

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

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

WSC's mission is "to provide accessible, affordable, life-changing, and life-long educational pathways to residents of North Dakota, the Upper Plains, and beyond." The college's mission statement and values were recently revised; the revisions were internally approved on May 20, 2024 and thereafter approved by the North Dakota University System (NDUS). The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) [approved the revised mission on June 25, 2024](#). The aim of WSC is to make education and training accessible, affordable, life-long, and life-changing. Its outreach serves those in the local community and region and attempts to make a national and global impact through the students it serves and the people that its students will serve in the future.

The initial clause of the previous mission statement, "Where the people make the difference," was repurposed into the college motto. This was also approved at the same time as the revised mission statement by the SBHE. This motto was coined by a longtime teacher and coach for WSC, Phil Rabon, who was an advocate for student engagement. This motto will continue to lead WSC into the future to make a positive difference in the lives of its students and employees, as well as regional businesses and communities.

Mission: Accessible Learning

WSC is in a dynamic area of North Dakota that serves over 100,000 people within one hour of its campus. In the last decade, Williston had the second-highest population growth rate in the state, and it is in the heart of the Bakken Shale oil production, making [WSC uniquely situated](#) to meet the education and training needs of the local workforce, their families, and the next generation.

Post the COVID-19 pandemic, three construction projects across campus were intended to provide increased access to WSC's stakeholders. First, the addition of the ["Bright Beginnings" childcare facility on WSC's campus](#) has increased access for students

wanting to attend college but lacking daycare access. Second, [a new turf project](#) will install synthetic turf to the baseball and softball fields on the WSC campus, designing a complex to increase access to recreational space for college athletics and community teams of all ages. Finally, [a newly planned, state-of-the-art healthcare facility](#) will bring much needed training and certification to the Williston area to support existing healthcare-industry shortages, and it anticipates the construction of a new Sanford Health medical facility in Williston.

WSC continues to explore ways to enhance accessibility in its course offerings. The noncredit workforce development arm of WSC, TrainND Northwest added two new programs of study to meet area demands in the fields of unmanned aircraft [systems](#) and [commercial driving licensure](#). While maintaining low faculty-to-student ratios, WSC has also increased its modes of instruction. Classes are offered online, over interactive video network (IVN), and in-person during the day and evenings; in the future, more hybrid and blended options are being discussed in conjunction with a new scheduling grid to add flexibility in class scheduling. [“Intersession” semesters](#) were added to make courses available to students during off-peak times. Discussions are currently happening to leverage alternative scheduling, block scheduling, and sequenced coursework to increase availability of courses to maximize students’ time with their busy schedules. WSC students have increased access to baccalaureate degrees through collaborative agreements with other North Dakota institutions, such as [University of Mary](#), wherein students can pay “less than \$5,000” to continue with a cohort at WSC and complete a degree in business management, elementary education, or nursing. Valley City State University, a public North Dakota sister institution, also offers an [elementary education program](#) with various endorsements, including early childhood education that utilizes the [Bright Beginnings daycare facility](#) on WSC’s campus.

Mission: Affordable

At the national level, WSC remains affordable for the students it serves. WSC tuition is several thousand dollars [less than the national average for community colleges](#). 86% of students were able to receive scholarships from the WSC Foundation, while only 17% needed to take out loans. Despite housing challenges in the community, WSC continues to provide competitive housing options for students. In fact, WSC has maintained the [lowest tuition rate in the state](#).

Scholarship and financial aid opportunities allow students to pursue their educational goals with less worry about finances. The WSC Foundation provides local and regional scholarships to high school graduates from 53 counties across the eastern half of Montana and the western half of North Dakota. These scholarships significantly reduce financial barriers for WSC students primarily through the Williams County Graduate, Regional County Graduate, and Academic Achievement Award scholarships, covering all [tuition and fees](#). Other [scholarships](#) are awarded each year to create opportunities for students and to make education more affordable. Scholarship opportunities are also

available through TrainND Northwest and the newly created [TrainND Foundation](#) to make quality workforce training available for those with financial need.

The [2023 session of the North Dakota Legislature](#) brought additional financial help to students attending North Dakota colleges and universities. WSC continues to be creative and proactive despite greater funding source challenges. Though the State of North Dakota contributes to the funding of its state colleges and universities, students still bear much of the cost. Changes to the funding model for WSC and the NDUS institutions shifted the focus from enrollment to completion, and this change did not necessarily help smaller colleges. Through its budgeting process, WSC must anticipate the potential growth or decline of students and form its budgets accordingly.

Mission: Life-changing, and Life-Long Educational Pathways

A college degree continues to be a vital tool for success. [Those with degrees outearn and outperform their non-degree peers](#). WSC provides the start students need for earning these degrees through its many access points: the Adult Learning Center provides GED opportunities, TrainND Northwest offers workforce, and early-entry and dual-credit high school students can jump-start their college degrees. Middle college options are also available at WSC, wherein students begin their college coursework as juniors in high school (11th grade). In fact, a WSC student completed an associate degree [by age 17 and went on to attain a graduate degree by age 20](#). Taking general education courses in their junior year allows them to enroll in the first year of the nursing program in their senior year. In doing so, this makes their completion of the Licensed Practical Nursing program much faster and sets them up for transfer more quickly.

Key [articulation and consortium agreements](#) provide pathways that extend students' opportunities in, through, and beyond WSC. Currently, WSC has over 60 agreements with nine different four-year institutions, public and private.

Mission: To Residents of North Dakota, the Upper Plains, and Beyond

The mission statement reflects the vision and purpose of WSC as an institution which serves a small but expanding community. Williston is home to approximately 30,000 residents, and this accounts for the bulk of WSC's student population as resident North Dakotans; [a significant amount of students also travel from adjoining states, such as Montana, to meet the college's "Upper Plains" scope of recruitment and outreach. A map of the 53 counties served by the WSC Foundation's regional scholarship can be found on the website](#). The college serves traditional high school graduates and non-traditional students as well as early-entry and dual-credit students. Distance education and robust

athletic program recruitment allow WSC to reach students “beyond” on a national and even global level.

WSC’s outreach to the people it serves fulfills [the missional mandate from the North Dakota SBHE](#) to “unleash the potential of higher education in the state to enhance the quality of life, and the social and economic vitality of all served by its public colleges and universities.” Starting in fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022 onward), WSC hired a recruiter to visit high schools and talk to eligible students about the opportunities available at WSC. Moreover, starting fiscal year 2024 (July 1, 2023 onward), Student Services staff members are available three days per week at Williston High School, the largest feeder high school. Additionally, starting in fiscal year 2025, a Student Services representative will be present one day per week at Watford City High School (approximately 50 miles south of Williston), the second largest high school in the region.

Varied course delivery methods continue to reach larger audiences and different localities. WSC continues to develop course delivery methods through online, hybrid/blended, IVN, and on-campus deliveries.

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

WSC’s [mission, vision, values, and purpose](#) are current and emphasize its role both in the local community and the larger region it serves. WSC’s mission statement is embedded in decisions, processes, and reviews. The mission statement remains current through its use as an integral part of annual [program reviews](#) to demonstrate how programs connect to the larger mission of the college. Annual strategic planning meetings allow opportunity to restate the college’s mission, vision, and values through shared leadership. For example, at the last strategic planning meeting, faculty, staff, and administrators were all assigned to generate future plans for the college through a collaborative process. Internal communication structures also allow for the discussion of misaligned purposes and/or review of the institution’s mission and goals.

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

WSC's mission sufficiently articulates the intended constituents for its educational programming and services. The college is also aware that diverse and meaningful experiences add to each student's intended academic pathway and goals. This awareness of the surrounding community and culture influences the college's purpose and directives, but WSC looks to broader goals beyond the local community that it serves.

The educational opportunities at WSC provide pathways for students not yet enrolled as traditional college students. WSC collaborates with the [Region 1 Adult Learning Center](#) to provide "services that help adults increase knowledge and improve skills that are essential in today's changing world." Services include GED preparation, English Language Learning, Adult Basic Education, and college preparation with the oversight of the [North Dakota Department of Public Instruction](#). High school students also have opportunities to earn credit through WSC using dual enrollment divided into [dual-credit or early-entry pathways](#); these pathways provide the same academic rigor as traditional college courses to jump-start their educational journeys.

Once students are college-ready, WSC offers numerous academic pathways to meet students' needs. An important aspect of WSC's mission is meeting the needs of regional students wanting to [start their education in Williston](#). Upon completion of their course of studies, students can either enter the workforce or transfer to a four-year college or university to get a degree in a specific field. WSC also works to form [articulation agreements](#) with other colleges and universities within the NDUS to create a seamless transfer for students, whether those students want to pursue baccalaureate degrees or graduate degrees. Additionally, WSC is working with all four-year institutions in North Dakota to create co-matriculated onsite bachelor's degree attainment options for students. This is critical to stem the migration of youth away from rural northwest North Dakota to the urban centers on the eastern side of the state. The regional workforce demand is elevated, and the availability of trained personnel is limited with the youth drain that the region is currently experiencing.

Starting in the Fall 2024 semester, WSC will offer middle college options to two cohorts of students at Watford City High School and Sidney High School, respectively. These cohorts will start by taking the general education prerequisites for the Nursing program in their junior year of high school (grade 11). Subsequently, they will enroll in the first year of the Nursing program in their senior year (grade 12), which would allow them to sit for the NCLEX-PN exam to become Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN). LPNs are highly

sought after and paid higher than other entry-level jobs. These same LPNs would be able to finish their associate degree in Nursing (ADN) the year following their high school graduation. Concurrently, WSC is working to start the “mobility” modality for the ADN program, which would allow these students (and others) to have a hybrid schedule that has little impact on their ability to work in their home localities.

WSC further fulfills its mission statement by training and certifying students in workforce education. The college offers program certificates and certificate of completion options in important [career and technical fields](#), and more programming is available through [TrainND Northwest](#), WSC’s workforce training division.

During the 2023 legislative session, North Dakota legislators funded the building of a new \$37 million facility for healthcare training at WSC. The construction of this facility started in June 2024. It coincides with the creation of new proposed healthcare programs to create the local workforce that is needed by hospitals and healthcare providers in northwest North Dakota and northeastern Montana, as well as Native American reservations within these regions. These proposed programs include Certified Medical Assisting, Health Information Management, Emergency Medical Services, Social Work, and Substance Use Disorder Counseling. These programs are being built in a stackable-credential format that will include workforce-ready certificates that allow graduates to enter the job market and potentially complete their education.

WSC’s mission also supports the [NDUS mission](#) “To enhance economic growth, social vitality, and quality of life for North Dakota through the discovery, sharing, and application of knowledge.” The vision of the NDUS also encompasses that of WSC’s, “To lead the nation in educational attainment through access, innovation and excellence.”

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

Providing accessible, affordable, life-long, and life-changing education is not without its opportunities for innovation and growth. WSC continues to navigate student demand with financial feasibility and practicality.

Program reviews are integral to meeting WSC’s stated mission. [WSC Procedure 403.1.2: Current Academic Program Review](#) explains the program review process at the college. Program reviews are set on three-year cycles: in the first year, the program will complete a full program review to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and continuing viability of the program; in the second and third years, program updates will note the changes made to the program, its courses, or its infrastructure. The program review cycle

ensures that faculty are meeting students' needs, that budget is being allocated accordingly to address program needs, and that faculty are accountable for maintaining the program to the best of their ability.

WSC has introduced several new programs and partnerships with more plans to introduce new programs with the completion of a new healthcare training facility. The completion of Bright Beginnings daycare on campus led to a partnership with Valley City State University to offer a four-year program in [Elementary Education with an early childhood endorsement](#).

[WSC's governance and continuous improvement process](#) is designed to both respond to present needs but also anticipate future needs. WSC's [Executive Cabinet](#) is comprised of administrators and directors across campus; this group meets bi-weekly to address how the college can most effectively meet its mission, vision, and purpose. [Faculty Senate](#) meets monthly to oversee academic policy and procedures. Its other subcommittees, such as the Curriculum Committee and the Accreditation Criteria 3 & 4 Team (overseeing the ePortfolio Committee), meet monthly and bi-weekly, respectively, to review and vet curricular developments and to monitor the college's progress in meeting its mission through the institution's learning outcomes. [Staff Senate](#) meets monthly to oversee alignment of student services with the mission and vision of the college. [Student Senate](#) meets monthly to monitor and drive student engagement at WSC. Each of the four academic departments at WSC meet regularly to ensure educational measures and directives are met.

[Instructional Cabinet](#) meets weekly to address challenges and cast vision to create the most effective pedagogical practice and delivery; this group maintains a cross-divisional membership of faculty, staff, and administrators to ensure that multiple campus entities are included in conversations of campus operations. For example, Instructional Cabinet discussed advising models that might be more appropriate for our student populations, enrollment trends affecting the community and region, the creation of a scheduling grid to increase flexibility in course offerings, and the planning of academic course maps to more easily advise students throughout their two years at WSC.

WSC also deploys digital tools to respond to enrollment trends based on faculty and staff feedback. In response to an identified need to help WSC improve its retention and completion rates, the Starfish application was deployed to enable faculty, staff, and students to be proactive about student success; this includes early alerts, referrals, appointments, feedback, and communication for those students who are at risk of academic failure or dropout. [Maxient Conduct Manager](#) was also deployed to confidentially manage student conduct cases, academic alerts, policy violations, behavioral issues, health referrals, and complaints regarding Title IX and academic integrity. Upcoming deployment of Blackboard Analytics for Learn will pull student learning outcome assessment (SLOA) data from the Blackboard Ultra learning management system as WSC develops its SLOA programming. [Modern Campus](#) deployment will "gamify" Student Life attendance and participation and could be used in the future to create a

badging system whereby students could earn certificates in leadership, customer service, and more to be linked to their LinkedIn profiles.

All career and technical education (CTE) programs meet annually with their prospective advisory committees in compliance with [WSC Procedure 469: CTE Advisory Committee](#) to maintain relevancy and current practices regarding industry standards.

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

Placards placed throughout the campus remind all stakeholders of the mission of the college. The [mission and vision](#) are communicated to the public through annual strategic planning meetings, the WSC website, the WSC catalog, and promotional materials.

Sources

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