

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

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

WSC's academic offerings are available in two main places on the college website, the [Academics](#) page and the [Academic Affairs](#) page. The yearly course catalog is available for students to view as well as previous years' catalogs, and a list of courses is available for the current and upcoming semesters. The [Academic Calendar](#) provides beginning and ending dates for each semester along with information about enrollment, drop, and withdrawal deadlines. WSC's programs and degrees are available online; each program lists a student education plan (SEP) to explain the requirements for each respective degree or certificate option. Information about individual courses can also be found within the Academic Affairs webpage.

Faculty information is also available on these two main webpages, including the department chairs of the four academic departments who make up Instructional Cabinet. As a transfer institution, WSC's students can study their general education requirements and transfer to achieve a bachelor's degree. As such, the Academic Affairs webpage lists two important resources for transfer students: [Articulation Agreements](#) and [General Education Requirements Transfer Agreement \(GERTA\)](#). WSC has drafted numerous agreements with other colleges and universities to create clear pathways for students; these agreements also include 2+2 agreements wherein students begin their education with two years at WSC followed by two years at another institution to earn a baccalaureate degree. The GERTA matrix also establishes an agreement among the NDUS institutions to accept transfer credits from one school to the next; this area of the website marks those courses that will transfer to another NDUS institution. By creating these agreements, WSC works to fulfill its mission statement of accessible education by allowing students to carefully plan their educational trajectory and seamlessly transfer to another school.

An area of growth for WSC is ensuring that gainful employment information is listed and reviewed cyclically. The plan is for this information to become available for each program starting in academic year 2025. Such information is critical to students in deciding their educational path. As of Summer 2024, college brochures will start listing the gainful employment information.

Another area of improvement revolves around the creation of educational/academic plans that list the sequence of courses needed by students and the term during which they should be completed. Currently, each program provides an SEP to list required courses for that specific program, but a suggested sequence of courses has not been developed. This approach is critical to the long-term planning of students, but it also benefits the scheduling and retention activities of the institution. Moreover, given the number of transfer institutions targeted by students, WSC will plan to have plans that match the requirements of each NDUS university that offers the major disciplines sought by most students. This would help students clearly see how the coursework at WSC fits their future educational trajectory.

The [Admissions](#) page of the college website clearly and transparently explains the costs for attending WSC. These costs include tuition, student fees, housing fees, meal plans through the cafeteria, or textbook and material costs at the campus bookstore. Information about student costs is also available in print form at Student Services; this information is provided by WSC recruiters who visit area high schools to drive enrollment. A net calculator function on the website allows students to estimate their cost of attending the institution. The [Payment Options & Billing](#) webpage displays important dates regarding student payments; announcements regarding student payments, financial aid disbursements, and other financial matters are sent to students regularly. The [Financial Aid](#) and [Scholarship](#) webpages provide more information about financing at WSC. Initial and exit loan counseling is available for student borrowers. This information, along with the [Institutional Code of Conduct for Educational Loans](#), provide definitions and transparency for students regarding the cost of their education at WSC.

As listed above, an area of development is the inclusion of gainful employment information, which includes detailed cost of attendance per discipline. These costs incorporate the tuition, fees, textbooks, and other required materials (e.g. PPE, dissection kits, art kits, etc.)

Information about WSC personnel is readily available in several places of the WSC website. At the state level, the [600-series of SBHE policies and procedures](#) deals with campus personnel within the NDUS; many of these policies have been adopted in WSC policies and procedures. The WSC Constitution that is currently under revision notes that there will be a spirit of cooperation among all WSC employees, and campus communication is expected to be prompt and relevant to WSC's purpose; the Student Code of Conduct also outlines effective communication between students and WSC personnel. Information about WSC employees can be found on the college website using the [directory](#), and information specific to campus leadership can be found on the

[Leadership](#) webpage, including the various groups that comprise the college's shared-governance model.

WSC complies with federal law regarding non-discrimination and equal opportunities for prospective and current employees along with students. [WSC Policy 619: Nondiscrimination Policy](#) and the [Equal Opportunity Policy](#) webpage note that the college complies with federal law regarding equal opportunities on the grounds of sex, race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. As an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer, all qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for posted positions. This is supported by [SBHE Policy 603.2: Equal Employment Opportunity](#) and by [WSC Policy 603.2](#) by the same name.

To provide transparency in the hiring process, WSC has developed a [minimum qualifications document](#) to ensure proper credentials for new and current faculty. In a previous accreditation cycle, the HLC noted that WSC did not adequately outline necessary qualifications for a faculty member to teach in a subject area; though the college adopted [WSC Policy 617: Faculty Qualification](#) in 2020, a more robust document was needed to clearly explain the faculty qualifications necessary to teach at WSC. Therefore, this new document listed various areas of study at the college along with a list of minimum qualifications or equivalent qualifications. This gives prospective applicants a better understanding of the minimum qualifications necessary to teach at the institution.

Based on the recommendations of the HLC 2020 reaffirmation site visit, WSC has identified three areas of improvement regarding Human Resources.

- Human Resources has started organizing employee files; through different Human Resources personnel, new documents were added to employee files without consistent organization. Documents within employee files will be much easier to locate with this new organization.
- There is no documented procedure for personnel files, including the acquisition of academic transcripts; this would streamline the hiring process and ensure that new employees, specifically faculty, have their academic transcripts documented with Human Resources to ensure compliance with HLC qualifications.
- There is basic training provided to employees regarding Title IX and Human Resources policies, so continuous training throughout the school year may be necessary to familiarize employees with policies, procedures, benefit packages, etc.

The [Accreditation](#) webpage of the college website gives information about WSC's accrediting body and its accreditation processes. Currently, WSC participates in the HLC's [Standard Pathway](#) for accreditation. Accreditation teams are listed on the webpage; full-time faculty, staff, and administrators comprise these teams. The [HLC's Criteria for Accreditation](#) are linked to this webpage to provide transparency for anyone who wants to know more about the accreditation standards by which the college is evaluated for accreditation reaffirmation.

WSC reformed its approach to accreditation teams in the 2023-2024 school year. In past accreditation cycles, accreditation teams were broken into several groups: academic integrity, enrollment management, student success, workforce and career readiness, and institutional leadership and partnerships. The Vice President for Academic Affairs recognized that these groups were not fully in alignment with the HLC's Criteria for Accreditation. [After restructuring accreditation teams](#), the institution has more direct alignment with the accreditation criteria, and teams have a stronger focus on each criterion.

The college website also lists various other reports and historical documents to provide more information to potential students. The [Historical Results Documents](#) webpage lists several nationally recognized reports and campus-driven survey reports to show that the college is dedicated to continuous, data-driven improvement. More information about program-specific accreditation by various accrediting bodies can be found on the Accreditation webpage.

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

As a two-year community college, research is not the primary focus of faculty and staff at WSC. More of the faculty's time and energy focuses on teaching, yet some faculty still engage in research projects to stay current in their fields. Instructors from Communication, Music, and Accounting are writing dissertations to earn their doctorate degrees. The college Registrar's Office also practices data collection and institutional research to drive the college's continuous, data-driven improvement. Research efforts are guided by the college's Institutional Review Board, which is governed by the WSC's [Instructional Division Policy and Procedure Manual](#) and by [WSC Procedure 477: Institutional Review Board](#). The board is led by the Vice President for Academic Affairs with three department chairs or faculty members from different academic departments along with a community member who is not affiliated with the college.

WSC students engage in experiential learning both inside and outside the classroom. Most courses, whether on-campus or online, incorporate group discussions and opportunities for active learning with peers. English courses ask students to

participate in peer review sessions to read and offer constructive criticism on written work; this provides each writer with personalized feedback, and it enhances analytical reading and critical thinking skills. In Physics, students fly kites to examine how wind force interacts with the kites and how holding the kites' strings exerts force on their bodies. Students in Economics classes also practice experiential learning by playing the board game *Monopoly*; students act as the supplier of housing and create a housing market in which there is no pre-existing price structure to better understand the laws of supply and demand. In BADM 228: Personal Investing, students begin the semester by creating a simulated stock portfolio that they use to trade and track market changes to ultimately see who can generate the best stock outcomes.

WSC programs also offer experiential learning while working in the community and earning credits simultaneously. Students who enroll in COOP 197: Cooperative Education/Internship gain work experience and earn college credits, which is especially helpful for those students in Associate in Applied Science programs. [BADM 150: Introduction to Recreation Management](#) requires students to log hours of work with youth programs in the community to gain experience in Sport and Recreation Management. Nursing students participate in mock interviews to ensure that they are ready for job interviews after graduation. Students also have opportunities for [federal work study](#) and student hourly appointments with WSC's Communication Lab, Math Lab, Learning Commons, and Student Services department.

WSC faculty and staff are heavily involved throughout the local community, the state of North Dakota, and national organizations. This supports the college's newly adopted motto, "Where the people make the difference," and it reinforces the college vision of "enriching personal relationships among our college, faculty, and students."

WSC employees engage in religious, athletic, social, and art/performance organizations throughout the community and region. Many employees volunteer at religious institutions throughout the area, including St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, and many more. WSC employees also participate in regional athletic organizations, such as the Williston Basin Curling Club and youth curling programs, Coyote Clay Target League, Williston Boys Baseball committee, and others. Two faculty members lead the local chapter of the Sons of Norway organization, and other employees volunteer with the Miss North Dakota Scholarship Organization, the Lions Club, the Williston Rotary Club, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, and Williston Community Builders. Art and performance volunteers participate in events at the James Memorial Art Center and Entertainment, Inc.! Several community events also see WSC employees' participation, including the Chokecherry Festival, Band Day, the Williston Community Sale, and Summer Nights on Main.

College employees also engage in professional organizations at regional, state, and national levels. Some organizations tie the college directly to area services, such as CHI Health at Home, but more employees offer WSC representation at the state level in various fields, including the State Historical Society of North Dakota, the State Historical Board, North Dakota Music Educators, the North Dakota General Education Council, Open

Education Resources State Council, and the Communication, Speech, and Theater Association of North Dakota. Nationally, WSC employees are active members of the American Society for Composers, Authors, and Publishers, the Society of Composers Incorporated, the American Psychological Association, the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, the National Council for Teachers of English, and more.

WSC students have ample opportunity to become involved in the community. Several clubs are tied to specific areas of study at the college, like Agriculture Club, Art Club, and Astronomy Club. The Diversity Club meets to discuss different facets of diversity, such as race, gender/sexuality, and sexual orientation. Students can participate in campus governance and programming through Student Senate, Student Ambassadors, and the Teton Activity Board. The Student Nurses Organization hosts a community health fair [annually to display health-related projects, the organization ties this event to a community blood drive. The FBLA club participates in statewide and national activities.](#) The FBLA Collegiate also interacts with the campus community, and members attend a State Leadership Conference near the state capitol. [The college's honor society, Phi Theta Kappa \(PTK\), arranges community drives throughout the year to aid underserved residents of the community.](#) More information about various student groups can be found on the [Get Involved](#) webpage on the college website.

WSC supports economic development throughout the Williston community and the northwest region of North Dakota. The college's [Mission and Vision](#) webpage notes that the purpose of the institution is “to provide career and technical education, as well as customized training, to prepare the learner for careers in a specific occupation”; the purpose further states that WSC will “provide community service and applied research in collaboration with business and industry to enhance economic development.”

Throughout the Associate in Applied Science programs, advisory boards comprised of community and regional experts discuss market trends with WSC faculty to ensure that the curricula taught are appropriate and advantageous for northwest North Dakota's workforce; advisory boards can also help students attain jobs in the region after they have completed their degrees at the college. The addition of a childcare facility on campus allows students with children to attend classes regularly and attain their degrees, but with the significant need for childcare facilities in the region, the [Bright Beginnings childcare facility](#) partners with Valley City State University to work with students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program to fill that need in the community. Moreover, in parallel to building a new \$37 million facility for healthcare training at WSC, the college is engaged in creating several 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. The approximately dozen proposed programs include certified medical assisting, health information management, emergency medical services, social work, and substance use disorder counseling. The new healthcare 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.

In addition to course offerings on campus, WSC will start offering middle college options to two cohorts of students at Watford City High School and Sidney High School, respectively, in Fall 2024. 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 high school year (grade 12), which would allow them to sit for the NCLEX-PN exam that would allow them to become Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN). LPNs are highly sought after and are 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, an online component, 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.

As the workforce training division of WSC, [TrainND Northwest](#) also drives economic development in the region. TrainND Northwest is accredited through the [International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training](#). Programs at TrainND Northwest include crane operating, oilfield technician training, certified nurse assistant training, commercial driver’s licensing, unmanned aerial systems training, and well control training; these programs drive to fill needs in the northwest North Dakota workforce. To aid workers in attaining jobs after completing their training, classes in computer skills and soft skills are also available. Just like the Associate in Applied Science programs, TrainND Northwest also utilizes an [advisory board](#) to identify community and regional workforce needs and to assess current curricula to ensure the highest quality workforce training possible. With more trained employees leaving these programs, more work becomes available in the region, and that brings more job creation to the region to enhance economic development.

## Sources

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- WSC website, “Academic Calendar”
- WSC website, “Articulation Agreements”
- WSC website, “General Education Requirements Transfer Agreement (GERTA)”
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- WSC website, “Leadership”
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- WSC website, “BADM 150 COG.pdf”
- WSC website, “Federal Work Study”
- WSC website, “WSC Community Health Fair scheduled for October 18”
- WSC website, “Williston State College Chapter of FBLA Collegiate Excels at State Leadership Conference”
- WSC website, “WSC Giving Tree Returns”
- WSC website, “Get Involved”
- WSC website, “Mission & Vision”
- Bright Beginnings Daycare website
- TrainND website
- International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training website
- WSC website, “TrainND Northwest Advisory Board”