring processes to maintain human diversity appropriate to its mission and constituencies. At the time of the current evaluation, the college employs 119 faculty (35 full-time faculty and 84 adjuncts), 58 full-time administrators, 34 staff (31 full-time and 3 part-time), and 50 student workers. Data demonstrated that the college's faculty, staff, and student body mirror the overall diversity of Emmett County, the main constituency for the college's programs and services. The male to female ratio of the college's full-time faculty is slightly lower (44:56) than the overall community (50:50); the same is true of the college's student body (37:63), which is similar to other community colleges in Michigan.

The college demonstrates it employs sufficient faculty for both instruction and non-instructional responsibilities. The ratio of students to faculty is 14:1. Evidence from the collective bargaining agreement indicates that full-time faculty teach a 15-contact hour each semester and are required to provide service to the institution through committee work and other non-instructional duties. Faculty can volunteer for up to six credits of overload in fall and spring and nine credits in the summer term; nearly all the faculty reported taking on overload courses. Roughly one-third of instruction is provided by full-time faculty and two-thirds by adjunct faculty. The college's research shows that full-

time and adjunct faculty achieve similar student retention and success outcomes. Faculty expressed appreciation for the administration's willingness to add full-time faculty positions when possible.

Faculty are appropriately represented on committees related to academic issues. Central to the curriculum process is the Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee, on which eight of fourteen voting members are faculty. Subcommittees of CRD/AP work with department faculty on program curriculum development. Assessment of student learning is similarly directed by faculty committees. Evidence was provided of prominent faculty role in three iterations of assessment committees: Student Outcomes Assessment Committee, Research and Assessment Committee, and HLC Assessment Academy Team. Faculty confirmed that each faculty member is expected to serve on one committee although most voluntarily serve on more than one.

Faculty qualifications are documented for every instructor for all locations and modalities using a standard Faculty Qualifications Assessment form, which details the required academic credentials and tested experience options for transfer and non-transfer faculty. Subject area-specific masters degrees or non-subject area-specific masters degrees with 18 graduate credits in the subject area are required for transfer courses. Bachelors degrees in the subject area are required for non-transfer courses. A complete list of current full-time and part-faculty, including dual enrollment instructors, and their qualifications was provided, including detailed analysis of credentials relative to the faculty member's teaching discipline. Evidence demonstrates the rigor and completeness of the faculty credentialing process.

The college's faculty evaluation model has evolved to include faculty at all levels. Historically, probationary faculty, i.e. those in their first four years, are observed and evaluated each semester in years 1-3 by a peer mentor and an assigned evaluator, normally their dean, who both have knowledge of the instructor's subject area. In the faculty member's fourth year, the vice president also participates in their fall-term evaluation in order to determine if the faculty member will move to full status.

Evaluation of full-status faculty has been an on-going subject of negotiation between the administration and the faculty bargaining unit. In the most recent five-year contract, the faculty and administration agreed upon a structured evaluation process for full-status faculty. The focus of the model is on support and professional development to ensure faculty success. Interviews with faculty and administration confirmed that the instruments and process are evaluative. Full-status faculty are evaluated on a four-year cycle by two peer evaluators (assigned by the bargaining unit) and their dean based on a classroom observation, student evaluations, and a portfolio of artifacts developed by the faculty member. The first quarter of full-status faculty completed the new process in 2024-25; all full-status faculty will complete their first evaluation within the next three years and on a 4-year cycle thereafter. Faculty in the first group expressed satisfaction with the process.

Adjunct faculty are observed and evaluated in their first semester and then on a 3-year cycle by their dean. Rubrics are provided in advance so adjunct faculty know the content of the evaluation.

All faculty are expected to remain current in their professional knowledge and practice. On-campus meetings clarified that professional development is required for probationary faculty and is planned in discussion with their mentor. Full-status faculty do not have a minimum professional development requirement but participate in on-campus trainings and avail themselves of the college's professional development support as well. Adjunct faculty are encouraged though not required to participate in on-campus professional development, and those who do are compensated for it.

The college provides both internal opportunities and financial resources for external professional development. Faculty are eligible for tuition reimbursement for coursework as well as an annual allocation of \$950 for conferences and other professional development opportunities. These funds can accrue over four years up to \$3800 per faculty member. Faculty members shared examples of their professional development:

- One faculty member reported using these funds to complete his doctoral studies, for example.
- A probationary faculty member described how she was supported to publish creative work in her professional development plan.
- A number of faculty are supported every year to attend the Lilly Conference on Evidence-based Teaching and Learning in nearby Traverse City each year.

Internally, the college provides workshops for faculty such as a welcome back week and annual assessment days. Faculty receive salary incentives for advanced degrees per the collective bargaining agreement. Faculty are also eligible for paid sabbatical leave after completing five years of service from the date of hire and at six-year intervals thereafter. Sabbatical leaves available include summer, a full academic year, and a single academic semester. Faculty are required to report on their learning upon returning from sabbatical.

Faculty are available to students in person and through electronic communication at the college. Per the collective bargaining agreement, faculty are required to have six office hours per week, which are documented with their dean and included on their course syllabi. Up to three of these office hours can be conducted virtually; faculty shared that this may be synchronous availability by email or Zoom. All faculty have assigned email addresses and can be reached through the college's Brightspace learning management system. Online courses are required to have discussion boards for general and private questions to instructors. The college assigns office space for full-time faculty and provides open office space for use by adjuncts, who are encouraged to make themselves available to students. In campus interviews, students expressed satisfaction with the faculty's availability and willingness to help students in any way needed.

Student support services staff at the college are appropriately qualified and receive necessary training and support. A review of evidence provided indicates that current staff meet or exceed the requirements of their positions. Qualifications are outlined in each job description for student support. Generally, staff-level positions require an associates degree and knowledge of student processes; higher level roles generally require a bachelor's degree. The college provides internal training for student support staff; in addition, staff participate in professional organizations, attend conferences, and serve on college committees for their development. Tuition reimbursement and college funding for professional development are provided for student support staff.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

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

A full range of student support services are provided by the college. The college provided evidence of these services:

- Accessibility Services
- Athletics - structured academic support as well as health and wellness
- Career Services - in-person assistance and multiple online tools
- Counseling
- Financial Aid
- Registrar/Student Records
- Residence Hall
- Starfish software - retention and communication tool for faculty and staff
- Student clubs and organizations
- Tutoring and Testing Center
- Veterans Services
- Women's Resource Center of Northern Michigan - housed in the Tutoring and Testing Center

All services were well detailed on the college's website. In particular, the college's counseling services were noted to have reached 10 percent of the eligible student population with assistance for mental health and wellbeing. The college residence hall provides a detailed handbook to students and maintains a capacity for 154 students. The Tutoring and Testing Center houses Math, Reading, and Writing labs as well as group and private study facilities; professional and peer tutors staff the tutoring center, and online support is provided through NetTutor.

Students are placed in appropriate coursework using multiple measures of aptitude. The college

shared detailed placement tables for Accuplacer, Compass, SAT and ACT tests as well as an internal writing assessment and high school GPAs. Developmental courses have been replaced by co-requisite support using the ALP model as recommended by the Michigan Reconnect Grant Act. Evidence indicated an increasing number of students enrolling in credit coursework in their first semester. The college also supports the transition of new-to-college students with a mandatory online orientation and registration day, as well as North Central Days prior to each semester for all students to connect to support services.

The college offers academic advising appropriate for its students, with expectations and learning outcomes outlined on their academic advising syllabus. The college employs two full-time academic advisors and three part-time advisors who also serve in other roles. Advising caseloads are roughly 300 students for full-time advisors. Advising is only mandatory for new-to-North Central students, students who place into developmental coursework, and students in the CCAMPIS program for student-parents. Other student support staff in retention and completion roles also provide informal advising. Students access advising appointments through an online portal or during walk-in hours. In campus interviews, students expressed satisfaction with advising services; however, several noted that when their advisor changed, they did not receive adequate communication about reaching their new advisor.

The college's technology infrastructure for teaching and learning was substantially upgraded during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence indicated that classrooms were equipped with cameras and microphones to facilitate teaching for virtual participants. Faculty shared that they were invited to collaborate with IT on the design of classroom instructional technology upgrades. Wi-fi capacity and internet speed were also significantly increased. The college makes technology available for students to borrow through the college library, including laptops and wi-fi hot spots.

Technical support for teaching and learning is available 24/7 from on-campus IT Helpdesk staff as well as through the BrightSpace LMS, an AI-powered bot for common issues, and a contract with BlackBeltHelp for off-hour support. The Distance Learning and Instructional Design department also support student and faculty. Evidence demonstrated that online courses are provided for students on the use of the LMS and online learning principles. Interviews on campus clarified that all online courses include a Start Here module that requires students to demonstrate mastery of basic tasks in the LMS before unlocking the remaining course content. Faculty have the option of making the Brightspace introductory course and/or the introduction to online learning requirements to unlock their online course content as well. Self-paced training for faculty on use of the LMS and online pedagogy are also offered in addition to the required training for online instruction. Most recently, the college integrated the Simple Syllabus software into its LMS.

The college's library houses a collection of 19,000 circulating books and offers access to nearly 200 online databases as well as a collection of e-books for circulation. Books represent roughly one-third of the library circulation. One-third comprises technology such as laptops and wi-fi hotspots available for student check-out. The last third is an innovative Library of Things; patrons can check out tools, kitchen appliances, outdoor equipment, games, musical instruments, and a growing list of other items. Students shared that they appreciate the library of things offerings. The library provides students with individual and group study areas as well as event and activity space. The public is also able to use the college library resources.

The Health Education and Sciences Center (HESC), a combined facility for nursing, EMS, allied health, and science instruction, offers numerous skills labs and simulation opportunities. A campus tour confirmed the college's up-to-date laboratory facilities for biology, chemistry, earth sciences, and

physics. Through an on-going capital initiatives process, the science departments have been able to acquire higher expense equipment comparable to what students will encounter at transfer partner institutions or in the workplace. The college also has invested in four high-fidelity human patient simulators housed in a mock hospital space that are used by nursing and EMS programs. Simulation hours can be substituted for up to 50 percent of the nurses' clinical hour requirements and 100% of obstetric and pediatric hour requirements due to the lack of nearby clinical placements for those specialties.

The college has embarked on a \$22 million Career and Technical Education Enhancement (CATEE) Project that began in summer 2024 with renovation of the HESC. The expansion phase of the project in 2025-2026 will expand the HESC and replace a recently demolished 59-year-old technology building with a new Technology Center. This facility will feature modern lab space for automation, CNC, robotics, HVAC trades, and welding.

In campus interviews, faculty expressed satisfaction and enthusiasm for their instructional spaces and the technological upgrades that have occurred. Students likewise praised the learning environment as well as the library and the many well-lit, comfortable common spaces on campus for studying and socializing.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Rationale

North Central has demonstrated that it provides quality education across all modes and locations of instruction.

The college completed significant and commendable work in the HLC Assessment Academy to revise and align its learning outcomes at all levels. Through a structured process engaging the college faculty and administration, the college replaced the Lumina Degree Qualification Profile with an internally developed set of institutional learning outcomes approved through shared governance and aligned its program and course learning outcomes with these ILOs. This work, documented in master course syllabi and supported by academic policies, ensures consistent rigor and learning expectations across all locations and modes of delivery, including dual credit instruction.

The college's general education program is similarly aligned with the college's ILOs as well as the standards and expectations of transfer partners and state projects. The college provides a well-rounded curriculum emphasizing communication, mathematics, laboratory science, and social and behavioral sciences.

The college has the necessary high-quality faculty, student support services, and instructional facilities and technology to support delivery of the college's programs. The current Career and Technical Education Enhancement (CATEE) project will provide up-to-date technical lab facilities for healthcare, science, and manufacturing and engineering programs.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

North Central ensures program quality through its comprehensive program review process for all programs on a six-year cycle. Recognizing the weaknesses of the Academic Planning and Program Review (APPR) template as noted in their 2019 Mid-Assurance Argument, the institution joined the 2021 cohort of the HLC Assessment Academy to develop program assessment protocols. A small number of programs have completed the first scheduled group in September 2024. There is evidence that NCMC is assessing program learning outcomes (PLOs) and completing Review of Academic Programs (RAP) form in year 5. The RAP form replaced the APPR template after the first scheduled round of program review based on feedback and subsequent improvement of the instrument. Programs receive administrative feedback from the VPAA and planning change initiatives in year 6. The program review process is currently in a pilot phase with planned improvements. At this time 39% of programs have undergone program review. The HLC Assessment Academy Team is

considering implementing a peer review process for programs prior to submitting their RAP to the Dean and VPAA.

Evidence provided a detailed schedule. Examples were provided that indicated the program review is being used for decision-making. These included sunseting a program (General Office Professional C), curricular changes in the ENVS program. Given the number of programs still to go through the process, there is limited, demonstrated evidence of using program review results for decision-making and continuous improvement.

The next four years will be critical for the development and implementation of this new program review process. The team recommends that in the next Mid-Cycle review there should be clear evidence of data collected and analyzed from the program review process using planning and budgeting for improvement.

Evidence ensures North Central fully evaluates credits transferred to the College. Credit awarded for courses taken at North Central are approved and periodically revised through CRD/AP. Faculty and deans review the master course syllabi (MCS) every 6 years as part of program review. Guidelines include specific rules regarding the transfer of credits from other higher education institutions. The college evaluates credits transferred to the College, offering a variety of methods for students to receive credit for prior learning and credits earned at other higher education institutions. Supporting evidence, including policy documentation, assessment records, and statewide agreements, demonstrates the college's commitment to recognizing prior learning and ensuring transparency in credit evaluation

North Central's policies regarding the incoming transfer of credits are published in the online 2024-2025 catalog. The College's Registrar follows professional guidelines for evaluating and accepting transfer credits set forth by AACRAO and its Michigan affiliate, MACRAO. The College has several consortia and contractual agreements whereby blocks of credit are transferred in for credit.

Examples include credit for police academy experience into two Law Enforcement programs credited and Welding.

The Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies (CRD/AP) Committee has primary control of course design, expectations, prerequisites and rigor. Evidence provided in the Committee structure outlines the purpose of the committee. Chaired by faculty and comprised of a majority of faculty. The CRD/AP Committee has final authority over course approvals and program revisions, while new programs and academic policies require approval from the President or Board of Trustees per the provided evidence of Board policy.

The college's efforts ensure students have access to high-quality learning environments and academic support. The College maintains authority over student learning expectations through its Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), which align with Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). These expectations are embedded in curricular and co-curricular maps and assessed using established tools.

Learning resources support these expectations through targeted programs, including Nursing student support initiatives, the Library's curated academic resources and technology lending program, the Starfish student success platform, and tutoring and testing services that adhere to professional standards. Discussions with staff on the campus visit as well as a tour of the library and labs further confirmed access to learning resources. The campus visit also revealed that there is a student emergency fund and a campus food bank for students.

Evidence provided outlined a faculty review process, procedure, and form. A form is used by the hiring dean to review/conduct/complete a faculty credentialing process that included gathering the required documentation. Faculty qualifications are determined by academic credentials or tested experience, with specific graduate coursework listed to meet the 18-credit requirement. A similar section for tested experience is also included. To ensure sustainability of the process, this process must be completed during onboarding and is a prerequisite before a faculty member can be paid. All dual-enrolled faculty are treated the same as full-time and adjunct faculty; the same process is applied. All faculty have an FQR completed and filed and are included in the “Faculty Credential Review” document. All faculty, including dual enrollment faculty, must use a master course syllabus, as mandated by the VPAA. This was confirmed by the team on the visit.

North Central maintains specialized accreditation for two programs (paramedic and RN), both in good standing. Programmatic self-studies for these accredited programs are used in place of the college’s program review process to further ensure alignment with rigorous external standards and reduce redundancy and workload for the faculty. Advisory Committees for these programs also periodically review program objectives and outcomes. The college is pursuing additional accreditations in Early Childhood Education (NAYEC) and International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) Healthcare Simulation Standards endorsement for the nursing simulation labs in anticipation of the completion of the Health Education and Science Center addition.

North Central defines student success as the summation of completion and transfer rates. The College’s Persistence, Enrollment, Retention, and Completion (PERC) dashboard includes two-, three-, and four-year success rates. North Central’s four-year success outcomes increased four percentage points while the average for the state of Michigan increased one percentage point. To further evaluate student success, the College disaggregates success by degree attainment and transfer to four-year university. Graduation surveys are also used. Occupational program licensure exam pass rates are publicly posted on the website. Transfer articulation agreements with 4yr colleges and the Michigan transfer pathways and completions for the non-credit, Fast Track programs, are also tracked.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The institution clearly describes how the college is committed to ongoing assessment of student learning, with a focus on improving and refining its assessment processes in both its Assurance Argument and in discussions with the team during the visit. The College follows a structured approach, guided by the HLC Assessment Academy Team and Institutional Research, and has implemented standardized assessment processes for faculty. The assessment system has evolved to incorporate curriculum mapping, the use of Bloom's Taxonomy, and the integration of data through the Learning Management System (Brightspace). Regular assessment days, training, and the involvement of stakeholders are part of the ongoing efforts to enhance student learning outcomes. The revised program review process further demonstrates the institution's commitment to using assessment data for continuous improvement.

The College's assessment processes are guided by the HLC Assessment Academy Team and Institutional Research. It has adopted the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile for outcome assessment, setting goals for student participation and learning. Faculty have been introduced to standardized assessment processes, requiring course assessments to be submitted via an Assessment Record Sheet. This led to increased participation across students, sections, and disciplines. Achievements in key areas were reported in the 2019 mid-cycle review, though some expectations were not fully met.

With new leadership, the College focused on improving its assessment processes, including a multi-year project to revise learning outcomes using. In 2022-2023, a curriculum mapping process was introduced, aligning course and co-curricular outcomes with program outcomes. The College began implementing improved assessment processes, starting with General Education and high-demand programs, and starting to expand to transfer and occupational programs in 2024-2025. While all courses now have course learning objectives, work is still in progress on program learning outcomes. Data has started to be collected for Institutional Learning Outcomes as well.

Faculty assess student learning through direct assessments, submitting data to Institutional Research.

A new system for collecting and analyzing learning data was launched, leveraging the Learning Management System (Brightspace).

Co-curricular assessment is also in a pilot phase. Several areas have been identified including: advising, HR, tutoring/testing, PTK, Library, career services, student senate, residence halls and counseling. Learning goals have been identified and co-curricular maps completed. However, data is just started to be collected or is planned to be collected at the end of the semester. Most verbalized aligning the assessments to the ILOs during the team visit. The team recommends staff remained committed and focused on co-curricular assessment.

Training for assessment has been robust, with a shift towards an assessment culture focused on collaboration rather than compliance. One faculty noted to the team during the visit, "we have went from assessment as compliance to assessment as curiosity. We want to know how it can help students." The team commends the progress made on assessment recognizing while the process is new and much to still to be developed and implemented, it is clear the campus, especially the faculty, are fully engaged. It was noted that much of the changes with assessment have been faculty driven.

Regular assessment days and ongoing training are central to this development, helping faculty refine data collection methods and improve their learning outcome assessments. Both faculty and staff acknowledged the HLC Assessment Academy for helping to re-envision their assessment practices.

The College employs both formative and summative assessments to measure and enhance student learning in all course modalities. It is committed to improving the use of assessment data to further student learning outcomes.

For institutional assessment, the College is developing processes to integrate assessment data into the program review process. In Fall 2023, a revised program review process was launched, establishing a six-year cycle for each program. This cycle includes dedicated time for assessment planning, assessment, and the use of data to evaluate all program learning outcomes. Programs are reviewed in groups based on factors such as program health (enrollment and completion), curriculum, and key stakeholders. Stakeholders are also involved in the review of academic programs.

The Assessment Academy team leverages benchmarking research and seeks best practices from reputable organizations to inform their processes. They focus on curriculum mapping, mentor and scholar feedback, and regularly attend annual conferences. The team prioritizes stakeholder input to transition from a compliance-focused approach to one centered on engagement. This is reflected in their regular assessment days, fostering curiosity, and their progress towards ambitious goals, which maintains strong faculty and staff involvement in the Assessment Academy.

The next four years will be critical for the development and implementation of the new assessment plans -both curricular and co-curricular. The team recommends that in the next Mid-Cycle review there should be clear evidence of data collected and analyzed from both curricular and co-curricular plans using planning and budgeting for improvement.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

NCMC presents its Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan 2024-2029 as evidence that retention, persistence, and completion goals are in place. The SEM plan is informed by the college's involvement with Achieving the Dream, and it appears to be comprehensive in its approach to defining goals, establishing action plans, and monitoring improvement over time. Page 6 of the plan outlines eight overarching goals which drive the plans articulated throughout the document, and these goals appear both ambitious and attainable; further, the action plans appear well-aligned to the goals for improved performance.

The SEM plan offers historical trend analyses to contextualize each of the eight stated goals. Not only are these data collected here, but each section of the plan offers concise and insightful qualitative analysis. For example, the plan notes that reasons for decreased applications may be a result of many factors including decreasing high school graduates in the service region. The data presented also demonstrate that NCMC is appropriately disaggregating data sets to seek insights and comparing performance against benchmarks.

Not only are each 8 goal statements supported with comprehensive analysis of data, "Action Steps" are articulated to make improvement. For each action step, the plan also identifies "indicators of success" and a "time frame" for progress. It's clear that NCMC is intent on using persistence, retention, and completion data to make improvements, and its plan reflects good practice related to planning. Reviewers note, however, that the plan (created in 2024 and extending to 2029) is in its earliest stage and impact may not be apparent until future cycles.

The team gained further evidence of the use of the college's PERC dashboard on its site visit.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Rationale

Evidence demonstrates North Central is accountable for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services. The team commends North Central on their newly piloted curricular and co-curricular assessment plans as well as a new program review process. Clearly, the campus is engaged fully in what it called, “a culture of learning and inquiry.” There was clear evidence in both the Assurance Argument and from the campus visit that there is a renewed priority and understanding of assessment of student learning and program review. While both the new assessment plans and program review process appears to be in pilot phases with planned improvements, the team felt confident that faculty and staff were fully engaged and trained to implement the plans. When fully implemented, the plans will evaluate effectiveness designed to promote continuous improvement. Faculty are clearly and fully engaged with curricular processes, program review and assessment of student learning. The team encourages the work on this trajectory to continue in earnest.

The team also acknowledges other significant undertakings such as the Thrive 2035 Strategic Plan, the SEM plan 2024-2029 and the PERC dashboard to support and guide the institution. The team found a vibrant campus learning environment with newly renovated areas and a new building construction. There was also an abundance of student support services, that now as part of the co-curricular assessment plan, will annually identify areas for improvement. Interviews with students and community members/ partners reflected they felt positively about the campus, faculty and staff.

The next four years will be critical for the development and implementation of curricular and co-curricular assessment plans and program review. The team recommends that in the next Mid-Cycle review there should be clear evidence of data collected and analyzed for all assessment plans and program reviews using planning and budgeting for improvement.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Rating

Met

Rationale

NCMC's governance structure, as illustrated by the organizational chart, reflects a clear delegation of authority. The Board of Trustees oversees policy development, hires and evaluates the President, and monitors budget and strategic planning progress. The President, in turn, oversees key administrative positions, including the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, Advancement, Finance, Student Affairs, and Marketing & Strategy. While the Board provides strategic oversight, daily operations are entrusted to the President and College leadership, ensuring institutional alignment with mission-driven priorities.

A commitment to shared governance was evident in cross-departmental collaboration, committee structures, and engagement of faculty, staff, and students in shaping policies and academic programs. The Curriculum Committee, Institutional Research Committee, Student Success Committee, and Distance Learning Committee play key roles in academic policy development, data-driven decision-making, and student success initiatives.

During the open session on criteria 1 and 2, several examples of shared governance were highlighted, including collective bargaining efforts and faculty-led initiatives in pandemic safety policies, outcomes assessment, and the Narcan plan. Additionally, regular meetings between the President's Cabinet, Human Resources, and campus leaders ensure broad institutional input into strategic planning and assessment. Student voice is also valued and integrated into decision-making. During

the open session of criteria 1 and 2, staff shared the example of the students having the final say in selecting a mascot and its name.

Faculty and staff actively contribute to shaping academic policies and program development through the Curriculum Review and Development and Academic Policies Committee. This committee reviews course and program revisions. Faculty and staff actively contribute to academic planning, with anyone able to propose new programs—such as the ski equipment mechanic program, which emerged from community-identified needs and proposed by the Foundation. New programs are approved by the Board of Trustees, after a careful planning review process.

NCMC upholds transparency through compliance with the *Michigan Open Meetings Act*, ensuring public comment opportunities and accessible governance. The Board of Trustees holds monthly public meetings, with agendas and minutes made available online through the NCMC website. The Student Senate meets regularly with the President to advocate for student concerns, alongside contributions from student groups such as Phi Theta Kappa and the Student Nurses Association. During the Criterion Five session, numerous examples of internal communication were shared, including posted committee minutes, emails, and specialized department newsletters from HR and the athletic department. Regular communication also occurs through bi-weekly department meetings, all-campus events like Welcome Week, and meetings between the faculty association president and the college president. Documentation of these communications is maintained in MS SharePoint, MS Sway, and on the college website.

Data-driven decision-making is embedded across the college. The Institutional Research and Assessment Office provides weekly reports on key metrics such as enrollment, retention, and student success. The PERC Data Dashboards track multi-year trends in persistence, enrollment, retention, and completion, supporting enrollment goals student success initiatives. The college also uses Starfish as an early alert system to identify students who may need assistance and connect students with support services to enhance their academic success and retention. Additionally, during the open session for criteria 3 and 4, the team learned about a new initiative for student parents that includes mandatory orientation and advising, designed to streamline their path to completion. Surveys like *PACE*, the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement*, and labor market data further inform decision-making, ensuring that policies, curriculum development, and student support initiatives align with both institutional goals and community needs. The Student Success Committee leverages data to monitor enrollment and student outcomes, while equity-driven initiatives such as the Indigenous Learner Excellence Initiative highlight NCMC's commitment to inclusive education.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Rating

Met

Rationale

North Central Michigan College (NCMC) has sufficient infrastructure, financial, and human resources to effectively support its educational offerings and student services, providing both face-to-face and online instruction. As a comprehensive community college, NCMC offers a range of credit and non-credit courses in the arts and sciences, career-technical education, and non-credit workforce development and lifelong learning. These programs are mostly delivered from the main campus in Petoskey, MI. The college has two additional learning centers located in Cheboygan and Gaylord serving approximately 100 students. NCMC is located in Emmet County, with Petoskey as its county seat. As the second most populous county in Northern Lower Michigan, Emmet County is the primary region served by the college. It is located at the top of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, and is bordered by Lake Michigan to the west and Mackinac to the north. Emmet County's economy is driven by local companies focusing on tourism, agriculture, healthcare, and manufacturing. The community is a seasonal community with a number of retired residents and those who own second homes. McLaren Northern Michigan Hospital in Petoskey is one of the top employers of Emmet County, with 950 employees. NCMC is one of the top 5 largest employers in Emmet County. During the community session, represented by a variety of business leaders, local chamber members, school representatives, citizens, and alumni, many participants described the college as an anchor in the community providing collaboration and vibrancy to the community.

NCMC has qualified and well-trained operational staff dedicated to maintaining the College's high standards. NCMC's website indicates the College employs 234 employees. Of those, 99 are full-time faculty and staff and 135 are part-time faculty and staff. Staff members are equipped with the necessary skills and expertise to manage the College's facilities and technology and to provide academic support services. The college has provided documentation outlining a process and template for faculty credentialing, applicable to all modalities, which is discussed in further detail in 3A. As outlined in the assurance argument, NCMC has a standardized hiring process, ensuring that all staff have the necessary qualifications and skills to support the College's operations. As confirmed during

the staff session, the Human Resources department uses the Hirezon platform to manage the hiring process and provides a standardized onboarding experience including orientation for new employees and annual mandatory, annual compliance training (e.g., Title IX, FERPA). Compliance training is accomplished and tracked through the Safe Colleges. New staff receive additional onboarding based on the needs of respective departments. For example, recent Foundation hires shared how they initially spent time learning about each department of the college which provides knowledge for them to help tell the story of the college during fundraising meetings. Staff are evaluated annually, as confirmed during the staff session and criterion five session. Faculty evaluation is discussed in 3C. During the criterion five session, an HR representative shared that the college has enhanced its staff recruitment process by allocating resources to established platforms such as Indeed, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

NCMC invests in their staff. Regular training and professional development opportunities are available to staff. The College provides funds annually for professional development. Faculty professional development at North Central is outlined in the collective bargaining agreement, with \$950 allocated annually per full-time faculty member, allowing them to accumulate up to \$3,800 over 4 years. Staff professional development at NCMC is supported through dedicated funding and overseen by a committee that meets quarterly to review requests. Tuition reimbursement is also available, with funding allocations based on the number of requests each quarter. During the staff session, many employees shared how they have utilized these funds for their professional growth. Recognizing the importance of cultivating leadership, NCMC provides opportunities for staff to participate in leadership development programs. Employees have attended workshops offered by the Chamber of Commerce and the Michigan Leadership Academy, a statewide initiative designed to enhance leadership skills. Staff also shared they are encouraged to attend conferences and provided a variety of examples of local, regional, state, and national conferences.

NCMC allocates approximately 82% of the general fund budget to salaries, which includes all employee groups. The college has recently added nine new staff positions to aligned with student success and the strategic plan. These positions include: an Accessibility Services Coordinator/Advisor, Counselor to address mental health, Instructional Designer, Foundation Gift Officer, HR Generalist, Student Services Coordinator, Career Development Specialist, and an IR Data Analyst. During the breakout session on co-curricular assessment, the team learned that an additional new position of Grants Writer had been added in the previous week. During both the staff session and the criterion five session, the team explored staffing workloads. Like many smaller colleges, NCMC's staff and faculty take on multiple roles to support institutional needs. During the staff session, employees shared that they feel supported in their work and trust their supervisors to help them prioritize their work and address challenges, as well as advocate for necessary support to maintain a sustainable workload.

According to the strategic plan, NCMC has a strategic goal to improve facilities and technology to increase student success. In the past 5 years, NCMC has invested over 33.5 million dollars in capital and infrastructure investments that include facilities renovation and expansion; HVAC and energy efficiency upgrades; and technology and classroom enhancements. These investments have been funded by a variety of sources including: state capital outlays, foundation matching funds; federal HEERF dollars, grants, College reserves, bond proceeds and student fees.

At the time of the visit, the college was undergoing a major construction project. The CATÉE project, launched in Summer 2024 with initial renovations to the Health Education and Science Center (HESC), is a major investment in expanding health sciences and career/technical education.

The project includes significant updates to the HESC and the construction of a state-of-the-art Technology Center. In early 2025, work will shift to construction of new Technology Center, expanding to support workforce development in critical industries serving the region such as robotics, automation, engineering, electronics, welding, and computer-aided design. Completion of the Technology Center and HESC is expected by Fall 2026. The college has made significant investments in classroom and teaching technology. During the campus tour, the team observed many these enhancements. Additional discussion about classroom enhancements can be found in 3D.

NCMC follows a transparent and structured annual budgeting process, guided by the Strategic Plan. The executive leadership ensures that departmental, divisional, and location needs are reflected in the budget. Budget development begins in March and concludes in May. The budget cycle is articulated in the assurance argument and was confirmed by the CFO as well as a Dean. Per Michigan law, the budget is balanced annually and made publicly available on the NCMC website. Since Michigan does not have a centralized Community College System, the budget is not required to be submitted to the state. During the criterion five session, faculty, staff, Deans, and administrators shared how their roles in the budget process. Budget decisions are reviewed and approved by senior leadership and the Board of Trustees, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities. Both staff and faculty can request additional resources, such as classroom equipment or teaching technology, through the *New Initiatives Request Form*. Deans and faculty shared their experiences with the request process, which involves faculty filling out the form, meeting with the Deans who prioritize the requests and present them to the executive leadership team. Requests exceeding department budgets are evaluated and approved based on data-driven considerations.

NCMC's goals are explicitly outlined in its Strategic Plan, demonstrating a clear connection to the College's mission. The assurance argument outlines the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which were collaboratively developed. As shared in the assurance argument and during numerous sessions, the KPIs are monitored through the PERC dashboards which are maintained by Institutional Research.

The College regularly monitors its financial health through monthly and quarterly reports, including statements of net position, revenue, expenses, and capital projects. Both the evidence in the form of meeting minutes included in the assurance argument and the conversation with the Board of Trustees confirmed their review and approval of financial reports. Budget managers have real time access to budgets through the Jenzabar system.

According to the website, the NCMC budget is comprised of property taxes (39%), tuition and fees (32%), and state appropriations (24%). From the evidence reviewed in the Assurance Argument, NCMC is fiscally stable and is in a solid position to pursue its mission as evidenced by the financial statement, audit report and Composite Financial Index (CFI). The last four audits have received an “unqualified” rating and contained no concerns. According to the most recent reporting on the *2024 HLC Institutional Update: Financial Form*, the Composite Financial Index (CFI) for 2024 is 4.21, reflecting a slight decrease from the previous two years (2023 and 2022). Despite this decline, the institution remains in a solid financial health range, indicating stability and the capacity to sustain operations effectively. Additionally, this CFI level suggests transformational potential, providing opportunities for strategic investment, innovation, and long-term growth while maintaining financial resilience.

NCMC prioritizes resource allocation to support educational goals. Throughout the Assurance Argument and during the on-site visit, it was evident that the strategic plan, coupled with student success, is the driving force for resource prioritization, including professional staffing, facilities, and

fiduciary needs. As noted by evidence provided in the assurance argument, 54.4% of the non-personnel budget is allocated to instruction and student services. The review team observed, through numerous examples and firsthand during the campus tour, that not only has the college maintained strong fiscal management practices, effectively allocating resources to support institutional priorities, but it has also made strategic investments that drive transformation, long-term sustainability and serve their community.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Rating

Met

Rationale

NCMC's resource allocation process aligns with its mission and priorities. Evidence provide in the assurance argument and conversations with the Board of Trustees, leadership, Deans, faculty, and staff confirmed that the College's strategic and academic planning processes ensure that resources are allocated in alignment with the College's mission and goals. Evidence provided in the assurance argument include strategic plan and Five-year Capital Outlay Plan guide resource distribution. As highlighted in the assurance argument and discussed by staff and faculty during the Criterion Five session, the New Initiatives Request Form includes a section for providing rationale on how requests align with the strategic plan. This process ensures that resources are allocated not only for immediate needs but also for long-term priorities, such as facility upgrades and technological infrastructure. The college utilizes a strategic performance dashboard (PERC), along with an accompanying spreadsheet provided as evidence in the assurance argument, to monitor progress. The spreadsheet is updated by Vice Presidents to reflect advancing and ongoing progress.

NCMC has an emerging process for integrating the assessment of student learning, evaluation of college operations, planning, and budgeting. While initial discussions did not clearly articulate the link between student learning assessment and resource allocation, evidence from faculty and staff conversations throughout the visit indicated that these connections are taking place. The assessment and program review processes are currently underway, although there is refinement still occurring. To date, 24/62 programs have participated.

NCMC's assurance argument notes its program review process as a place where processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting are linked. Indeed, there are apparent links between evaluation of the programs and budgeting; for example, the process

generates an “Administrative Response to Academic Planning & Program Review” which includes recommendations, many of which require budget allocations. Reviewers noted, however, that the program review process appears to focus primarily on indicators of program health or vitality rather than direct measures of student learning aligned specifically with stated course or program goals. It’s also worthy of note that the graphic NCMC uses to articulate the alignment of strategic plan, operations, and budget includes five intersecting college functions (leadership, strategy, operations, financials, and fundraising) without any mention of assessment or even student learning. Through conversations with executive leadership, faculty, and Deans, the team found that the college was linking the assessment of student learning to resource allocation and budget requests through the New Initiatives Form, independent of the program review process.

As NCMC continues to enhance its student learning assessment program, it will need to intentionally position student learning as equally vital to the college’s overall success as financial and operational priorities. This includes integrating the assessment of student learning outcomes with clear action plans for continuous improvement in the program review. One possible approach could be adapting the New Initiatives Request Form to better link assessment findings with resource allocation and strategic planning. During the mid-year visit, the college should be able to directly articulate how student learning assessment informs decision-making and resource allocation, demonstrating a systematic approach to using assessment data for institutional improvement.

The planning process involves the entire institution and takes into account both internal and external stakeholder perspectives. As noted in the assurance argument, the development of the strategic plan encompassed a wide variety of stakeholders which was confirmed during the Board of Trustees session as well as open session of criteria 1 and 2 with staff and faculty. Collaboration is demonstrated in public oversight, community engagements, and industry collaboration through Program Advisory Boards, the Presidential Commission, and the engagement of college personnel on a variety of boards. Numerous participants in the community session shared examples of the college's significant impact on the community, emphasizing its approachability, willingness to listen, and commitment to solution-focused collaboration that supports community development and vitality. During the Criterion Five session, faculty, staff, and budget managers described the annual budget planning process as collaborative, providing numerous examples of meetings, discussions, and prioritization efforts. They also highlighted the role of Program Advisory Boards in guiding budget decisions, as noted in the assurance argument, by providing industry insights and ensuring curriculum was relevant to workforce needs.

NCMC uses internal and external surveys, such as CCSSE and PACE, to assess student and institutional needs. Recent CCSSE survey results led to a Mental Health Counselor position. During open sessions, faculty and staff highlighted how these surveys shaped initiatives like Real Talk, which fosters belonging among at-risk students through educator storytelling, strengthening student-instructor relationships and engagement.

Evidence from the assurance argument and on-site visit confirmed that the College proactively plans and monitors progress based on a clear understanding of its capacity, including fluctuations in revenue and enrollment. NCMC engages in a structured budgeting process, though in a conversation with the CFO, the team learned that the college does not conduct scenario planning. Reports, dashboards, meeting minutes, and discussions during the Criterion Five open session further demonstrated NCMC’s commitment to financial vitality, highlighting how it assesses financial health, responds to enrollment trends, and aligns resources with institutional goals.

NCMC’s budget planning process is also collaborative. During the Criterion Five session, faculty,

staff, and budget managers highlighted how prioritization efforts and regular discussions guide financial decisions. Program Advisory Boards play a key role in ensuring budget allocations align with workforce needs by providing industry insights that shape curriculum relevance. See 5B for additional information about budget planning and monitoring.

As noted by evidence provided in the Assurance Argument, the College uses a variety of resources to assist in planning and mitigating unforeseen and/or evolving related to external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support. Examples provided in the assurance argument include environmental scans, SWOT analysis provided as evidence in the assurance argument. The College integrates demographic trends into its planning, adjusting class sizes, locations, and programs accordingly. For example, in response to rising dual-enrollment trend, NCMC strengthened its Early College partnership to enhance student accessibility.

NCMC plans for technology upgrades through a Classroom Technology Plan, which is paired with a five-year network upgrade plan. Additionally, investments have also been made in Information Technology to guard against cybersecurity attacks. Several IT staff shared examples of financial investments made in advanced security measures, system upgrades, and employee training programs to strengthen the college's cybersecurity infrastructure and mitigate potential threats. The college currently operates with an informal data disaster plan, but there are plans to develop a formal, structured plan along with an academic continuity plan to enhance preparedness and safeguard critical systems. The college may want to consider prioritizing the development of these plans to strengthen institutional resilience, minimize disruptions, and protect institutional, student, and employee data, as well as academic operations, against potential threats or emergencies.

NCMC systemically tracks the implementation of its plans and monitors progress in a number of ways. North Central employs a systematic approach to track and monitor progress on key institutional initiatives using performance tracking tools. The evidence provided includes documented reports, the PERC dashboard, meeting minutes, and assessment plans, demonstrating the College's commitment to transparency and continuous improvement. Additionally, staff and faculty shared insights and experiences with the PERC dashboard and the Institutional Research department during the open session of Criterion Five, highlighting how these practices and collaborative conversations support institutional effectiveness and informed decision-making.

The assurance argument provides several evidence examples of how the strategic plan is monitored. Spreadsheets, including the Progress Review Performance Tracker and the Year-to-Year Strategic Performance Instrument, track progress and provide evidence. Enrollment and student success initiatives are driven by the Strategic Enrollment Plan and monitored through the PERC Dashboard and SEM Report Card. Assessment of student learning and program reviews are still emerging processes, although about 40% of the programs have initiated the assessment cycle. See 4A and 4B for additional information.

Progress and updates pertaining to the strategic plan are communicated to stakeholders through all-campus meetings and the Board of Trustees members confirmed there is regular agenda item during their monthly meetings. Staff and faculty confirmed that updates regarding assessment and academic planning are documented and shared through an internal SharePoint site. Updates regarding enrollment and student success are regularly provided to Cabinet liaisons, who oversee divisions responsible for implementing SEM initiatives and responding to emerging trends.

These integrated tracking tools and data-driven processes ensure that institutional priorities remain

on course, resource allocation is guided by measurable outcomes, and continuous improvement efforts are supported by real-time insights and stakeholder collaboration.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Rationale

Evidence in the assurance argument and conversation during the on-site visit demonstrates NCMC's governance structure features a clear delegation of authority, with the Board of Trustees responsible for policy development, presidential oversight, and budget monitoring, while daily operations are led by the President and College leadership. Shared governance is promoted through cross-departmental collaboration, faculty and staff committees, and student involvement in decision-making. Key committees, including Curriculum, Institutional Research, and Student Success, are essential for academic policy and initiatives. Transparency is maintained through compliance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act, monthly public board meetings, and regular internal communication. The team heard numerous examples of data informed decision making in academic program planning and student success initiatives which is operationalized and supported by the Institutional Research Office with tools like PERC Data Dashboards and Starfish for student retention.

Evidence and conversation also demonstrated that NCMC has a qualified and well-trained staff dedicated to supporting the institution's mission. There are processes for faculty credentialing and evaluation and similar staff hiring processes. The team also heard about recent improvements in standardizing the hiring and onboarding processes as well as compliance training. Professional development is a key investment, with faculty receiving allocated funds per the collective bargaining agreement and staff supported through excellence funds, tuition reimbursement and leadership programs. Nine recent new hires, reflect the college's strategic focus on student success. Employees report feeling supported in their work, trusting supervisors to help manage workloads and advocate for necessary resources.

The team was able to see many of the recent significant investments in infrastructure and financial planning that align with its Strategic Plan and mission. Over the past five years, the college has invested over \$33 million in capital improvements, including facility upgrades, energy efficiency projects, and classroom technology enhancements. At the time of the visit, the college was engaged in the CATEE project, expanding health sciences and technical education facilities, with completion expected by Fall 2026.

There is clear evidence that institutional planning encompasses the institution as a whole and the resources allocation process is driven by the strategic plan. The college demonstrated both through evidence in the assurance argument and various conversations from staff and faculty at all levels of the college that there is a structured, transparent budgeting process with departmental and institutional needs reflected in financial planning. The team found that the organizational culture of the college and the flatter hierarchy encourages collaboration.

After review of evidence, the team finds NCMC is fiscally stable, with a strong Composite Financial Index, supporting both institutional sustainability and transformational investments in student success, staffing, and facilities. After reviewing the evidence and the various discussions with leadership, faculty, and staff the team can confirm that the college uses specific frameworks and

dashboards to guide resource distribution and track progress of achieving goals in the strategic plan. While the college has an emerging process for linking student learning assessment with budgeting, faculty and staff conversations revealed that these connections are forming. However, program review currently focuses more on program health and provides no evidence of student learning being linked to planning and budgeting. Strengthening these connections is imperative to integrating student learning into institutional decision-making. The team recommends that in the next mid-cycle review, the college must be able to provide evidence and clearly articulate how assessment outcomes inform resource allocation and strategic priorities.

FC - Federal Compliance

Rating

Met

Federal Compliance Filing Form

- March_2025_Federal_Compliance_Filing_for_NCMC

Rationale

Federal Compliance Rationale Template
Effective September 1, 2024–August 31, 2025

Instructions: When an evaluation that includes a Federal Compliance Review is released to the peer review team in the Assurance System, copy and paste the text below into the Rationale section of the Federal Compliance tab.

1. ASSIGNMENT OF CREDITS, PROGRAM LENGTH AND TUITION

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The institution's Policy Manual has a clear statement of the definition of assignment of credit hours as described in Policy 217. The definition is in keeping with the definition of the U.S. Department of Education and verified in the course descriptions in the online catalog.

The Policy Manual documents that the institution offers academic credentials inclusive of associate degrees, certificates, and certificates of development in recognition of students successfully completing programs offered by the College. The specifics of such programs and relevant credit hours are contained in the College Catalog. The current catalog specifies the total number of credit hours required for associate degrees and transfer programs are typically 60 hours. Further review of the curricula in these programs generally lists courses with three academic credits. A review of the syllabi that were found in the Addendum showed courses with lecture hours with and/without lab sections that equated to the credit hours assigned in the College Catalog.

Career Associate degree programs differ from regular associate degree programs mostly in the level of prescription in the program itself rather than in any changes in the credit hours or credit hour requirements. For example, a minimum of 15 credits must be taken at the institution that will award the degree. The degree itself may require 60 or more credits to complete. Certificates of Completion

generally are described as 30 credit hour programs that prepare a student in some specialized area and are often completed in two semesters. Although these programs often lead to eligibility for external certification exams, they are not credentialing programs.

Based on the policies listed and the courses and catalog program information it is clear that the institution has designed its academic programs so that students can expect to complete a program of study in two semesters for a Certificate of Completion and four semesters for an Associates Degree. It is unclear whether a student in a Career Associate of Science will expect to graduate in four semesters based on the particular rules of the program.

Tuition rates are published on the Admissions Office web page. In addition to the direct cost as a raw number by demographic group and contact hour, there are links to a Federal net tuition calculator, an institutional net tuition calculator, how to pay your bill, and to scholarship resources.

2. Institutional Mechanisms for Handling Student Complaints:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The Student Handbook identifies steps for handling all Due Process issues including those that are academic in nature and other types of complaints. Academic complaints fall within the Student Code of Conduct and are handled by the Vice President for Student Affairs. The Code of Conduct is written broadly enough that it is applicable to student complaints inside and outside of the classroom such that very few student issues would fall outside the Code. Non-academic issues such as alcohol and drug use, unauthorized animals, bullying, computer misuse, unaccompanied children or dependent adults, discrimination, dishonesty, disruption of normal college operations, disruptive behavior, failure to pay, failure to return college property, forgery, fraud, sexual misconduct, and another dozen that are not included in this list. If an issue were to arise the Handbook defines a process for resolution of the issue.

3. PUBLICATION OF TRANSFER POLICIES

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Transfer policies are easily accessible off the Admissions Office home page of the institutional web site. Information clearly identifies the process for planning a transfer starting with assuring that the 'transfer to' institution offers the desired program. This is included in the Transfer Check List. The Transfer Page also has links to the Michigan Transfer Agreement, Michigan Transfer Pathways, Articulation Agreements, College and University Links, and the University Center.

4. PRACTICES FOR VERIFICATION OF STUDENT IDENTITY

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The institution uses a single-sign-on method for access to all of its secure server applications. The single-sign-on is generated at the time of admission in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and uses directory-only data of students combined with a randomly generated password issued at the time of application to verify the identity of students.

5. PROTECTION OF STUDENT PRIVACY

Conclusion :

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The institution has a number of policies in a variety of locations designed to protect the privacy of student information. These separate policies relate to an umbrella Board Policy (421) of overall Privacy.

6. PUBLICATION OF STUDENT OUTCOME DATA

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The institution has documented the student outcome data on its website. Although it is not directly accessible, it is available. Data are provided for regular students and a sub population of student athletes. Data show that the retention to graduation of student athletes is significantly higher than retention to transfer or graduation of the institutional population at large.

7. STANDING WITH STATE AND OTHER ACCREDITORS

Conclusion :

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The institution holds initial accreditation for its associate degree nursing program through the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and continuing accreditation for its certificate and degree programs through Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).

8. ADMISSIONS AND RELATED ENROLLMENT PRACTICES:

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The Admissions Team is made up of a Director of Admissions, two Outreach Coordinators and a Dual Admissions Coordinator. This Team is responsible for assuring the integrity of the admissions and enrollment practices defined in the Federal Compliance document and complying with the Board Policies. Pages 22-23 of the Compliance filing validate information contained in the Policy Manual and the Web Site for the Information.

APPENDIX A: TITLE IV PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

MET

Complete this section **only if** the institution has submitted an Appendix A. Review any negative actions taken against the institution since HLC's last Federal Compliance review and identify any implications for the institution's current compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or other HLC requirements. Provide a detailed rationale for any Core Components identified as Met with Concerns or Not Met.

Rationale:

The institution had an audit finding on its Federal Compliance with a COVID 19 grant related to the use of funds to pay executive salaries in 2019. Those funds were immediately repaid and do not represent any concerns at this time.

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MANDATORY REPORTING: FRAUD, ABUSE OR FAILING TO MEET TITLE IV RESPONSIBILITIES

Federal regulations require HLC to notify the U.S. Department of Education related to the following item. Do not skip this section.

In the course of the peer review team's evaluation of this institution, have the reviewers encountered any reason to believe that (i) the institution is failing to meet its Title IV, Higher Education Act program responsibilities (if the institution participates in Title IV, HEA programs) or (ii) that the institution may be engaged in fraud or abuse?

Answer:

No

Rationale:

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Review Dashboard

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

Review Summary

Conclusion

North Central Michigan College meets all criteria for accreditation and is eligible to choose its pathway for accreditation.

As a result of the current evaluation which included a review of its assurance argument as well as a two-day on-site interaction with internal and external constituents, the peer review team concluded that NCMC meets all criteria for accreditation.

Strong evidence exists to provide assurance that NCMC's mission is widely understood and guides all aspects of the college's operations. Further, governance structures at the college function effectively, and institutional policies related to fiscal, employment, and student conduct matters are well-developed and mature. These mature policies as well as faculty, staff, and administration's commitment to them make it evident that NCMC is operating with integrity in all of its functions.

Reviewers noted considerable enthusiasm and energy regarding the college's strategic initiatives as well as specific improvements in key functions such as assessment of student learning outcomes and program review. During on-campus conversations during the site visit, stakeholders demonstrated a renewed and invigorated understanding of how assessment and program review can foster improved performance. In fact, one faculty leader noted that NCMC "has moved from a culture of compliance to a culture of curiosity." Another faculty leader also described how newly developed assessment procedures have helped him notice and improve weak spots in his own teaching strategies. These indicators demonstrate that NCMC's Assessment Academy activities have resulted in a substantive enhancement to college culture as it relates to continuous quality improvement.

At the same time, reviewers note that newly re-envisioned processes for assessment and program review are in the early stages of implementation. In many areas, data and information do not yet exist to inform improvement processes and enhanced results. The next four years are a critical time period in which NCMC will need to be deliberate in its work to systematize improvements in assessment and program review. Given the enthusiasm expressed during the present review, reviewers have no reason to believe that measurable results will not be available soon alongside action plans intent on driving improvements.

Also newly implemented at NCMC is a framework, process, and commitment to formal evaluation of faculty. While not all faculty members' performance had been formally evaluated in the recent past, both faculty leaders and academic administration appear to share a commitment to ongoing performance evaluation. The newly developed process is heavily dependent upon a "peer review" component, however, reviewers noted that both a faculty leader and the vice president for academic affairs both articulated a firm understanding of the process as "evaluative" during the same conversation. Because this process is new at NCMC, the next four years offers both faculty and administration an opportunity to further refine its approach to faculty performance evaluation as well as its shared commitment to improving performance through formal evaluation.

Reviewers were particularly impressed by evidence that NCMC is actively listening to its external stakeholder groups. Community leaders participating in the on-site visit were generous in their praise of NCMC's commitment to the public good, even noting the impact of the college's initiatives and their impact in the community it serves. Also notable is how aligned the community voice and the college voice is in relation to future trends, threats, and opportunities.

The exceptional morale demonstrated by internal constituents as well as the enthusiastic praise presented by its external partners are strong indicators that North Central Michigan College is not only meeting criteria for accreditation but is positioned well to make great advancements in how it achieves its mission.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Sanctions Recommendation

No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation

Eligible to choose

Federal Compliance

Met

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Institutional Status and Requirements (ISR) Worksheet

Review Details

Institution: North Central Michigan College, Michigan

Type of Review: Open Pathway - Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

Description: In developing the Assurance Argument for the reaffirmation of accreditation in 2025-2026 NCMC should include updates of the efforts described in the interim report to confirm compliance with Core Components 3A, 3C, 4A, and 4B.

Review Dates: 03/10/2025 - 03/11/2025

☐ No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

Accreditation Status

Status: Accredited

✓ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Degrees Awarded: Associates

✓ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2014 - 2015

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2024 - 2025

☐ No Change

✓ Recommended Change: **2034 - 2035**

Accreditation Stipulations

General:

The institution is approved at the following program level(s): Associate's

The institution is not approved at the following program level(s): Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist, Doctoral

- ☒ No Change
- ☐ Recommended Change:

Additional Locations:

Prior HLC approval required.

- ☒ No Change
- ☐ Recommended Change:

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

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

- ☒ No Change
- ☐ Recommended Change:

Competency-Based Education:

- ☒ No Change
- ☐ Recommended Change:

Pell-Eligible Prison Education Program:

- ☒ No Change
- ☐ Recommended Change:

Accreditation Events

Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation: Open Pathway

- ☐ No Change
- ☒ Recommended Change: **Eligible to Choose**

Upcoming Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

✓ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Upcoming Branch Campus or Additional Location Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

✓ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Monitoring

Upcoming Monitoring Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

✓ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Institutional Data

Academic Programs Offered:

Undergraduate Programs		
Associate Degrees:	21	✓ No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Baccalaureate Degrees:	0	✓ No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Graduate Programs		
Master's Degrees:	0	✓ No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Specialist Degrees:	0	✓ No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:

Doctoral Degrees:	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Certificate Programs		
Certificates:	25	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:

Contractual Arrangements:

48.0508 Welding Technology/Welder - Associate - Welding Technician Associate of Applied Science - Industrial Arts Institute, Inc.

☒ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Off-Campus Activities

Branch Campuses:

No Branch Campuses

☒ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Additional Locations:

NCMC - Cheboygan, 801 West Lincoln Avenue, Cheboygan, Michigan 49721 United States

North Central Michigan College Gaylord Center, 620 E. Fifth St., Gaylord, Michigan 49735 United States

☒ No Change
☐ Recommended Change: