

5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

5.C.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.

The resource allocation process includes multiple phases, each with an ingrained method to ensure WSC's budget allocation aligns with its mission, strategic plan, and campus action plans, all of which reflect the North Dakota University System (NDUS) and State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) [strategic plans](#).

Annual budgets for the following fiscal year are formulated over several months. [Academic program reviews](#) are set to a three-year cycle; at the end of each school year, program faculty highlight fiscal needs for each program to guide budget planning for the upcoming school year. Budgets are generally submitted to the NDUS in May for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Each spring semester, a preliminary budget that includes all expected expenses and revenues is prepared by faculty and staff during a formal budget review process. Faculty collaborate with the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) to forecast expenses and revenues based on previous years' data. The budget includes all anticipated expenses, including lab supplies, equipment, instructional materials, professional development, hardware, software, and travel. The budget is presented to the administration for review and approval, after which funds are allocated.

At the state level, WSC's funding is allocated using a biennial budget. Biennial budgets are formulated and submitted in late spring to mid-summer to the NDUS and to the [North Dakota Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#) in July or August of the fiscal year preceding the start of a new biennium. The OMB biennial budget is prepared as the starting point for legislative consideration in the appropriations process. The allocation process begins with the development of the biennial budget, which is prepared for departments that receive appropriations from the North Dakota State Legislature. These departments comprise WSC's appropriated budget and include both tuition revenue and state appropriations as sources of funding.

WSC's budget has been allocated with its instructional mission at the forefront. Classroom technology has been enhanced throughout campus for the past few years to enhance student engagement and streamline instructional workflow; for example, some classrooms have been turned into "bring your own device" classrooms wherein an instructor can bring their WSC-issued laptop and either plug directly into the classroom projector or wirelessly cast their screen to the classroom projector; this allows faculty to showcase software that is relevant to their courses, and it removes the need to bring a flash drive with presentations and learning materials to each class meeting. More technology has positioned some WSC classrooms to be hybrid and HyFlex capable with high-definition, presenter-tracking cameras and high-quality microphones. The college additionally allocated funds to adopt software systems like Blackboard Analytics for Learn and [Worldwide Instructional Design System \(WIDS\)](#) for student learning outcome assessment; professional development money was allocated, as well, to bring a WIDS consultant to campus to discuss student learning outcome assessment with faculty. WSC also allocated money to hire a full-time nursing instructor to teach in Watford City.

5.C.2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.

Assessment of student learning is linked to evaluation, planning, and budgeting through program reviews, program accreditations, course assessments, and cocurricular assessments.

The [academic program review process](#) is intended to assist academic programs with areas of strength and opportunities for improvement and/or collaboration. The VPAA oversees the administration of the academic program review process. This process is set to a three-year cycle. In the first year, program faculty and staff draft a full review document under the leadership of the respective department chair or program coordinator. In the second and third years, program faculty and staff complete program update documents to identify strengths and areas for improvement while noting specific changes made to improve the program. This is also shared with the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education (NDCTE) for [Associate in Applied Science \(AAS\)](#) programs.

WSC also undergoes external evaluations that include a review of processes and activities for evaluation, planning, and budgeting. The NDCTE conducts an onsite comprehensive evaluation every five years for AAS programs. [Ten standards of quality](#) are evaluated to ensure that adequate resources are provided to support the instruction plan, which assures safe, orderly, and quality education to meet the programs' objectives. [WSC](#)

[underwent this evaluation in October 2023](#); three programs received one minor violation each, [which were resolved rapidly and effectively](#). The plan of action is currently being addressed for each violation. Each AAS program also requires an advisory board committee in compliance with [WSC Procedure 469](#); each program coordinator must meet with a group of local and regional industry experts to discuss industry trends and recommend curriculum changes to meet industry standards. Minutes from advisory board meetings are submitted yearly to the NDCTE.

Various academic programs pursue external accreditation, which can include a comprehensive program review and a site visit. The Nursing program is accredited through the National League for Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (NLN CNEA). The Massage Therapy program is pursuing Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA)-endorsed Curriculum status; this status is an alternative to accreditation to honor programs that meet COMTA's requirements and focuses exclusively on the curriculum and instruction.

Recently, the Technology committee decided to nominally raise technology fees for students based on emerging technology needs. Students pay technology fees to fund Campus Connection, Blackboard, and maintain their computer access across campus; a balance is kept in the fund to meet emerging technology needs for the students and the campus's technology infrastructure. The college uses a simple projection enrollment model based on new student recruitment and current student retention to anticipate enrollment changes, allowing the college to adjust its budget accordingly.

WSC prepares annual budgets for all departments, regardless of the funding source, unless the purpose is limited to a timeframe of less than one year. In addition to annual budgets, biennial budgets are prepared for departments that receive appropriations from the North Dakota State Legislature; these departments comprise WSC's "appropriated budget" and include both tuition revenue and state appropriations as sources of funding. Biennial budget requests are prepared and submitted to the state based on state rules and funding formulas that may be changed by the Legislature from one biennium to the next. WSC's appropriated budget includes unbudgeted, undesignated cash reserves equaling 5-7% of the total net tuition revenue and state appropriation of the preceding fiscal year as mandated by [SBHE Policy 810.1](#). This allows the institution time to deal with fluctuations in revenue.

Upon approval of the institutional budget as detailed in 5.B.3., department leaders monitor budgets. WSC employees routinely conduct budget status and budget transaction detail reports. Unanticipated expenses do arise, and it is the department directors' responsibility to ensure that expenses do not exceed the budget. The President receives weekly overall budget updates from the Vice President for Business Services (VPBS). Any spending outside of the approved budget plan requires a meeting between the WSC President and the department head.

The college maintains financial reserves and seeks external funding wherever possible to anticipate fluctuations in revenue and enrollment. Departments that do not

depend on tuition and state appropriations carry cash reserves to minimize the impact of revenue fluctuations. Also, programs and departments can hold cash reserves in local funds to mitigate revenue fluctuations. Grant funding is pursued to assist in program enhancements and to meet additional needs that develop because of emerging technologies and programs.

5.C.3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

WSC's planning process includes representatives from the whole institution. Largely, the planning process, at the highest level, is originated by Executive Cabinet, which consists of representatives from departments across campus. This group meets bi-weekly to discuss campus-wide plans and initiatives. Currently, Executive Cabinet is focusing its attention on WSC's policies and procedures, including creation of new policies and procedures or review and revision of existing ones. Once policies and procedures are approved by Executive Cabinet, they are sent to Faculty Senate and/or Staff Senate for further review and feedback. This process ensures that all entities of WSC's shared-governance model can collaborate with one another before final approval by the president. Once the policy update initiative is completed, corresponding procedures will be updated and/or created to provide execution details for each policy.

Internally, the program review cycle is vital to WSC's planning processes. Each program goes through a three-year program review cycle. In the first year, a full self-study is conducted to highlight the program's strengths, identify its areas of growth, and describe its fiscal needs to secure its continued viability at the college. The second and third years of the cycle ask program faculty to conduct self-studies to discuss improvements made to the program over the past year while also noting any fiscal needs that would enhance the program. Full program review and program update documents are reviewed by the VPAA along with a cross-divisional group of faculty in preparation for budget planning for the next fiscal year. In the future, student learning outcome assessment data will also factor into the program review cycle to reinforce budget planning discussions.

WSC's planning process also considers external constituent groups. All career and technical education (CTE) programs must meet with an advisory board composed of community members as well as regional industry experts in relevant fields; these provide guidance and feedback on industry trends that may impact the current curricula, thereby ensuring that WSC's programs align with industry needs and standards. Capital projects are also vetted by various community groups, such as the City of Williston, Williston Public School District 7, Williston Parks and Recreation District, and the WSC Foundation. The

new healthcare training facility on WSC's campus, as an example, was spurred by external constituents in the community who identified a need for trained healthcare personnel in northeast Montana and northwest North Dakota. As the project was proposed at the North Dakota State Legislature and approved (with 80% of the needed funds), the Healthcare Steering Committee was formed, consisting of diverse stakeholders including students, faculty, staff, and healthcare professionals in the region. Stakeholder feedback events facilitated by the building's architect ensure ongoing input and alignment with community and institutional needs.

Specifically regarding athletic teams at WSC, both internal and external feedback is sought. WSC's athletic director and coaching staff provide internal feedback on athletic projects, and they often seek further advice from community members and community groups. For instance, the [baseball and softball turf capital projects](#) under construction were set into motion for WSC's athletic teams to address weather challenges that impact the baseball and softball teams' playing schedules each spring. The Williston Parks and Recreation District provided additional feedback to ensure that community needs, just as much as internal WSC needs, were met in the capital project. As a result, the College will be creating a 'complex' designed for all levels of teams to use from within the region.

These examples demonstrate WSC's systematic approach that involves internal and external stakeholders in decision-making processes across policy development, program alignment with area industries, and capital project planning. By leveraging these committees and advisory groups, WSC ensures that decisions are informed by a broad range of perspectives, promoting transparency and inclusivity in the larger community, and alignment with the institution's mission and community needs.

5.C.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.

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be changed by the Legislature from one biennium to the next. WSC's appropriated budget includes unbudgeted, undesignated cash reserves equaling 5-7% of the total net tuition revenue and state appropriation of the preceding fiscal year as mandated by [SBHE Policy 810.1](#). This allows the institution time to deal with negative fluctuations in revenue sources.

Departments that do not depend on tuition and state appropriations also carry cash reserves to minimize the impact of revenue fluctuations. The college keeps financial reserves wherever possible. For example, the NDUS states that each college must keep 5-7% of its annual appropriated revenue as a reserve, calculating that amount using the annual appropriations plus the annual tuition revenue. Students also pay technology fees to fund key systems such as Campus Connection and Blackboard Ultra while also using those fees to maintain computer access across campus. In addition, cash reserves are maintained in local funds to allow for fluctuations in revenue and expenses. Whenever possible, WSC pursues grant funding to assist in program and campus enhancements and to meet additional needs that develop because of emerging technologies and programs.

Upon approval of the institutional budget as detailed in 5.B.3., department leaders monitor their budgets by routinely running budget status and budget transaction detail reports. Unanticipated expenses do arise, and it is the department directors' responsibility to ensure that expenses do not exceed their allotted budgets. The President receives weekly overall budget updates from the VPBS. Any abnormal spending requires a meeting between the President and the department head.

Enrollment and tuition rates are primary drivers of WSC's revenue. Since 2018, enrollment has been consistent with minor fluctuations from year to year. Annual tuition and fee rates have increased only \$738 over the past eight years. WSC uses a simple projection enrollment model based on new student recruitment and current student retention to anticipate enrollment changes, allowing the college to adjust its budget accordingly.

5.C.5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.

WSC's institutional planning activities anticipate evolving external factors, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy, and state support. Therefore, WSC utilizes a diverse set of processes and resources to ensure its planning is responsive, adaptive, and strategic. CTE programs at WSC meet changing industry and community needs in various ways. First, all CTE programs are required to meet annually with an

advisory board comprised of community leaders and regional industry experts. Feedback from advisory boards drives program enhancements, including new equipment, facilities, and workforce needs of the programs. They also help WSC identify emerging trends, opportunities, and challenges in their industry sectors. By consulting with these boards, WSC aligns its CTE programs with the current and future demands of the labor market, the community, and the region. Furthermore, CTE programs at WSC partner with other entities to accomplish program delivery. WSC participates in several NDUS consortia, such as the Dakota Nursing Program, the Northern Information Technology Consortium, and the North Dakota Agriculture Consortium, which allow WSC to share resources, expertise, and best practices with other colleges and universities; these consortia also enable WSC to offer more diverse and specialized program and courses to its students and respond to emerging needs of the state and the region. Also, many NDUS-wide academic disciplines groups evaluate such external factors yearly to coordinate at a statewide level. Increased interest in dual-credit courses from regional high schools also presents WSC with opportunities to meet community needs.

Another WSC process to anticipate evolving external factors is data analysis from various sources, such as Lightcast and North Dakota Job Service. These entities provide market information and projects for the region and the state. WSC also includes community leaders in its strategic planning sessions via physical and virtual attendance; these leaders provide insight into adjustments needed within WSC program offerings to meet current and future needs for both the immediate region as well as global needs relevant for students on transfer pathways. Regional partners involved in WSC strategic planning activity space a variety of roles, including K-12 education partners, elected and non-elected city and county officials, North Dakota state leaders, regional healthcare leaders, and experts from various industries such as agriculture, energy, finance, technology, trades, and more. WSC monitors these data and feedback mechanisms to identify the growth and decline of industries, occupations, and skills along with the demographic changes and preferences of potential students and customers. Based on this data, WSC adjusts program offerings, course delivery methods, and marketing strategies to meet the changing needs and expectations of its stakeholders.

WSC's planning activities also act upon economic and state support factors. This ensures the college's alignment with NDUS and SBHE goals and initiatives as well as directives identified by the NDUS Chancellor, Governor of North Dakota, and North Dakota Legislature. Alignment with state support often results from collaboration between the WSC President and those state leaders. Evidence includes separate projects consistent with North Dakota's emphasis on workforce training expansion, such as playing a key role in the creation of the Re-Energize North Dakota scholarship proposal, as well as soliciting \$30 million in state funds for a new healthcare training facility. [The new facility on the WSC campus will expand medical training offerings in northeast Montana and northwest North Dakota.](#)

WSC deploys a thorough set of activities to anticipate, plan for, and act upon technological advancements to best serve students, faculty, staff, and administrative

operations. A diverse set of local, system-wide, and industry-wide sources and partnerships are utilized to anticipate and prepare for these advancements. Locally, the Technology committee represents a cross-divisional group of faculty and staff who evaluate and recommend the acquisition and implementation of technology tools and solutions for teaching, learning, and administration; Instructional Cabinet, comprised of academic leadership, key faculty, and instructional support staff, review and approve the curriculum, assessment, and accreditation activities of WSC's academic programs and units. At the system level, WSC participates in Chief Information Officer Council, ServiceOne, and ERP360 to discuss, implement, and troubleshoot key strategic information technology initiatives throughout the NDUS. Industry-wide activities include collaboration with senior leadership at key solution and service providers within higher education to ensure that WSC and the NDUS maximize opportunities to align technology solutions to customer needs. All these activities show that WSC identifies evolving technologies and leverages them to student benefit. In effect, the other three colleges that are partners in the Dakota Nursing Program (DNP) recognize WSC's leadership in instructional technology and delivery. This has led to a widespread adoption of the tools and approaches that WSC pioneered.

WSC's planning activities have anticipated technology trends and leveraged technology to enhance instruction across campus, especially in hybrid and Hy-Flex modalities. Quality academic services are delivered effectively, flexibly, and sustainably through a Technology Refresh program for instructional hardware and other infrastructure to align physical technology assets with a refresh schedule, enhancing budget planning and technology modernization. Classroom technology is going through a three-phase enhancement: first, classrooms had dedicated PCs without online options; next, classrooms received multi-camera systems with top-quality microphones and flexible device choices for instructors; as a third, upcoming stage, classrooms will be fitted with digital whiteboards, smart camera switching, and automatic class summaries for better experiences for in-person, remote, and asynchronous learners. The technology advancements across campus have enhanced WSC's offerings to various North Dakota consortia, especially CTE fields and dual-credit locations. Additionally, lecture capture capabilities added to learning spaces help faculty development, empower non-traditional students, students with language barriers or learning disabilities, or any student interested in the supplemental learning resource [associated with improved outcomes](#).

Alongside the physical technology improvements on campus, WSC also deploys and plans to deploy more systems to benefit students and college personnel. 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.

Several outcomes show how WSC has dedicated its time and resources to technology-related planning activities. The college enhanced operational effectiveness and financial viability through broader collaborations with North Dakota State University for payroll assistance, University of North Dakota for financial management assistance, and Lake Region State College for human capital assistance. These collaborations are all in addition to dozens of application-related shared services through Core Technology Services at the state level to adapt to emerging technologies.

WSC shows dedication to institutional planning that responds to a changing environment and seeks to be an adaptable, forward-looking, strategic institution that exceeds higher education accreditation standards by merging the above collaborative processes and resources.

5.C.6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

WSC maintains institutional goals within its strategic plan. This includes the institution’s major initiatives with specific goals attached to each one. This plan is updated annually and includes feedback from all WSC employees and external stakeholders. The initiatives and goals are publicly available on the website and shared with the WSC Foundation to guide budgetary planning. Other planning documents to improve operations and student outcomes are the [WSC Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#), the [NDUS Strategic Plan](#), and the [TrainND Northwest Business Plan](#).

WSC programs are reviewed frequently to improve operations and student outcomes. All programs at the college are internally reviewed on a three-year rotation. In the first year, the program faculty and department chair will create a full program review document to identify the program’s strengths and opportunities for improvement or collaboration; in the following two years, the program faculty and department chair will generate program update documents to revisit the program’s strengths and areas for improvement while also noting the specific changes made to the program to better align it with the college’s mission and goals. The internal review team is comprised of a cross-divisional group of faculty and staff and is headed by the VPAA.

External review processes specifically for Associate in Applied Science (AAS) programs further ensure alignment with the college’s mission and goals. External reviews by the NDCTE are specifically conducted for AAS programs every five years; these reviews are based on the program’s purpose, goals, faculty qualifications, resources, job trends, enrollment, and graduation rates. AAS programs are also required to meet with an advisory board annually to discuss additions, changes, or removal of courses from the curriculum to meet industry standards. Whether internal or external, these review processes provide feedback and recommendations for improvement, and they also guide administration in adjusting accordingly for budgetary needs.

WSC continually strives to meet the educational needs of the community and the region using annual discussions with community members. For example, the healthcare industry in northwest North Dakota and northeast Montana faces shortages in trained healthcare personnel. The college president began discussions with the state legislature and the NDUS to respond to these shortages by requesting funding to construct a new healthcare training facility. The request was approved, and work immediately began on infrastructure planning. The new facility is scheduled to open in the Fall 2025 semester. It will provide ten new healthcare programs and provide state-of-the-art facilities for the current Nursing and Massage Therapy programs.

The college recently implemented a new customer relations management tool in 2023 to streamline the enrollment and admissions process. The new system, TargetX, provides stronger communication channels between the college and prospective students. For example, during the admissions process, it creates automated communications that are tailored to students’ areas of interest. This allows for efficient communication with students through SMS or text messaging. It provides a comprehensive dashboard of analytics to see the health of WSC’s enrollment lifecycle and optimize it when needed.

Sources

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