

**Assurance Argument**  
**North Iowa Area Community College**

**Review date: 11/6/2023**

# 1 - Mission

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

## 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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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.

## Argument

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### 1.A.1.

As the oldest community college in Iowa, North Iowa Area Community College has embodied the pillars of the mission statement for over [one hundred years](#), always centering on students, community, and leadership.

The Mission, "North Iowa Area Community College enriches lives through comprehensive educational opportunities, a commitment to learner success, community engagement, and leadership," was reviewed and updated along with the [Vision and Core Values](#) during a year-long [series of discussions](#) held in 2017 in conjunction with the development of the [2018-2023 Strategic Plan](#) (pg. 78) and [Strategic Goals](#) (pg. 44). To facilitate the process, the College contracted with the University of Northern Iowa's Institute for Decision Making (IDM), who developed an [initial timeline](#) for the Mission, Vision, and Core Values review and input process. A [College Strategic Planning Committee](#) was created to work with IDM to advance the planning process.

In developing its Mission, Vision, and Core Values, NIACC engaged hundreds of [students, faculty, staff, alumni, business leaders, and citizens](#) across the [nine-county service area](#). [Community input sessions](#) were held in seven communities and one on campus, with public notice and direct mail [invitations sent to](#) school board members, school administrators, business leaders, city and county officials. All community listening posts followed a common [agenda](#). Additionally, over 6,000 emails were sent with a [survey](#) to an even broader audience of donors, alumni, legislators, area businesses, and retirees, with [148 responses received](#) (pg. 56).

The NIACC Board of Directors approved the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan and its accompanying Mission, Vision, and Core Values at its [December 2017 Board Meeting](#).

### **1.A.2.**

NIACC's Mission, Vision, and Core Values are current and reference the College's emphasis on instruction, public service, economic development, and culture. NIACC's mission statement reflects its comprehensive community college model and dedication to helping students succeed, supporting the surrounding community, and leading the North Iowa region.

In April 2022, the Board of Directors reviewed the revised goals (later renamed Strategic Priorities) for the 2018-2023 strategic plan at their [Spring Board Retreat](#) (pg. 3). Considering the worldwide pandemic, the five strategic priorities of the institution were evaluated, and it was determined three strategic priorities: Elevate Organizational Excellence, Enhance Teaching, and Increase Enrollment and Retention would become the primary focus as the institution recovered post-COVID. The Board [approved](#) (pg. 4) extending the [revised Strategic Plan](#) through 2025.

Each month, a different college division presents a written [Monitoring Report](#) (pg. 11) to the NIACC Board, focused on What We Do, For Whom, and At What Cost. Board members provide [written](#) and verbal feedback that is reviewed and [addressed](#) in subsequent reports to the Board. Monitoring Reports were further improved in 2022 to include alignment with NIACC's Mission, Vision, and Core Values. (See example: [Continuing Education](#) pg. 2). All areas of the College are covered by these Monitoring Reports and presented to the Board of Directors at least once a year. (See sample reports: [Academics](#), [Administrative Services](#), [Institutional Advancement](#), [Athletics](#).)

### **1.A.3.**

NIACC offers a [wide range](#) of support services to promote learner success. Comprehensive educational opportunities include [credit](#) and [non-credit](#) offerings for learners of all ages and interests. College-wide initiatives such as [Guided Pathways](#) and Title III grant [activities](#) strengthen NIACC's commitment to learner success.

Community engagement opportunities abound through the [Performing Arts and Leadership Series](#), [John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center](#), [Continuing Education offerings](#), and NIACC's [athletic teams](#). [The Volunteer Center](#), [Lifelong Learning Institute \(LLI\)](#), the [Retired Senior Volunteer Program](#) (RSVP) provide an opportunity for further community engagement through education and service.

The College aims to be a leader in the communities and economy in North Iowa. As a higher education institution, NIACC often is a leader at the state and national levels. Since 2013, NIACC has been recognized by the Aspen Institute's Prize for Community College Excellence five times and placed in the [Top 150](#) Community Colleges nationwide for its student completion initiatives. In 2023, NIACC was named a semifinalist (top 25) for the [Aspen Prize](#). An invitation to apply for the Aspen Institute's Prize is based on achievements in student learning, certificate and degree completion, employment and earnings, and a high level of access and success for minority and low-income students. Other examples of NIACC's leadership include being invited to join the Alliance for Innovation & Transformation ([AFIT](#)), "an association of innovative higher education CEOs who are committed to transforming their organizations in the face of unprecedented challenges and change;" being one of the first community colleges in Iowa to implement Guided Pathways fully; and participating in a [national pilot group](#) of the Non-Credit to Credit Alignment Lab.

#### 1.A.4.

The College ensures that academic programs and services are consistent with its Mission by always focusing on what's best for the student. NIACC's Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Priorities are structured to serve a broad audience. Career programs have been established to serve [major industry sectors](#) in the College's nine-county service area, and advisory committees are used to evaluate these programs and identify emerging needs in the market. The [Career Placement Report](#) provides evidence that NIACC's academic programs are consistent with its Mission to enrich lives by providing educational opportunities to meet the needs of area employers and result in gainful employment for graduates.

[Guided Pathways](#) began implementation in 2018 with a plan for full implementation within two years. Guided Pathways aims to provide a clear pathway for students to complete their degrees, reducing their overall costs and time to completion. Programs are [mapped](#) to clarify the path to degree completion, career advancement, and further education. Students select their Meta Major during the [application process](#) and receive structured support with advising, wrap-around services, and [progress monitoring](#) to provide ongoing feedback and support as needed.

NIACC provides various student support services, including a testing center, professional tutoring, peer tutoring, math lab, disability services, FAFSA assistance, veteran's assistance, TRIO Student Support Services, Student Assistance Program, career counseling, mastery program, Supplemental Instruction, OnTrack Program, IPASS Program, PACE support, Wellness Hub, and technology help desk.

Utilizing a holistic advising approach, students are required to meet with their assigned academic advisor each semester to register for classes. At each advising appointment, advisors check in with the student to determine if they need additional resources and connect the student to the [appropriate service](#) on campus or in the community. During the semester, academic advisors are notified by faculty through an alert system, Dropout Detective, when students become at risk of not completing the course. This allows the academic advisor to reach out to the student and help them with academic or personal issues that are causing challenges to their academic success. Moving forward, Dropout Detective was replaced in Fall 2023 by EAB's Navigate, which provides similar early alert functionality and allows advisors to send positive recognition to students.

As an open admissions institution, NIACC's mission is to ensure the success of all learners. Any student is given the chance to earn a [degree, diploma, or certificate](#), [explore a career field](#), prepare for the [High School Equivalency Diploma](#) (HSE), learn [English as a Second Language](#) (ESL), engage in [lifelong learning](#) and personal enrichment, receive [workforce training](#), and learn new skills from a cadre of [faculty and instructors](#) (pg. 10) who are deeply invested in the success of every student and the delivery of quality instruction. In 2022, 3,210 students (2,091 FTE) were enrolled in credit programs and 11,203 in non-credit offerings. The student population for credit programs was 55.9% female/44.1% male, with an average age of 21.4, and 14.7% from racial and ethnic minority groups ([NIACC Profile 2022](#)).

The [John V. Hansen Career Center](#) was opened in Forest City, serving four school districts, to educate high school concurrent enrollment students in four program areas determined by [labor availability and workforce characteristics](#). Community, business, and workforce offerings, including HSE, ESL, and Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), are also available to the public. A second center will open in Charles City in 2024 with similar offerings and serve seven school districts.

### 1.A.5.

The College communicates its Mission, Vision, and Core Values externally via the NIACC [website](#), [catalog](#), [newsletters](#), and [news releases](#). These statements are displayed across campus on [digital signage](#), [computer lab lock screens](#), and [fabric banners](#), ensuring everyone recognizes the importance of the College's Mission, Vision, and Core Values.

Marketing items displaying the Mission, Vision, and Core Values have been provided to employees to ensure these are top of mind while at their desks or working with students. These elements are also included in the [Student Handbook](#) (pg. 3) and [Employee Handbook](#) (pg. 6) and are discussed during [new faculty](#) (pg. 2), employee, and [board member orientation](#) (pg. 39). Faculty minimum qualifications [require](#) (pg. 7) a knowledge of the history and mission of the College. Each part of the Employee Handbook, including a review of [the Mission](#) (pg. 3) is discussed during employee orientation.

Our Cornerstone performance module will require employees to link performance and evaluation [goals](#) to the College's strategic priorities in the upcoming year. We are currently piloting the new system with HR and IT.

Ensuring that the mission is embedded in scholarship and higher education programs was extensively articulated during the [capital campaign](#) to construct a new STEM Center and Simulation Center.

## Sources

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## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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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.

### Argument

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#### 1.B.1.

NIACC serves the public by [offering](#) credit and non-credit programs, including Career Link concurrent enrollment programs. The [John V. Hanson Career Center](#) opened in Forest City in 2021, serving four partnering school districts offering credit training in high-demand fields. A similar center will open in 2024 in [Charles City](#) with [seven partnering schools](#).

NIACC's [nine-member governing Board](#) represents the constituents of the nine-county service area. Each member is elected to serve a four-year term by voters within their district.

NIACC welcomes all students regardless of preparedness or financial ability as an open-access institution. There are a variety of services that provide nonfinancial and financial support to underserved populations in the service area. [Adult Education and Literacy](#) (AEL) (pgs. 9-10) offers high school equivalency (HSED) instruction and testing, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Adult Basic Education (ABE).

#### 1.B.2.

As a public community college, NIACC's educational responsibilities to the North Iowa region, grounded in its mission, vision, and values, take precedence over other purposes. NIACC does not serve any investors or parent organizations. All of Iowa's community colleges are governed by a locally elected board of directors and comply with approval standards adopted by the State Board of Education. The NIACC Board of Directors retains its responsibilities for the College governance provided by [Chapter 260C](#) (pg. 5) of the Code of Iowa.

The College and its Board of Directors are both committed to the success and completion of the students served. The Board not only supports NIACC's role in providing access to post-secondary education and training but, importantly, supports programs and services that move students towards completion of credentials, certificates, and degrees. The Board supports actions taken by the College to provide clear and coherent educational pathways leading to high rates of student success. Additionally, the Board expects the College to address the changing needs of its students and communities, address current educational achievement gaps, and for the College to act through evidence-based decision-making, supporting collaboration and an institutional responsibility for the



success of our students ([Board Policy 1.02](#) pg.11).

### **1.B.3.**

As a comprehensive community college, NIACC's commitment to serving the community is evident in the [Mission, Vision, and Core Values](#) statements. Aligning with NIACC's mission to enrich lives, the College works with external constituencies like high schools and businesses through concurrent enrollment, Regional Career Academies, workforce training, and economic development.

The [2018-23 Strategic Planning Process](#) facilitated by the University of Northern Iowa's Institute for Decision Making (IDM) included extensive involvement of internal and external stakeholders. The IDM facilitators led a Strategic Planning [Leadership Team](#) of students, staff, faculty, administration, and community members. The process for developing the strategic plan (addressed in 1.A.1) included all-staff meetings, community forums, and the utilization of an online survey to capture additional feedback for those unable to attend a face-to-face session. The leaders in communities, school districts, local governments, and businesses were identified and individually invited to participate in public forums.

Each Career and Technical Education (CTE) program has an advisory committee of area business leaders relevant to the program. The advisory committees [meet](#) twice annually to discuss industry needs to inform college curricula.

To better meet the diverse needs of the academies and our workforce, our Building Trades program underwent a major [curriculum revision](#), including non-credit to credit options offered through Continuing Education. Students may now enter the program via one of three on-ramps:

- [A Regional Career Academy](#)
- [Non-credit offerings through continuing education](#)
- [The traditional credit program](#)

Students who choose to enter the workforce after one year at the career academy are awarded a certificate. In contrast, diploma-bound students must finish the curriculum in a third term held in the summer. Continuing education students start with a non-credit certificate that can be articulated to credit should they choose to enter the program immediately or at some point in the future.

NIACC was awarded its first National Science Foundation (NSF) Advanced Technological Education (ATE) grant, NextGen Technicians: Addressing Industry Demand for Robotics ([DUE #1901957](#)), in 2019. Through interactions with local businesses and industry, as well as the program advisory committee, the College recognized the need to infuse more robotics into an existing program but also recognized the heavy financial lift in adding robotics equipment of the caliber necessary to catapult the program to the next level. Through NSF ATE grant funding (\$299,962), the College purchased several collaborative robots, trained faculty, and added third-party credentials in robotics to the curriculum.

When the focus on robotics became a central theme for businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, the College submitted and received a second grant with the NSF ATE, an Instrumentation Acquisition grant for \$499,871. Advancing NextGen Technicians: Addressing New Industry Demand for Robotics Because of COVID-19 ([DUE #2055293](#)) began in 2021 and was focused on adding additional robots and faculty training. As a result of this ongoing focus on continuous programmatic improvement, the program added an advanced robotics course and another third-party credential.

NIACC's 2022 Profile by the Iowa Department of Education shows that the College's non-credit enrollment [ranks 6<sup>th</sup>](#) (pg. 8) out of the 15 community colleges. However, NIACC [ranks 1<sup>st</sup>](#) in the state (pg. 3), at 10.3%, in non-credit market penetration. These high enrollment numbers are attributed to NIACC meeting the requests for training and education from area citizens and employers.

NIACC's five education outreach [centers](#) have a local advisory board that provides ideas and input on needed courses and educational opportunities in each community. This approach ensures each part of the district receives the educational opportunities desired.

The [vision](#) of the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center/Small Business Development Center (JPEC/SPDC) is to be the [leading source](#) for entrepreneurship education programs and small business counseling/support services throughout the nine-county service area. The center serves as a liaison for additional resources to enhance the entrepreneurial environment and improve client results. The center collaborates with other organizations to achieve this vision. Between 2019 and 2022, JPEC worked with 83 businesses, resulting in 388 new jobs and over \$25 million in capital investment. During the pandemic, JPEC created a Small Business Help Line that assisted 218 businesses in understanding what funding programs they qualified for, creating financial statements to file for grants and loans, and answering basic questions on unemployment. In nearly every conversation, business owners were glad to have help navigating the rapidly changing information available. In addition, JPEC made 322 calls to past clients to provide information needed to apply for funding programs. From mid-March to the end of May, JPEC served 737 clients.

NIACC partners with area [businesses](#) to provide [experiential learning](#) and create a talent pipeline through career immersion events, work-based learning experiences, and internship placements.

The Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training Program ([260E](#)) (pg. 17) creates training funds for new and expanding businesses. NIACC works with area businesses to identify needs and deliver customized training.

NIACC's [Lifelong Learning Institute](#) (LLI), a membership organization, is a community of adults participating in non-credit learning without grades, tests, papers, or long-term classes. Membership provides additional benefits to utilize campus facilities.

RSVP, or the [Retired Senior Volunteer Program](#) (pg. 6), recruits adults 55 and older to use their skills, talents, and life experience to help others in their community with a focus on promoting childhood literacy. The majority of volunteers serve in area elementary schools. RSVP also connects volunteers with opportunities to serve at local non-profit organizations.

Balance-Agility-Strength-Endurance-Socialization ([BASES](#)), a free fitness program for older adults, launched in January 2022. The primary goal of BASES is to provide area residents with an accessible way to exercise more consistently.

In April 2021, NIACC opened a volunteer center on campus to foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. The goals of the [NIACC Volunteer Center](#) (pgs. 6-7) are to connect students with opportunities to serve, increase the capacity of local organizations to engage volunteers in meaningful service and promote volunteering. The center supports local non-profit organizations in recruiting, managing, and retaining volunteers to address the area's most pressing challenges.

The NIACC [Performing Arts and Leadership Series](#) provides vital arts and cultural activities for a

rural, underserved audience. Our programming includes Broadway shows, family programming, musical performances, and educational programming with outreach opportunities. An advisory committee consisting of season ticket holders from nine counties delivers feedback from their communities at quarterly meetings. To provide equitable access to the arts for all families, regardless of socio-economic status, NIACC works with 15 local agencies, including non-profits, daycares, schools, and service organizations. These partnerships allow NIACC to offer free tickets to families with financial needs so they may experience live performing art as a family.

The public uses [NIACC facilities](#) for meetings and events. For example, the Muse Norris Conference Center has been used for the Ag Ventures Annual Meeting for the past two years, First Security Bank's Professional Development Day for several years, and several Cerro Gordo County Emergency Management's Hazard Mitigation Plan updates. The North Iowa Community Auditorium has been used for the Mason City Chamber Annual Meeting for the last two years, ITC Holdings' annual Safety Summits, and annual recitals for several area dance studios. During a recent construction project, a local high school used NIACC's gym for competitions. The Charles City Center is used frequently by the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) agency, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and other local social service providers.

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## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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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.

### Argument

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#### 1.C.1.

NIACC 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.

NIACC's [Institutional Learning Outcomes](#) (ILO) represent what the College believes every graduate will need to be successful as a professional. ILO #4 Global Awareness states, "Learners will analyze the interconnected world in which they live, how various factors in one area can affect other areas, the existence and value of diverse perspectives, and the importance of respecting all human life in a global society."

North Iowa Area Community College considers education the foundation of a democratic society. At the core of the educational experience is [general education](#), an ongoing endeavor to engage students in acquiring the knowledge and tools necessary to understand their environment and contribute to their communities. In these courses, students gain the skills and knowledge to become better-informed citizens and contributors to society.

Students explore civic engagement and diversity through various [courses](#) as allowed by [House File 802](#).

In April 2021, the College was [awarded](#) a Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) grant of \$31,354 from the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, a state agency promoting civic engagement through service and volunteering. This funding provided the resources for the NIACC to create a Volunteer Center on campus and engage students in volunteer service throughout North Central Iowa.

Numerous student activities are offered that prepare students for [informed citizenship](#) and [workplace success](#).

The [Common Read](#) supports the Global Awareness ILO through [real-life stories](#) of people from diverse backgrounds. It is designed to engage NIACC students, staff, faculty, and community members in a unified, intellectual activity. First-year students who read the book as part of their communications requirements are introduced to academic expectations, respectful discourse, and community building. The Common Read is supported by the Performing Arts and Leadership Series

and the NIACC Foundation, which sponsors a [keynote address](#) by the author, or someone closely associated with the book. Whenever possible, the [author](#) visits several classrooms to interact directly with students while on campus.

### 1.C.2.

Many student [clubs and organizations](#) on campus focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Clubs such as Friends @ NIACC, 4 Us by Us, and [SAGE](#) are examples of clubs that educate, inspire, and create safe spaces for students to express their true identities. The Friends @ NIACC (F@N) club caters to students wanting to learn more about other cultures. Open to any student, many of the international students participate in this club to learn about traditions in the United States but also to teach about their culture to native students. In addition, organizations like Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization (CEO), TRIO & Friends, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Phi Theta Kappa, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes align with national organizations that provide not only opportunities on campus but also nationwide opportunities to connect with people with similar interests.

Each Fall semester, the NIACC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Alliance (DEI Alliance, FKA The Diversity Committee) holds an [International Student Welcome Dinner](#). This [event](#) includes [icebreakers](#), [welcome bingo](#), and trivia questions about their country. It also [introduces](#) international students to key people on campus to support their transition into our educational system. Each Spring semester, NIACC holds an [International & Minority Student Blue and Gold Graduation](#) banquet celebrating our graduating international and minority students. The event includes a meal and a short program featuring guest and student speakers. Each student is recognized and acknowledged for their achievements and contributions at NIACC. In the past, we have also recognized [NIACC students](#) for their contributions to diversity. Whether by engaging with other students or mentoring incoming students, their efforts have been noted and praised.

The DEI Alliance highlights historical months with informational posts on TrojanHome for all employees and students. Those have included [Black History Month](#), [Women's History Month](#), [Hispanic Heritage Month](#), and [Native American History Month](#), among others.

NIACC is committed to maintaining an educational environment that values individuality and identifies and addresses success barriers. Data-driven equity goals developed in 2018 as part of the 2018-2023 strategic plan have been expanded to include [goals](#) established as part of the equity-focused Guided Pathways initiative launched in Fall 2019. The [first step](#) was the development of clear definitions of [diversity, inclusion, and equity](#).

NIACC has continually earned the [Military Friendly School Designation](#). This designation is based on an evaluation using public data and responses from a proprietary survey. These services help students with a transition plan for entering college and civilian life.

NIACC awards over one million dollars per year in student scholarships. The process of reading and scoring scholarship applications is a blind process where readers are not given demographic information of the applicant to allow a fair and unbiased score. In 2013, the college hired a bilingual enrollment advisor in the southern portion of our district, which has a sizeable Hispanic population. The goal for this position was to increase the number of Hispanic students who enroll in NIACC. In 2014, the College created a [Dream Scholar award](#) that provides scholarships to three undocumented or DACAmented students. Undocumented and DACAmented students are not eligible for financial aid. This award helps undocumented students obtain the education and college experience that would



otherwise be cost-prohibitive. The selected students go through an application and interview process. Recipients are eligible for two years if they maintain a 3.0 GPA. The number of Hispanic students increased until 2020 when the College experienced a decline due to the global pandemic and changing political climate in the United States.

Community service is deeply rooted in the College. A [Volunteer Center](#) that coordinates activities for staff and students results in volunteering and community service being an established practice. It is a requirement that all collegiate athletes enrolled in [PEV-105/106/205/206](#) Varsity Sports [complete](#) two hours of community service each semester. [Employees](#) may complete up to 8 hours of approved volunteer work per year as paid time off.

### 1.C.3.

Professional development opportunities are provided during faculty workshop periods and throughout the year. [Training](#) on implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom, mental health first aid, immigration 101, creating more inclusive spaces, pronoun usage, and identifying implicit bias has been presented during professional development week as a way faculty and staff can gain new skills and training to foster a climate of respect and better serve our diverse population of students.

The DEI Alliance, which consists of [faculty and staff](#), meets monthly during the fall and spring semesters to design, plan, and provide [events](#) and other ways to recognize the diversity on our campus. The group has sponsored traveling displays ([Systemic Oppression in Our Schools](#)), workshops ([Juneteenth and Emancipation & Behind the Beat](#)), and other cultural opportunities ([Musical Tour of Mexico](#)) open to all employees and students. Every two years, we also celebrate the [Day of the Dead](#) with an *ofrenda* display, a tradition from Latin American countries. In addition to the History Month information mentioned above, the DEI Alliance has also provided information on [Juneteenth](#) and hosted film viewings such as [The Freedom to Marry](#) during LGBTQ History Month and [Mankiller](#) during [Native American History Month](#), as well as the [Dakota 38](#).

Working collaboratively with the Library, the DEI Alliance has acquired several diverse [DVD titles](#) available for checkout by faculty, staff, students, and community members, with licenses for viewing open to the public. This collection includes a range of titles that address diverse and underrepresented groups.

The committee also aims to improve the enrollment and persistence of students from diverse ethnic and underserved backgrounds and populations by working collaboratively with student clubs such as SAGE, F@N Club, and 4 Us By Us. This past academic year, the DEI Alliance conducted a [research project](#) with graduating students during the International & Minority Student Banquet, assessing their needs and how we can better support them on campus. [Results](#) from this project have been analyzed and will be discussed with the DEI Alliance to guide our efforts in making a more inclusive environment at NIACC.

Through the [Business Partnership Program](#), part of the Continuing Education department, faculty, staff, and staff are encouraged to enroll in on-campus or online high-quality training with topics such as skill development in leadership, human resources, and communication.

NIACC fosters a climate of respect with training on Title IX and the Clery Act. Most students take the College Essentials [course](#), which includes Title IX training completion to pass the course, educates students about dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, as well as

the hearing and investigation processes. Students who do not take this course are required to complete training through Canvas. In addition to the required training, all students are encouraged to attend events like the [Sexual Assault Awareness Month Olympics](#), an event held in partnership with Crisis Intervention staff and guest speakers ([Tim Collins](#), September 2023) who explain affirmative consent and bystander intervention. In addition, Crisis Intervention Staff held office hours one day per week in the Wellness Hub.

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- TGIF 9-8-23 with Intl Dinner
- THE SCRIPT Show Flyer
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- Title IX student
- Volunteer Center example
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- Wilma Mankiller Flyer
- Womens History Month 2023
- Workplace Professionalism Offerings

## 1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

### Summary

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NIACC prominently communicates its mission via its website and numerous recruitment and informational materials. The mission is foundational to the institution's operations and embodied in the Strategic Plan developed through an extensive year-long community engagement process. The mission and strategic plan are reflected in monthly Monitoring Reports to the NIACC Board of Directors. The institution places a strong emphasis on enriching lives through excellence in education, aligning its academic and support services with the needs of its student body, and is informed by the insights of varied stakeholders.

The planning and budgeting at NIACC align with its mission and strategic plan, involving employees through committees and communication sessions and ensuring resources are optimally utilized. NIACC maintains open access to education and leads in student success, as recognized by the Aspen Institute.

The institution actively engages a wide range of stakeholders, demonstrating its commitment to living its mission and contributing to the public good. The college's initiatives are tailored to meet the community's needs, emphasizing its role as an inclusive and community-focused educational institution.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*

## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

### 2.A - Core Component 2.A

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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.

### Argument

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The NIACC Board of Directors derives its authority from [Chapter 260C](#) of the Code of Iowa. It is subject to provisions of the Constitution of the United States, federal laws and regulations, the Constitution of the State of Iowa, rules and regulations of the Department of Education, state law, its policies and regulations, and the expressed will of the electorate.

Board members are citizens of the NIACC college district and are elected to staggered four-year terms in accordance with the statute. The Board [elects its officers](#) (pg. 15) and establishes [policies](#) (pg. 11) for the operation of the institution, which further defines its relationship with the President and Administration. All Board members abide by Board Policy 1.05, [the Code of Ethics for Directors](#) (pg. 20). Additionally, the [Board Conflict of Interest policy](#) (pg. 12) was updated in [October 2022](#) (pg. 3) to include [annual certification](#) (pg. 13) that the Board member is not aware of the existence of any direct or indirect conflicts of interest.

NIACC has a nine-member Board that meets monthly to conduct business. Meetings include a Board Workshop at 5:30 p.m. with faculty and staff presentations during dinner with no formal action taken, followed by the Regular Meeting beginning at 7 p.m. All Board [minutes and agendas](#) are available on the College's website, and Board meetings are open to the public and subject to Iowa Code.

The NIACC Board is a member of the Association of Community College Trustees, the American Association of Community Colleges, and the Community Colleges for Iowa.

#### 2.A.1.

NIACC's Mission, Vision, and Values were developed based on input from hundreds of students, staff, alums, business leaders, and citizens of the nine-county service region (as described in 1.A). The NIACC Board of Directors ultimately approved the [2018-2023 Strategic Plan](#) (pg. 78) and its accompanying Mission, Vision, and Values at its [December 2017](#) Board Meeting (pg. 6). The College later sought Board [approval](#) (pg. 4) to extend the current Strategic Plan from its sunset period of June 2023 to June 2025. The Board sets goals annually that align with the mission of the

College. ([October 2021](#) 1<sup>st</sup> reading (pg. 4), [November 2021](#) 2<sup>nd</sup> reading (pg. 3), [October 2022](#) 1<sup>st</sup> reading (pg. 9), [November 2022](#) 2<sup>nd</sup> reading (pg. 3))

The Board [views](#) the Mission, Vision, and Values monthly while preparing for and attending the regular Board meeting. The Mission, Vision, and Values are reviewed during the annual update of the Board Policy Manual and the biannual Strategic Plan update.

## **2.A.2.**

### ***Financial***

The Vice President for Administrative Services presents a [financial report and narrative explanation](#) (pg. 66) at every Board meeting, which includes a budget and actual year-to-date comparative statement of the College's general operating fund revenues and expenditures. Financial statements are audited annually and presented ([2020](#) pg. 5, [2021](#) pg. 2, [2022](#) pg. 3) during regular board meetings.

The operating budgets for the general fund, auxiliary fund, and capital expenditures related to its plant funds are reviewed annually by the NIACC Board of Directors. During the [annual budgetary presentation](#) (pg. 110), the NIACC Board reviews the College's annual and long-range plans and forecasts to determine if the College should increase student fees in compliance with state law requirements. Annual auditing requirements guide financial integrity. [Redundant practices](#) are in place to provide the required segregation of duties oversight to all receivables and expenditures. Managers are provided [access](#) to budget reports and expense reports monthly. Each month, a board member reviews all bills and expenditures before recommending payment as part of the Consent Agenda. The Board retains an independent auditor to examine and audit the internal control system, financial reports, records, and financial aid disbursements annually. Separate audits are conducted for the College (FY2020, FY2021, FY2022) and NIACC Foundation (FY2020, FY2021, FY2022), including local, state, and federal procedures and statutes.

NIACC's [Purchasing Policy 2.06](#) (pg. 30) establishes the rules governing the purchase and acquisition of materials, supplies, contract services, equipment, repairs to facilities, construction, works of improvement, library books and periodicals, and goods for resale.

The [Investment Policy 2.18](#) (pg. 43) governs the stewardship practices for all College funds. This Investment Policy will comply with [Iowa Code Chapter 12B](#) (pg. 2).

### ***Academic***

Information regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is presented annually during [New Faculty Orientation Week](#). The FERPA policy is included in the [Faculty Handbook](#) (pg. 32) and the [Student Handbook](#) (pg. 56).

All employees [are required](#) (pg. 18) to complete [new employee training](#) in Cornerstone, consisting of Hazard Communication-GHS and your Right to Know; Title IX and Sexual Misconduct; Workplace Harassment; and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) during their first two weeks of employment. It is required that all faculty, staff, and students complete Iowa's First Amendment training. The Title IX and First Amendment training refreshers are conducted annually. Employees who regularly work with children are required to complete Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter training.

The Student Handbook contains policies and procedures on [academic dishonesty](#) (pg. 29), [sexual misconduct and non-discrimination](#) (pg. 10), [grade appeals](#) (pg. 7), and [formal student complaints](#) (pg. 8).

The [Technology Policy](#) (pg. 32) and [Acceptable Use Policy](#) (pg. 90) establish acceptable practices regarding using NIACC informational resources to protect information confidentiality, integrity, and availability.

The College has an established [Institutional Review Board policy](#) that all individuals conducting research at NIACC or using NIACC data must follow.

### ***Human Resources***

Human Resources is responsible for recruitment, training, evaluation, termination, and professional development, including performance improvement plans. Cornerstone, a new [online application](#) software, was adopted that allows applicants to [upload all materials](#) required by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, including demographic information. NIACC uses a collaborative hiring process, and the Cornerstone system provides access to pertinent information needed to evaluate candidates but denies access to protected demographic information.

NIACC's [Faculty Handbook](#) and [Employee Handbook](#) include policy, governance, and procedure information. Both are posted online, making this information readily available to all NIACC employees. Links to board policies are included and cover such topics as leave, professional development, salary increases, faculty workload, annual evaluations, promotion and tenure, code of conduct, faculty compensation from grants and contracts, and conflicts of interest.

NIACC's [Affirmative Action Policy](#) (pg. 10) and [Plan](#) guide and ensure equal [hiring](#), recruitment, promotion, scheduling, and compensation access. Hiring [qualifications](#) for all College personnel are posted in job advertisements. Screening committee members are identified by the hiring supervisor and approved by Human Resources. Screening committee members are [oriented](#) to the search and interview processes during a face-to-face consultation with Human Resources, with relevant documentation posted to the Cornerstone site for easy retrieval.

### ***Auxiliary Functions***

Athletics, Bookstore, Food Service, and Student Housing follow the same policies and procedures governing all other College units.

[Resident Assistants](#) in Housing receive training and are held to a contract outlining expectations for their performance.

Food Services has a catering [policy](#) and also maintains [integrity](#) in its operations.

The NIACC Foundation has adopted [by-laws](#) and established [policies](#) and administrative procedures to govern its work.

Athletics provides student-athletes with a [handbook](#) outlining policies on student-athlete drug testing, behavior guidelines, personal conduct, social media, and sportsmanship.

BookZone, NIACC's bookstore, strives to offer an excellent customer experience, which includes readily available, clear, and transparent [policies](#) (pg. 2) as well as reminders and [announcements](#) to

students regarding their textbooks.

As an auxiliary function, BookZone is held to the same auditing requirements as the College. An annual inventory is conducted at the end of each fiscal year, and findings are reported to the Vice President for Administrative Services for inclusion in the College's annual audit.

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- Nov 2022 Board Book (page number 9)
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- OnBoard Dashboard
- Sample Employment Application
- Sample Job Posting
- Segregation of Duties
- Self-Service Financial Management

## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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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.

### Argument

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#### 2.B.1.

The NIACC [Catalog](#) is a primary source for academic and student services information. The NIACC Catalog contains admissions requirements, course descriptions, degree requirements, institutional resources, facilities, and services. The Catalog resides on the public webpage, has advanced search features to locate information, and is updated annually. Print copies of the Catalog are provided to advising staff, local high school counselors, and those who work closely with the advising staff.

NIACC courses are published, and a search feature allows individuals to search [class schedules](#) for multiple terms. With this being an online search program, the information is published in real time and provides the most up-to-date class information. This is available on the public website and also on TrojanHome.

Each Meta Major has a [flyer](#) outlining the academic programs available as transfer and career pathways and the requirements for admission to NIACC. The Meta Major flyer also outlines information related to annual wage, projected job growth, top skills employers are looking for, and short-term offerings, including credit or non-credit. The Catalog also [details](#) each Meta Major and any specific program's specialized entrance requirements or prerequisites. An [enrollment checklist](#) provides each step of the way from application to enrollment.

Program booklets are prepared each spring after curriculum updates have been approved by the Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council (Samples – [Skilled Trades](#), [Agriculture](#)). These booklets provide admission, degree, and curriculum requirements.

[Current tuition and expenses](#) can be found on NIACC's website. The tuition and fee schedules are updated yearly for [resident](#) and [non-resident](#) fees. Students can estimate their educational expenses in a way that best suits their needs. Printable PDF files of tuition, fees, housing costs, and online [calculators](#) are available. The [Net Price Calculator](#) is a tool that provides an estimated attendance cost, including tuition, fees, books, supplies, room and board, and other related expenses. The cost of attendance listed for on-campus, off-campus, and those living with parents can be found on the financial aid webpage. Program and course [fees](#) for tools, supplies, and other additional costs are also available. Students can find specific textbook costs on the [BookZone](#) website by entering their courses and determining if books are available to purchase or rent.



NIACC articulates courses and programs to other colleges and universities. A listing of these institutions can be found on the [articulation agreements](#) webpage.

Each year, the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) releases The Annual Condition of Iowa's Community Colleges ([2022](#)) report, which includes academic program information, enrollment, student outcomes, and cost of attendance information for Iowa's 15 community colleges. The report highlights the positive impact that Iowa Community Colleges have on students' lives and the economic impact on local communities. Each community college submits data to the IDOE's Management Information System.

The IDOE created a website with program outcomes and [interactive dashboards](#) allowing users to pinpoint outcomes for credit and non-credit students. The user can select a statewide data view by college, graduation year, or year of employment going as far back as 2010. This allows the user to access employment and wage data and trends quickly.

The [Student Handbook](#) is updated annually by the staff responsible for the processes, procedures, and services. Updates are requested in May, with the final publication available on July 1. The Student Handbook outlines complaint processes, academic and disciplinary policies, college services, emergency procedures, and many student development processes and services.

NIACC's website contains department contact information and a searchable [directory](#). This allows an individual to search for a staff member by name, department, or position. A directory of all full and part-time staff with pictures and contact information can be accessed on TrojanHome. This photo directory is updated daily from Colleague. Finally, the "Staff" link on the Catalog website provides an annually updated list of all full-time employees' academic qualifications.

The College utilizes a variety of media to inform the broader community of specific programs, events, and offerings. The institution is deeply committed to upholding the integrity and accuracy of its representations across all platforms and includes source information when using specific data (Example: [Meta Major flyer](#)). NIACC ensures that even those not directly connected to the digital world remain informed by advertising through [local newspapers, radio, and television stations](#). In real-time, leveraging [social media platforms](#) allows NIACC to reach a wider audience, particularly the younger demographic. This dual strategy ensures that the community is well-informed while maintaining the integrity and transparency of the institution's information.

## **2.B.2.**

Experiential learning offers different forms of learning for [students](#): clinical and simulated experiences, labs for the hands-on application of skills, and preceptorships. Clinicals are required in many health sciences career pathways where students must work on-site with trained professionals. Clinical and preceptor experiences are [mapped](#) to student learning and program outcomes and [evaluated](#) for competency. Clinical partners include acute care (inpatient), long-term care, outpatient clinics, and observation sites at community locations such as schools, public health, and home-care services. The variety of [clinical partners](#) ensures our students can work with patients across the lifespan. These partners allow our students to work and experience what happens day-to-day in these career areas to better prepare them for employment.

Our on-site [health simulation center](#) allows students to practice their skills in a safe and controlled environment designed to simulate various clinical environments with state-of-the-art mannequins that simulate human interaction. Led by faculty, the mannequins can blink, breathe, cough, speak,

and mimic any human action that could be experienced in health care.

Our agriculture students can plant and harvest the acres surrounding our campus. In addition to producing corn and soybeans, agriculture students are afforded the experience of a [working farm](#) with a small hog and cattle operation.

Having a [Volunteer Center](#) on campus gives faculty, staff, and students an opportunity for civic engagement through service and volunteering. By offering various service and volunteering opportunities, the College engages our future leaders to become active in our local communities and provides a sense of belonging and accomplishment. Student-athletes are required to volunteer two hours each fall and spring semester. By doing so, the student-athletes gain a sense of pride and identity with their team and college. In addition to these hours, teams take on special events to give back to the community, such as hosting [Think Pink Night](#) and helping at [Ruby's Pantry](#) and the [Humane Society of North Iowa](#).

[NIACC Minute](#) is a blog that captures much of the happenings on campus. With featured news and special announcements, this is a way to keep the community informed of what is happening at NIACC.

The [John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center](#) (JPEC) and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) are vital in economic development in our rural region. JPEC offers several services to help entrepreneurs with business start-ups or expansion. College students better understand the many facets of entrepreneurship through degrees, certificates, courses, and clubs that give practical experience to develop their entrepreneurial skills. Scholarships are available to students who qualify. The center assists various age groups in developing an entrepreneurial mindset. Services include an early introduction to entrepreneurship with "Entrepreneur for a Day," where local fifth-grade students visit campus to learn how to create and market a product they design with Play-Do. The Youth Entrepreneurship Academy teaches high school students the basics of owning and starting businesses.

The [Performing Arts & Leadership Series](#) (PALS) provides Tony Award-winning shows, Grammy Award-winning artists, comedians, and internationally acclaimed speakers. The PALS offers season and individual tickets, with a new lineup revealed every May. College students are given a reduced ticket price of \$10 to any show, allowing them to experience culture at its finest. Students also have the opportunity to do paid backstage work gaining hands-on, experiential learning with professional technicians.

The [InTouch newsletter](#) is printed twice per year and delivered to alums and friends of NIACC. It provides human interest stories of current and previous staff and faculty, alum doing extraordinary things, and updates on new programs, services, and scholarships. The annual Foundation Report and the Foundation donor list are provided in each newsletter.

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## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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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.

### Argument

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#### 2.C.1.

Board members participate in an orientation following the election and oath of office. New Board members undergo a comprehensive onboarding process that includes an [orientation manual](#), a one-on-one meeting with the president, an assigned mentor, and a monthly meeting before the regular Board meetings.

[Board Development](#) activities are available through Community Colleges for Iowa and the Association of Community College Trustees. Additionally, Board members are encouraged to attend [annual state](#) and national [conferences](#) to learn more about best practices to be considered at NIACC. One Board member is appointed each year to serve as liaison to the Community Colleges for Iowa state-wide board of trustees.

The Board has established [policies](#) to define authority, duties and responsibilities, compensation, composition, professional development, organization, formulation, and policy review.

[Board Policy 1.05](#) (pg. 20) defines a member's legal and moral commitment. [Board Policy 1.06](#) (pg. 21) defines the fiduciary responsibilities of the Board, including the requirement to have a certified public accountant conduct an annual audit of NIACC's financial affairs in accordance with the [statutes](#) (pg. 5) of the State of Iowa. The Board receives a [monthly report](#) (pg. 66) from the Board Secretary, and a Board member, rotating monthly, reviews the [monthly bills](#) (pg. 16) before the full Board's payment approval.

#### 2.C.2.

The NIACC Board of Directors has adopted a policy form of governance. It has established specific policies and procedures for the board's duties, rules, and regulations, as well as meeting requirements. These are incorporated into the College's [Board Policy Manual](#), which outlines policies and procedures.

The [authority](#) (pg. 7) of the Board of Directors includes formulating broad public policy in community college education. It shall function as the legislative and policy-making body charged with the oversight and control of College activities. The formulation and adoption of written policy shall constitute the basic method by which the Board exercises its leadership in the operation of the College.

The Board annually assesses its actions during the prior year through a formative [self-evaluation](#) process. Each member of the Board identifies areas of overall Board effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Each year, the Board sets [goals](#) (pg. 4) for improving their performance as a governing body. These goals may reflect areas that respond to current conditions, foster Board leadership, and respond to accreditation recommendations or areas of weakness identified in the Board self-evaluation.

The Board Policy Manual includes the [Board Organization](#) (pgs. 11-16) and the respective duties of officers. In 2023, the NIACC Board reviewed all policies and requested a formal [review](#) by the College's attorney.

To ensure connection to the Foundation and Alumni Boards, a [joint meeting](#) is held each year to share updates from the respective Boards.

### **2.C.3.**

The NIACC Board of Directors is deeply committed to a comprehensive community-based strategic planning process involving both internal and external stakeholders, demonstrating their commitment to review and consider the interests of internal and external constituencies. The [2018-2023 Strategic Planning process](#) (pg. 6) is described in detail in 1.A.1. The College contracted with the University of Northern Iowa's Institute for Decision Making to [facilitate](#) (pg. 3) the process and collected feedback from faculty, staff, students, and community members. The NIACC Board of Directors approved the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan at its [December 2017 Board Meeting](#) (pg. 7) and later approved a [revised Strategic Plan](#) (pg. 1) to extend to 2025.

The Board of Directors receives a [weekly newsletter](#) from the President and other regular campus communications like TrojanHome. In addition to its standard business meetings, the Board conducts two annual retreats, including multiple presentations from campus leaders, students, and board development activities.

The Board meets monthly to reflect on the priorities of the institution. Student panels, held during the semi-annual board retreats, allow members to [hear directly from students](#) (pg. 2) regarding their experience and recommendations for improvement at the College. The retreats also regularly include [budget updates](#) (pg. 3) from the Vice President for Administrative Services and [Strategic Plan updates](#) (pg. 6) from the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Organizational Development.

Each department annually provides a [monitoring report](#) (pg. 11) to the Board. Monitoring reports include the successes and challenges each division faces.

### **2.C.4.**

The Board derives its [authority](#) from Chapter 260C.14 (pg. 7) of the Code of Iowa. The Board is subject to provisions of the Constitution of the United States, federal laws and regulations, the Constitution of the State of Iowa, rules and regulations of the Department of Education, state law, its

policies and regulations, and the expressed will of the electorate.

All Board minutes and agendas are available on the College's website, and board meetings are open to the public and subject to [Iowa Code](#). Board members must complete annual requirements for financial disclosure and conflicts of interest. The Board Policy Manual contains the [Code of Ethics for Directors](#) (pg. 20).

The Board preserves its independence by following its [Conflict of Interest policy and procedures](#) (pgs. 12-13). Board members routinely abstain when any potential conflict may be present in their decision-making process.

## 2.C.5.

Per [Board Policy 1.02](#) (pg. 11), the Board will delegate to the College President the function of specifying required actions and designing the detailed arrangements under which the College will be operated.

The Board's delegation of authority to NIACC's President is also detailed in [Policy 1.05 Code of Ethics for Directors](#) (pg. 20), "A Board member will recognize the Board's delegation of authority to the College President as chief executive officer and will work to confine Board actions to policy determination, planning, overall approval and evaluation, and maintaining the fiscal stability of the College."

The Board's responsibility is to select and appoint the president of North Iowa Area Community College. Within the framework of policies and regulations adopted by the Board, the [College President](#) (pg. 22) shall exercise broad and discretionary authority in carrying out the responsibilities of the position.

Board meetings and minutes reflect how the board reviews and approves the [president's](#) recommendations related to the institution's day-to-day operations.

As detailed in 3.C.2 and 5.A.3., faculty are responsible for all aspects of teaching and curriculum and program development. [New program proposals](#) and [existing program changes](#) go through the Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council for review and final approval. This faculty-led committee holds final decision-making authority. [Representatives](#) (pg. 3) from each academic area and department serve as committee members.

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## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

### Argument

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#### 2.D.1.

In 2019, a [Speech and Expression Policy](#) (pg. 27) was developed and instituted based on [Executive Order 13864](#) and Governor Kim Reynold's letter approving [Senate File 274](#). The College established this policy to comply with the laws of the state of Iowa and the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

As required by SF274, the language includes the [policy](#) (pg. 4) and sections on protected and non-protected activities, student organization protections, public forums on campus, freedom of expression, and the complaint procedure.

Additionally, the Iowa Legislature passed [HF 744](#), which went into effect in July 2021, requiring community colleges to provide "training on free speech under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States to all students, faculty, and staff on an annual basis, which elected officials and staff shall be permitted to attend."

The online course [SRM-100-WF22-First Amendment Training](#), housed in Canvas, contains the annual Iowa free speech training, a state-mandated training for all college and high school students taking NIACC courses. Employees complete an identical training in [Cornerstone](#), NIACC's Human Resources software portal. It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The Board of Directors' Policy [3.01 Students – General Policies](#) (pg. 50) states, "Students of the North Iowa Area Community College are both citizens and members of the academic community. As citizens, students enjoy the same freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and right of petition that other citizens enjoy. As members of the academic community, they are subject to the obligations which are theirs by virtue of this membership."

The NIACC Faculty Handbook contains a statement on [Academic Freedom and Teaching Controversial Issues](#) (pg. 16).

Classes use a [standard syllabus template](#) to communicate common course content, common competencies, and specific course expectations and policies. A faculty resource, the [Syllabus Information Document](#), explains further syllabus considerations. Within the bounds of said statutes and policies, as well as College accessibility and quality standards, faculty members are granted academic freedom to determine how they deliver course content and competencies.

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## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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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.

### Argument

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#### 2.E.1.

All research must follow the [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\) approval policy](#). It begins with the researcher completing the [Research Proposal form](#) to determine the required review type. The proposed research must meet the defined criteria, including being compatible with the college's mission and purpose and being educational. All proposals utilizing human subjects must meet the [Protection of Human Subjects](#) requirement. The IRB review team is comprised of the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Organizational Development, the Vice President of Student Development & Success, and two faculty members with advanced degrees.

#### 2.E.2.

Support for the integrity of research is provided by library staff where students, faculty, and staff can get [assistance](#) with developing research questions and finding resources in the library or through one of the many [databases](#), [full-text journals](#), [magazines](#), and [e-books](#) (pg. 7). Library staff supports students individually in their research and scholarly practice, with assistance [available](#) by phone, drop-in during open hours, online help through email or Zoom, or by scheduled appointment.

The NIACC Library [helps](#) (pg. 5) our students, faculty, staff, and community members become effective researchers and connects them with [information](#) (pg. 6). For example, in 2021-2022, Library staff assisted with 177 in-person and 15 email research and reference requests.

#### 2.E.3.

Library staff offer in-class or in-library orientation sessions for all academic disciplines, available by faculty request. Orientation sessions cover information literacy, accessing library services and resources, evaluating sources, search strategies, and other topics as requested by instructors. During the last academic year, these orientations were held for various [Composition I](#) and II, [Nursing](#), and College Essentials classes. In 2022-2023, there were ten classroom instructional sessions with 262 students in attendance.

[Library policies, copyright, and acceptable behavior policies](#) are on the library webpage and in the

student code of conduct. [Research help/guides](#) are available on the website, and resource guides and additional information can be found on the [Library's TrojanHome page](#).

[Composition II](#) (ENG-106) emphasizes research strategies, synthesizing valid sources into [compositions](#) and utilizing appropriate types of source documentation.

The [Technology Policy](#) (pg. 32) in the Student Handbook also guides ethical learning and research practices. Copyright infringement and responsible use of the internet are detailed in this policy. Student issues arising from technology misuse on campus are monitored by the Technology Department and sent to the Vice President for Student Development & Success as warranted.

#### **2.E.4.**

Students are expected to conduct themselves responsibly. College disciplinary proceedings may proceed against a student who violates the Student Code of Conduct related to [academic dishonesty](#) (pg. 29). In the Student Handbook, the Code lists standards for student conduct and informs students of various actions that may constitute academic dishonesty. Enforcing academic honesty begins at the instructor level. Syllabi include a link to the Student Handbook addressing academic honesty and encourages students to proactively seek instructor guidance if they have questions. Disciplinary actions will be taken as outlined in the syllabus and the student disciplinary policy.

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## 2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

### Summary

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NIACC exemplifies integrity and responsibility, underpinned by policies and procedures encouraging fair and ethical behavior across the institution. The college's commitment to equity and transparency is manifested through publicly accessible policies and reporting available to the Board of Directors, the community, and the state. The NIACC website is a comprehensive source of information for students and the public, detailing academic programs, board operations, and accreditation relationships, among other aspects.

The NIACC Board of Directors operates autonomously, adhering to established policies and maintaining transparent communication, ensuring decisions align with the institution's best interests. Regular development opportunities further fortify the Board's commitment to upholding institutional integrity. Additionally, tailored policies for students, faculty, and staff affirm NIACC's commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth. Adherence to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and academic integrity policies fosters responsible scholarship and application of knowledge.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*

## 3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

### 3.A - Core Component 3.A

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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).

### Argument

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#### 3.A.1.

Credentials awarded by the College are approved by the Iowa Department of Education ([IDOE](#)). NIACC offers transfer, career and technical, and general studies [degrees](#) (pg. 13). Transfer degrees include the Associate in Arts (AA) and the Associate in Science (AS). The College's career and technical degree is an Associate in Applied Science that prepares students to enter the workforce. Other credentials offered include [diplomas and certificates](#) (pg. 14), which can be standalone or stackable. Also, a non-transfer degree, an [Associate in General Studies](#) (AGS) (pg. 14), is offered as an individualized student plan.

Associate degrees are at least 62 semester credit hours and require the completion of a [general education core](#), which includes communication, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences/mathematics courses. Diplomas and credentials of at least 30 semester credit hours require a minimum of 3 semester hours of general education coursework. Degrees, diplomas, and certificates demonstrate alignment with the four Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) through curriculum program mapping. [Communication, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Life Skills and Professionalism](#), and [Global Awareness](#) were the ILOs [identified](#) (pg. 210) by faculty and staff as essential for students who graduate from NIACC to be successful in life and their careers, regardless of academic program.

The Liaison Advisory Committee on Transfer Students (LACTS) is a voluntary partnership comprised of representatives from the Iowa community colleges, the Regent Universities, the Board of Regents, the State of Iowa, and the Iowa Department of Education. LACTS develops each of the statewide agreements, which undergo an [annual review and reaffirmation process](#) under the direction of the LACTS Committee.

The NIACC Academic team analyzes data from the [Community College Transfer Report](#) to look for

gaps in GPA comparisons between the transfer students and the students who started at the universities and GPA by program or discipline. NIACC students transferring to Regents institutions earned an average GPA of 3.22 (transfer, with associate degree) and 2.99 (transfer, no degree), with 86% remaining at the transfer institution one year after the transfer, which validates that NIACC programs/curriculum prepare students to be successful at the 4-year institutions.

During the development of [Guided Pathways](#) (pg.2), efforts were made to ensure courses, certificates, and diplomas were appropriately matched to each pathway, and students would be adequately prepared for subsequent courses in their degree.

The Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council ([CAAC](#)), consisting of content expert faculty and academic staff, oversees the [curriculum approval process](#). Items [submitted](#) in the CAAC workflow are accompanied by rationale with evidence of [departmental approval](#) before being vetted and approved by CAAC, which requires two readings. After approval, changes and new course or program information are [submitted](#) through the State of Iowa Curriculum System (STICS). Through this review process, faculty and administration determine that the curricula are appropriate to the mission and educational program/degree.

The currency of courses and programs is assessed through Academic Program Review, a process outlined in 4.A. This process requires programs to review and develop action plans regarding their goals and objectives (Sections IV.B. and IV.C. in sample reports: [2020](#) (pg. 22), [2021](#) (pg. 37), [2022](#) pg. 17).

Business and industry leaders serve on Career and Technical Education [advisory committees](#). Committee members [meet](#) with faculty to strengthen collaboration and to provide feedback on enrollment data, completion rates, program curriculum, assessment results, activities, and work-based learning opportunities. To build relationships, some employers visit campus to recruit students for their companies, and faculty/students visit employers to learn how classroom learning is applied on the job.

Annual [Career Placement Reports](#) provide employment results of certificate, diploma, and degree offerings, which are reviewed to determine if programs are preparing students for the workforce and are marketable. In programs leading to state licensure, [outcomes](#) are aligned with state requirements or accrediting agencies. Such professional and state alignment prepares students to sit for the needed credentialing board exam, a step commonly required to secure employment in the field of study.

### **3.A.2.**

As a community college, no graduate or baccalaureate degrees are offered; however, the different levels of achievement in course-level [Student Learning Outcomes](#) (SLOs) (pg. 5) are articulated in the course outlines and syllabi of all general education and career-technical education courses as well as [Program Learning Outcomes](#) (PLOs) (pg. 26), ensuring progression in learning course/program content. Four [Institutional Learning Outcomes](#) (ILOs) have been identified that NIACC believes every graduate will need to succeed as a professional, regardless of academic program. [Division Chairs](#) (pg. 10) review a random sampling of syllabi each semester to help maintain Student Learning Outcomes.

Curriculum maps serve as a framework for course sequencing and curricular assessment in transfer and career-technical programs. CTE [program maps](#) (pg. 66) articulate and differentiate SLOs, PLOs, and ILOs. The [maps](#) demonstrate how general education courses align with the ILOs for transfer

curriculum.

### 3.A.3.

Several methods ensure course consistency across [all delivery modes](#) and [locations](#). [Course outlines](#) include the course description, Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), and an overview of the required course content used for each course with the same prefix/number. For instance, the Computer Business Applications course is consistent between [face-to-face](#), [hybrid](#), and [online](#), as well as the ENG courses. ([F2F](#), [hybrid](#), [online](#)) Course outlines are evaluated and updated on a [three-year rotation](#) (pg. 19). Division Chairs receive a Course Review Rotation [spreadsheet](#) with the list of courses that will be evaluated/updated during the academic year. Faculty [review](#) the course outline and determine if changes must be made to reflect current classroom practices. Courses can be updated outside the recommended review cycle as needed; however, this cycle ensures that all courses are reviewed consistently. As stated in 3.A.1, all courses are subject to the same review process for approval. Consistency is further accomplished through a required [course syllabus template](#), which includes course information, learning outcomes, NIACC policies, and program/course/individual faculty member information.

Faculty have initial and ongoing training to assist in consistency in content delivery. New full-time faculty participate in a [New Faculty Orientation](#). For full-time faculty, thirteen days per academic year for [professional development](#) (pg. 26) and academic preparation are provided for continuing professional development to ensure consistency in policy procedure, technology training, etc. One activity provided to adjuncts is the [grade norming](#) session at the Adjunct Professional Development Dinner.

NIACC is National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accredited. [Accreditation standards](#) strengthen consistency between NIACC courses offered to high school students and other NIACC offerings.

The College has [two professional development opportunities](#), offered in person or via Zoom each year, which are mandatory for all adjunct and concurrent faculty. Those pieces of training are accompanied by a [professional development course](#) in Canvas with assessments addressing items such as grade norming, [Canvas requirements](#) (pg. 18), and accessibility. Concurrent/adjunct faculty are partnered with liaisons from their content area. Liaisons [provide](#) content support, assessment guidance, institutional information, and training.

NIACC has clearly defined course modalities, specific course development and [updating](#) processes, and resource courses to ensure consistency from section to section. NIACC [uses master](#) courses for some online courses to ensure course consistency and [Blueprinting](#) in Canvas for other [courses](#).

The Online Learning Coordinator/Instructional Designer maintains and assists in overseeing consistency in instructional delivery through the [NIACC Course Development Process](#) and [Quality Course Reviews](#) for all online, hybrid, and flex deliveries.

Solutions Management Group (SMG) is contracted to provide uniform [classroom technology](#) at the teaching stations.

The [textbook adoption process](#) also ensures that faculty make changes based on specific criteria (the previous book was used for at least three years, the last text is out of print, etc.) and that textbook changes happen across all course sections. The methods described here also ensure the consistency of

course rigor and expectations, as discussed in 4A.

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- Template - Agenda for Breakout Committees
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## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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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.

## Argument

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### 3.B.1.

The Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) has [administrative governance](#) over community colleges, including minimum [general education requirements](#). NIACC's credentials/degrees provide varying levels of [general education](#) skill development through their distribution requirements across the four general education categories: communication, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences/mathematics. The Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council (CAAC), the [IDOE through STICS](#), and HLC approve modifications to credentials, including the general education program.

Part of our mission is "to enrich lives through comprehensive educational opportunities," which the General Education courses support. The Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs): Communication, Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving, Life Skills and Professionalism, and Global Awareness were developed by faculty and approved by academic leaders.

Faculty maintain curriculum maps for their program(s). For the transfer curriculum, the Meta Major curriculum maps demonstrate how general education requirements meet the ILOs. [Program maps](#) (pg. 66) align course outcomes with program and institutional outcomes for CTE programs. Curriculum maps serve as a framework for course sequencing and curricular assessment in transfer and CTE programs.

The [Educational Effectiveness Committee \(EEC\)](#) is charged with helping faculty map the ILOs and program goals. NIACC adheres to general education standards established by the State of Iowa's [Liaison Advisory Committee on Transfer Students \(LACTS\)](#), "which exists to help make the student transition among Iowa public institutions of higher education as smooth and seamless as possible." Curriculum and course details are communicated to students through [syllabi](#) and the [Catalog](#). The [Institutional Learning Outcomes](#) are also in the Catalog.

Through the [strategic planning process](#) (pg. 39) conducted in 2017, consideration of mission alignment with educational offerings was reviewed and validated. The planning [process](#) (pg. 40) involved the community, advisory boards, students, staff, and faculty. A stakeholder [survey](#) (pg. 56) aided the process and included research on student needs, community engagement, and economic development.

### 3.B.2.

The General Education Core Curriculum adheres to [the Iowa Code](#) and aligns with the [LACTS articulation agreements](#) to provide a streamlined transfer process to our four-year partner institutions. In line with Iowa Code 21.4(1), NIACC's general education "imparts common knowledge, promotes intellectual inquiry, and stimulates the examination of different perspectives, thus enabling people to function effectively in a complex and changing world."

Per [Iowa Code 281—21.3\(260C\)](#) (pg. 175), for associate of arts and associate of science transfer major programs, "each community college shall offer a general college parallel program of study leading to an associate of arts award or an associate of science award, pursuant to sub rules [21.2\(9\)](#) (pg. 2) and [21.4\(2\)](#). These programs shall offer courses equivalent to the first two years of a baccalaureate program and shall not be discipline specific."

The [ILOs](#) include broad knowledge and skills necessary for college students to be successful when leaving college, whether to enter the workforce or continue pursuit of their educational goals. NIACC uses modified [ILO assessment rubrics](#) based on the Association of American Colleges & Universities VALUE Rubrics.

### 3.B.3.

ILO #4 [Global Awareness](#) calls for learners to analyze the interconnected world in which they live, determine how various factors in one area can affect other areas, understand the existence and value of diverse perspectives, and understand the importance of respecting all human life in a global society. Examples of how this ILO is utilized to provide students with growth opportunities and skills for success in a multicultural society can be seen across [program offerings](#).

The [Common Read](#) supports the Global Awareness ILO through [real-life stories of people](#) from diverse backgrounds. It is designed to engage NIACC students, staff, faculty, and community members in a unified, intellectual activity. First-year students who read the book as part of their communications requirement are introduced to academic expectations, respectful discourse, and community building.

Cocurricular [clubs and organizations](#) identify annual [goals](#) to align and deliver activities that support learning. Some clubs, such as [4 Us By Us](#), [TRIO & Friends](#), and the [Sexuality and Gender Equality Club](#) (SAGE), focus on student success in diverse environments.

### 3.B.4.

As a comprehensive community college, faculty focus primarily on effective teaching and student learning, with less emphasis on research and publication. However, NIACC faculty and Academic Affairs staff participate in many [professional growth opportunities](#) in their fields supported by the College.

Active learning and engaging teaching strategies were presented during Professional Development

Week in [August 2018](#) (pg. 2) and at an all-faculty meeting in [May 2023](#). Project-based learning (PBL) and course-based undergraduate research experiences (CUREs) training are planned for the near future. One faculty member in Natural Science attended the [ABLE Conference](#) over the summer, and there was a [session on CUREs](#). She also did a training on using [Bean Beetles](#) as a CURE activity and has implemented that in BIO-202. Additionally, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) Team regularly delivers [training](#) throughout the year.

NIACC offers faculty [Developmental Leave](#) (pg. 18) that can be utilized for resident study, travel, research, writing, or other activities. In the last five years, two faculty have taken a sabbatical.

[The Innovation Space](#) on campus allows students to tackle [tangible, open-ended, real-world problems](#). Another example is students in Building Trades built [bookshelves](#) and cutting boards for NIACC retirees and eleven bookcases, which were [presented](#) at the end-of-the-semester social in December.

The College has an [Institutional Review Board Policy](#) to support faculty and student research. The IRB process extends to [external researchers](#) who wish to use NIACC as a research site if they meet certain criteria and standards.

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- Strategic Planning Sessions 2017 (page number 39)
- Strategic Planning Sessions 2017 (page number 40)
- Strategic Planning Sessions 2017 (page number 56)
- Transfer in Iowa webpage

## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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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.

### Argument

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#### 3.C.1.

NIACC strives to ensure that the overall composition of [faculty and staff](#) (pg. 21) reflects the [region's diversity](#). To obtain a diverse pool of applicants, the College uses numerous professional employment job boards as outreach to diverse populations, which assists in recruitment.

NIACC, in compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies, makes every effort to recruit and employ a diverse and highly qualified faculty and staff. In the [Diversity Statement](#) (pg. 10), Board Policy 1.02, the College strives to support and respect all, providing an inclusive environment.

NIACC's [Affirmative Action Policy](#) (pg. 10) guides the [hiring process](#), recruitment, promotion, scheduling, and compensation and ensures equal access. While it is promising to see an increase in minority applications for last year, it is disproportionate to the rise in applications overall ([Human Resources Monitoring Report](#) (pg. 7). Looking at the [specific pools](#) (pg. 9) of minority applicants by race replicates the population of the College's service area. This helps educate us on the people applying to the College to develop appropriate support systems for the future workforce.

According to IPEDS 2022, when comparing full-time [faculty](#) (pg. 4) and [students](#) (pg. 4), 98% of faculty identify as white versus 85% of students who identify similarly, 0% as black versus 3% of students who identify similarly, 45% full-time faculty are female versus 54% of the student population is female. Of [NIACC staff](#) (pg. 21), 96% of employees identify as white, 4.2% as American Indian/Asian/Black/Pacific Islander/Hispanic; and 60% female/40% male.

### 3.C.2.

NIACC continues to offer exceptional programs and services by employing and maintaining qualified faculty. According to IPEDS 2022, the College has 64 full-time faculty members and a [21:1](#) student-to-faculty ratio. This low faculty-student ratio allows faculty to engage with students at a higher level.

Division Chairs and department faculty review full-time to part-time (FT/PT) ratios during the Academic Program Review [process](#) (pg. 2). Also, Division Chairs analyze regular load and [capacity data](#) to assess areas of need or faculty equity. For example, in 2019-2020, two English faculty members who left NIACC were not replaced due to low enrollment numbers across sections. With full implementation of [Guided Pathways](#) in Fall 2021, Composition I and II enrollment increased. After completing a capacity study, the position was approved for Fall 2023.

As detailed in the [Faculty Agreement](#) (pgs. 4-5) and in compliance with [Iowa Administrative Code 281-24.5\(2\)](#) (pg. 3), the full-time faculty teaching load per semester is Arts and Sciences - 15 semester hours and is capped at 22, Career and Technical Education – shall not exceed an aggregate of 30 clock hours per week or the equivalent.

More than 80% of semester hours offered are taught by full-time faculty members ([National Community College Benchmarking Project](#)). NIACC continues to focus on full-time faculty positions, with 11% of total employees as adjuncts compared to the state average of [28.7%](#) (pg. 24). The number of full-time faculty and their [longevity](#) ensures continuity in and- out of the classroom.

Faculty have opportunities to participate in shared governance, recruitment, and curriculum development. Faculty serve on [CAAC](#) and [EEC](#), which provide oversight for curriculum, program review, and assessment, which are integral in offering quality instruction.

Beyond the classroom, faculty serve as [club advisors](#) (pg. 64), [mentors](#), [liaisons](#), help at recruiting events and new student orientation, and serve on committees for [hiring](#), [campus health and wellness](#), and [diversity](#). Faculty support students by attending college athletic, musical, and social events.

### 3.C.3.

Regardless of instructional appointment, faculty (full-time, part-time, adjunct, concurrent) are subject to the same credentialing review and documentation [process](#) in compliance with [Iowa Code 260C.36](#) (pg. 27) and [Iowa Administrative Code 24.5](#) (pg. 2).

Beginning with the [hiring process](#), applications are reviewed through Cornerstone to determine if the applicant is forwarded to the next step. [Job descriptions](#) identify required program-specific credentials. The College complies with the credentialing standards set forth by the Iowa Department of Education as outlined in the [Faculty Qualifications Guide](#), [Iowa Code 260C.48](#) (pg. 2), and [Iowa Administrative Code 281-24.5\(1\)](#) (pg. 2), which adheres to HLC criteria and assumed practice for faculty roles and qualifications. Iowa law establishes the process for community colleges to plan for faculty hiring and professional development. Community college instructional quality faculty plans must meet the standards outlined in [Iowa Administrative Code section 281-IAC 24.5\(7\)](#) (pg. 4).

The 2016 State Comprehensive [Accreditation](#) (pg. 10) noted hiring qualified faculty as a strength. In collaboration with the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Organizational Development, the Vice President of Academic Affairs & Student Learning and the respective Division ensure compliance with these guidelines.



### 3.C.4.

The evaluation process and frequency for full-time, non-probationary faculty complies with [Iowa Code 279.14](#), the [Faculty Salary and Welfare Agreement](#) (pg. 24), the [Faculty Handbook](#) (pg. 30), and the [Employee Handbook](#) (pg. 20).

The probationary period for full-time faculty is directed by [Iowa Code 279.19](#); [classroom visits](#) are conducted each semester during the faculty probationary period as part of the mentoring process. Performance evaluation classroom visits happen annually while other full-time faculty members are on a [three-year cycle](#) for classroom observations, [student perception of instruction](#), and [supervisor evaluations by the respective Division Chair](#).

New adjunct/concurrent instructors have a [site visit/classroom visit](#) by their liaison/mentor every semester they teach for the first three years and every three years after that. Concurrent faculty are also required to meet with their liaison every semester they teach for professional development. Adjunct and concurrent instructors complete the [Course Assessment Reflection and Action Plan](#), then review the document and discuss how they can improve performance on the course Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) with their liaison/mentor. Division Chairs also review the results of student perception of instruction survey.

Additionally, to increase the rigor and quality of online course instruction, [Quality Course Reviews](#) are completed by the online learning and instruction designer on a five-year cycle.

### 3.C.5.

The state of Iowa requires each community college to maintain a Quality Faculty Plan ([QFP](#)). NIACC's plan complies with [Iowa Code 260C.36](#) and was reviewed by the Iowa Department of Education during the state accreditation review.

The minimum competency requirements outlined in the Quality Adjunct Plan ([QAP](#)) for adjunct/concurrent faculty must be completed in the first two years of employment (changing to one year). Components of the program implementation include Hiring, Iowa Department of Education Minimum Standards, and Professional Development. Minimum Competencies include Instructional Planning, Instructional Strategies, and Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation. Beginning in Fall 2023, adjunct progress is tracked through a Canvas [course](#) that supports their work through [many provided resources](#).

As described in 3.A., instructors complete a [Continuing Professional Development Plan \(CPDP\)](#) (pgs. 18-20) yearly, including action steps to improve teaching/learning once the QFP and QAP minimum competency requirements have been completed.

In addition to Professional Development Week for all employees, new full-time faculty attend a week-long [orientation](#) two weeks before the start of the semester. New full-time faculty members [meet monthly](#) during the academic year for continued orientation sessions.

A [mentor program](#) is provided for new faculty to support them in acclimating to the College and to help students achieve higher learning standards. Mentors complete Mentor Orientation before beginning in this role and commit to at least five significant contacts (including a mentee classroom observation) with new faculty. Mentors and mentees complete a [checklist](#) (pgs. 6-7) and an [evaluation](#) (pgs. 8-9).

For adjunct (which includes concurrent) instructors, a [Professional Development Meeting/Dinner](#) is held during [Professional Development Week](#) (pg. 4) at the beginning of the fall and spring [semesters](#). Orientation continues monthly through their first academic year. In addition, a [liaison](#) is assigned to support them in transitioning to the College. Appointed by Division Chairs, liaisons [meet](#) with adjunct instructors throughout the semester and provide content support, assessment guidance, institutional information, and content training to adjunct/concurrent faculty. The [Career Link Instructor Handbook](#) offers additional resources for concurrent enrollment instructors.

Full-time [faculty contracts](#) include nearly three weeks [per academic year](#) for professional development and academic preparation coordinated by Human Resources and the faculty-led Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). CETL identifies, develops, and presents [training](#) (designed to meet the requirements of the Continued Professional Development Plan and [Quality Adjunct Plan](#)) for all faculty members throughout the academic year.

CETL's mission includes increasing "teaching effectiveness" and achieving "learning outcomes." CETL provides faculty training and one-on-one consultations in teaching methods and technologies to improve outcomes. [CETL leadership](#) (pg. 3) develops programming in consultation with the [CETL Working Group](#) (pg. 1), which provides input on the academic needs of the College, and the [CETL Advisory Board](#) (pg. 2), which provides feedback and direction on the faculty professional development needs of the College.

In 2022-2023, the CETL Team presented four trainings, including [Academic Integrity](#), a Faculty [Research Share](#), Examining Grading Practices, and a guest presentation on pronouns. In Summer 2023, the CETL team worked with the Educational Software Administrator, Online Learning Coordinator, Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness & Organizational Development, and the VPAASL to redesign the [2023-2024 New Full-time Faculty Training](#) and the [2023-2024 New Adjunct Training](#) Canvas course shells. All CETL resources were also moved to the [Faculty Resources](#) page in TrojanHome to provide a single destination for all faculty needs.

In addition to CETL activities and Professional Development Weeks, the College supports professional development through the following:

- [Developmental leave](#) (pg. 18) is for further study in well-defined fields of learning, pursuing advanced degrees, or for industrial, trade, professional, or business experience that provides the potential for enhancing effectiveness.
- "[Growing with Canvas](#)" resource
- [Tuition reimbursement benefit](#), including for [adjunct faculty](#)
- [Financial Incentives](#) (pg. 125)
- Online Learning Coordinator-
  - provides [resources](#) and training on best practices for Flex teaching and learning.
  - assists with alignment with quality matters [standards](#) for online courses
- Designated time – NIACC established a common hour from 12:20 - 1:20 p.m. on Mondays for groups to meet without conflicting with the class schedule - [student clubs](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays) and faculty/staff professional development and Division meetings (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays).

In addition, faculty members are encouraged to attend content-specific state and national professional development events, join professional organizations, and maintain certifications. ([Compiled list](#))

### 3.C.6.

Per mutual agreement in the [Faculty Salary and Welfare Agreement](#) (pg. 6), full-time faculty must hold at least five scheduled office hours weekly. Faculty members are available to meet with students via phone, Zoom, or email. Faculty availability and contact information are communicated on [course syllabi](#), in [Canvas](#), and via a [schedule](#) posted outside the office. Faculty have individual offices to ensure confidentiality when working with students. To ensure timely accessibility, faculty must have a clearly stated [response time](#) (pg. 17) to questions and emails from students and administration listed in their syllabus. The norm is usually within 24 hours during the work week and 48 hours over the weekend or holidays.

During New Student Orientation, held the week before the fall and spring semesters, faculty are available to meet and greet students in their office or classroom and answer any questions or address concerns.

Departments have a staff person or Division Chair who is an additional contact and support for student-faculty connection. NIACC's website provides [faculty and staff](#) contact information.

### 3.C.7.

[Vacancy announcements](#) reflect the required education, experience, skills, knowledge, and attributes for the position. Search committees follow the same processes for hiring faculty and other open positions.

As with all new employees, student support services personnel must complete mandatory training upon entry to their positions on FERPA, Right to Know, Title IX, and the First Amendment. Emergency response training was mandated for all employees and residence hall assistants during this [August Professional Development Week](#). Both Title IX Coordinators and members of the Decision-Making Panel complete training [annually](#). [Mental Health First Aid](#) certification training has been made available and will be held again during January Professional Development Week.

Professional development of the Student Development staff is supported on the institutional level with [reimbursement of standard tuition rates](#) (pg. 17) for courses taken at NIACC. Additionally, [the tuition reimbursement program](#) (pg. 19) supports formal education outside of the institution. Funding is also allocated at the division level for conferences and other forms of professional development. The professional staff in various areas [hold degrees](#) specific to their expertise and participate ([2018-2021, 2022 & 2023](#)) in formal departmental training, conferences, and workshops.

In addition to formal professional development, opportunities are available for informal professional development. The Iowa Department of Education has created [work-alike groups](#) that provide colleagues with similar positions within Iowa's Community College system to meet and discuss current topics in the educational landscape. These work-alike groups usually meet a minimum of two times an academic year.

Staff in Student Development are active in their [regional and national associations](#) related to their field. The most attended conference for Student Development staff is the [Iowa Community College Student Services Association \(ICSSA\)](#) conference in the fall of each year, along with the annual drive-in day in the summer.

Staff who work with our international student population attend [virtual training](#) throughout the year to ensure we maintain records and complete the Student Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP) requirements. The Disability Services Counselor attends both regional conferences for the

Illinois/Iowa Association on Higher Education and Disability ([ILIOWA AHEAD](#)) and national conferences for the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD).

[Transfer Tuesdays](#) are held bi-monthly by the Regent Universities for Community College academic advising staff to learn more about the programs students transfer to and what is expected once the student transfers to the university. Other private colleges in Iowa host our advising staff to showcase their college and what is offered there.

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## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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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).

### Argument

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#### 3.D.1.

NIACC uses several methods to identify student stakeholder groups and to determine their needs: The Survey of Entering Student Engagement ([SENSE](#)), the Community College Survey of Student Engagement ([CCSSE](#)), and the National Community College Benchmark Project ([NCCBP](#)).

Every fall, the College prepares the [Enrollment Trends and Analysis Report](#), which provides an overview of the credit student enrollment, and the [Area 2 High School Market Share Report](#), which identifies attendees from local high schools. The Registrar provides an [enrollment report](#) each semester identifying degree, diploma, and certificate program enrollments. In addition, as a follow-up, the [Career Placement Report](#) shows the employment of our graduates.

The NIACC concurrent enrollment program is called [Career Link](#) (pg. 9). [Concurrent enrollment](#) (pg. 6) for Fall 2022 was 1,107 students, accounting for 44.7% of overall enrollment. Career Link Program staff provide additional support to concurrent students and local high schools. We [serve](#) all [18 school districts](#) in the North Iowa area. Students enroll in courses through a [contractual agreement](#) (pg. 35) between NIACC and the local school.

NIACC broke ground on a Regional Career Academy, the [John V. Hanson Career Center](#), in October 2020 and moved into the facility in October 2021. The Center is the first of three planned regional centers focused on serving high school partners with curriculum support, communities in the service area with career training needed in the community, and students with free and accessible education that allows those students to immediately go into a high paying, local career in [Advanced Manufacturing](#), [Construction Trades](#), [Information Technology](#), and [Health Careers](#). The Center enables NIACC to offer curriculum and support services directly to students on-site.

For students who are not academically prepared for college, on-campus support includes the [Student Learning Center](#), which provides one-on-one tutoring, [Supplemental Instruction](#) options for math and science classes, a Housing Success Coach supervising daily study tables, staffed computer labs, study tables for athletes, and co-requisite developmental education support.



The [Wellness Hub](#) was created to care for our students holistically and offers wrap-around services to support their wellness needs with the assistance of [community partners](#). NIACC entered into [contractual agreements](#) with Way Point Medical Center and Prairie Ridge Integrated Behavioral Healthcare for medical and mental health services based on education, prevention, and well-being.

The [Intake Survey](#) that new students complete before registering for classes shows that 20.3% are interested in mental health and wellness resources.

The [NIACC Food Pantry](#) provides shelf-stable food and personal hygiene items. Anyone in the NIACC community can shop for groceries daily. During the Spring 2023 semester, over 535 individuals benefited from shopping at the food pantry.

[TRIO Student Support Services](#) is a federally funded grant project that helps [eligible students](#) stay in college and graduate. Our goal is to promote the academic and personal success of all participants. The [program](#) offers counseling, tutoring, financial literacy, orientation classes, career exploration, transfer assistance, personal growth workshops, and cultural opportunities.

The program has required objectives that have been met each year of the most recent grant award. Specifically, the program must serve 200 per year. The most recent [APR report](#) (pg. 20) shows that 205 were served, and 82% of participants persisted when 65% was the minimum program objective.

NIACC [Disability Services](#) (pg. 12) provides support to students with documented disabilities in reaching academic goals and works to ensure equal access to educational opportunities. NIACC employs a [Disability Services Director](#) who works with the student to [develop an individual plan for services](#) that will include accommodations in testing and instruction. A [Disability Services Student Handbook](#) and [policies and procedures](#) related to NIACC Disability Services can be found on our public-facing website.

The NIACC [Financial Aid](#) (pg. 13) staff connects annually with area guidance counselors at their [Counselor Network Meeting](#) to support area high schools and their students. Staff attend high school fall conferences and offer free FAFSA filing assistance and informational [sessions](#) on financial aid and college preparation.

As the repayment pause ends, NIACC has actively connected with borrowers as they reenter student loan repayment. NIACC has partnered with [Ascendium Education Solutions](#) to conduct outreach to borrowers on their repayment options and connect them with their loan servicer. This initiative began in August 2023. This effort correlates directly with NIACC's [cohort default rate](#).

NIACC identified financial barriers as a retainment issue and, in Fall 2014, established a [strategy](#) to help retain students and reduce NIACC's accounts receivable. In the past [three cohorts](#), NIACC staff contacted an average of 285 students per semester.

The NIACC [Registrar's/Records Office](#) (pg. 16) ensures the accuracy, integrity, and security of student records. Along with managing student records and coordinating course information, it maintains the integrity of academic policies and the student information system.

[Veterans](#) are served by our School Certifying Officials who assist the student with veteran education applications, maintenance of required reporting and records, and disseminating of pertinent information. NIACC has been awarded the designation of a [Military Friendly](#) since 2014 when the yearly award started.

NIACC supports international students by outlining detailed enrollment processes with staff dedicated to [the recruitment](#), [admissions](#), [enrollment guidance](#), and services available to our international students, including a separate [orientation](#) and international welcome packet, a [welcome dinner](#), [a student club](#), and a [handbook](#). NIACC also hosts a special graduation [celebration](#) to celebrate our international graduates' success.

[New Student Orientation](#) (pg. 8) is designed to provide students with the information, resources, and tools necessary to transition to college successfully. With the implementation of Guided Pathways, Orientation was [redesigned](#) to include specific details about their Meta Major and meeting the faculty in that Meta Major area. With many new students in the Meta Majors of Agriculture and Skilled trades being Career Link students, an [evening orientation](#) allows new students and parents to attend, tour the labs, and meet with the representative about purchasing tools for the program.

Most degree programs include [SDV 199: College Essentials](#) (1 semester hour) as a mandatory requirement for graduation. College Essentials focuses on personal, mental, and financial safety, health, and well-being for today and the future. The course [includes](#) content on SMART goal development, the 8 Dimensions of Wellness, and Growth Mindset, with assignments focused on career goals and how the course content can help students reach them.

The NIACC [Behavioral Intervention Team](#) (pg. 30) is a multidisciplinary group established to address and manage various behavior concerns among students. While it serves as a team working with students who have alleged violations against them, it also acts as an advisory and coordinating role when students are in crisis.

### **3.D.2.**

As part of the [Guided Pathways](#) initiative, NIACC reviewed GPA, placement tests, and success in first classes for both writing and math and reviewed the literature on multiple-measure placement to develop a [multiple-measure formula](#) (pg. 68) for student math placement for Fall 2021. This initiative experienced positive [outcomes](#) with student success.

The [Learning Support](#) Division addresses the needs of our developmental students. Five full-time [faculty](#) members teach math, reading, writing, and ESL developmental courses. There are also three full-time staff members, 15 part-time tutors, and three work-study positions. Offerings in Developmental Education include the following courses and programs: [Accelerated Math](#), [Mastery Math](#) Writing, ESL, and Communication courses for the Skilled Trades programs. Other services of the Learning Support Division are [Supplemental Instruction](#) (SI), Student Learning Center [tutoring](#), High School Credit (credit recovery), and the [Testing Center](#).

In 2022-2023, 74.1% of students who enrolled in the co-requisite course for Mastery Writing earned a C or higher in their college-level Composition course. 61% of students who enrolled in the co-requisite course for Mastery Math earned a C or higher in their college-level Math course. The Student Learning Center's [goals](#) align with the Title III grant [strategies](#) (pg. 25), including bridge programming to assist students placed in developmental education courses.

In Fall 2022, the Individualized Program for Academic Student Success ([IPASS](#)) program began, which provides direct support through intrusive support and guidance to the [identified students](#) in a guided study and tutorial setting for students whose cumulative GPA is below 2.40.

Navigate, EAB's student success management system, was purchased in 2022. A [leadership team](#) and

engagement teams were created. The work began to develop a connected and coordinated network of support for students, enabling advisors, faculty, and staff to actively participate in students' journey to completion. Staff, faculty, and students [utilize](#) Navigate higher than standard measurement goals. Future use of the predictive analytics model will provide the ability to understand cohort-level data and individual student risk.

### 3.D.3.

Student onboarding begins with the [College application](#). Enrollment Advisors guide applicants through the [Enrollment Checklist](#). [Scheduled communication](#) engages potential students with the campus and in opportunities for career exploration with the College's [Career Advisor](#) or by accessing NIACC's "[Career Coach](#)" software to help students determine if they are on the correct pathway, set goals, and develop their pathway plan.

The College's [academic advising](#) (pg. 7) structure includes the Director of Advising, Director of Admissions, Enrollment and Academic Advisors, College and Career Transition Counselors, and a Career Advisor. The College's advising services caseload is divided according to [area high school assignments](#) and [Meta Majors](#). [Additional counselors/advisors](#) are employed to service federal programs for targeted underrepresented student populations, including a full-time Director of TRIO, Director of Disability Services, and College and Career Transition Counselors.

[Academic Advisors](#) support students with their academic and career pathway goals. Advisors [meet](#) with students each semester to enroll in classes, review progress toward [degree completion](#), and check and suggest any other resources to help the student succeed. Utilizing a [holistic advising](#) approach, advisors connect the student to the appropriate [service](#) on campus or in the community.

NIACC receives a report on how our transfer students do at the three Regent Universities each year. The [Community College Transfer Report](#) provides an overview of transfer credits, GPAs, and graduation rates of the students who transferred to the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and University of Northern Iowa.

NIACC supports and advises students taking classes while in high school as dual-enrolled students. The [Enrollment Advisors](#) and [College and Career Transition Counselors](#) support area Career Link students in identifying future pathways and the [contracted college courses](#) that support those pathways.

Navigate Early Alerts allows faculty to submit progress reports for students who are at risk in their courses. The [alerts](#) are sent to the Advising care unit where advisors can monitor and support student performance. [Cases](#) can be opened to work with the student to identify the issues and get back on [track](#).

### 3.D.4.

The College maintains a [Facility Master Plan](#) that provides direction in keeping the College up-to-date in supporting effective teaching and learning.

[Campus View Housing](#) (pg. 17) provides on-campus living that promotes a structured environment for living and learning. Living on campus offers closer access to classrooms and academic facilities, making it easier for students to attend class and study sessions.

[TrojanHome](#) is the College's Enterprise Portal. It provides one-stop self-service for students, faculty,

and staff to communicate and access electronic resources at NIACC. Students can access additional resources using [Navigate Student](#) from TrojanHome for student services support. Faculty can access instructional software use information, including [Zoom](#), [Panopto](#), and [Canvas](#).

The College's technological infrastructure is sufficient to support the needs of faculty, staff, and students on the Mason City campus, the [John V. Hanson Career Center](#) in Forest City, and [education centers](#) in Charles City, Garner, and Hampton. The [network infrastructure](#), including [wireless](#) access points, ensures technology is accessible to students, staff, faculty, and visitors throughout campus.

To safeguard employee and student data, the college maintains an annual contract with [FRSecure](#) for cybersecurity services. FRSecure provides guidance and resources for [network penetration testing](#) and [vulnerability scanning](#) and [annually assesses](#) NIACC's information security risk. NIACC performs internal Personal Identifiable Information scans monthly ([schedule](#), [results](#)). These network scans produce reports that are reviewed regularly by NIACC's [IT Security Task Force](#). Any vulnerabilities identified are prioritized for mitigation.

Two regular monthly maintenance windows for [servers](#) and [enterprise software](#) ensure systems and software are updated with patches. Maintenance windows occur on Sunday mornings to ensure minimal disruption to end users.

NIACC's Enterprise Resource Planning software, [Ellucian Colleague](#), is tightly integrated with the Canvas Learning Management System, with changes updated to Canvas in near real-time.

NIACC contracts with Solutions Management Group (SMG) to provide [classroom audio/visual](#), instructor stations, office and [lab](#) computers, and multi-function printer devices throughout the campus on 4-year (computers) and 7-year (AV equipment) [replacement cycles](#). SMG maintains a comprehensive [list](#) of computers, mobile devices, and [printers](#) deployed at the college. Twenty-three printers, located throughout campus, are [available](#) for student use.

[SMG technicians](#) manage the college helpdesk and are responsible for technology deployment, support, and ticket escalation to NIACC staff when needed. The Technology Services Department publishes a service catalog connected to a [robust ticketing system](#) to address technology issues. Customer satisfaction surveys are automatically generated at the close of each ticket. SMG and NIACC IT personnel maintain [high customer satisfaction](#) each month. Additionally, SMG offers on-demand, one-on-one [training](#) for all college employees.

The College's [technology resources](#) include 20 classroom computer labs with 279 computers. Additionally, four open computer labs are available to students, with 36 computers available. Students who lack access to technology resources may [check out](#) laptops and hotspots at no charge if the equipment is returned in good condition.

Labs and specialty classrooms are provided for science classes and CTE programs. Here are a few examples:

- The Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance/Industrial Systems Technology program received two NSF ATE grants ([DUE 1901957](#), [DUE 2055293](#)). With these grants, the program created a state-of-the-art [robotics and automation](#) lab.
- In the summer of 2022, the [PTA program lab](#) was renovated and realized with the support of the [Advisory Committee](#). The renovations included increased square footage and increased lab availability for skill practice on equipment that reflects contemporary physical therapy practice.

- The [health lab](#) is utilized by CNA, Nursing, and Medical Assisting programs and offers eight patient care bays, complete with mannequins and headwall units to administer oxygen and apply suction. Numerous IV arms, injection pads, and supplies are available to practice all skills required in the program.
- The health programs have access to a [simulation space](#), which includes a four-room simulation area, a debriefing area, and four classrooms with state-of-the-art technology and medical equipment.

Health program students have the opportunity to apply their skills at [clinical sites](#) as well. The College follows requirements or [guidelines](#) set forth by external programmatic accrediting agencies or other regulatory bodies when establishing clinical sites. Program-specific [requirements](#) include providing clinical opportunities across the lifespan (obstetrics, pediatrics, geriatrics), acute medical/surgical care, long-term care, outpatient services, and simulation.

Agriculture students can plant and harvest the acres that surround our campus. In addition to producing corn and soybeans, agriculture students are afforded the experience of a [working farm](#) with a small hog and cattle operation.

The Library supports the [information](#) and research needs of the College's students, faculty, and staff by teaching students how to find and use information effectively. In addition, students are introduced to the physical library collection and the periodic collection, both print and online. Library [orientation sessions](#) (pg. 2) are offered to students upon faculty request.

Library staff strive to provide a welcoming and inclusive space for all NIACC students, staff, and faculty. The displays around the Library highlight [upcoming events](#), [student artwork](#), and topics of interest to the college community. A popular tradition in December is the display entitled "[Trees from Around the World](#)."

More than 90% of the Library collection consists of digital content, which helps NIACC serve online, hybrid, Flex, concurrent, and face-to-face students. In addition to holding the physical collection, the [Writing Center](#), [Café Bean](#), and the [Destress Room](#) are in the physical library space.

Support needs are identified through the [Quality Initiative Opportunity \(QIO\) process](#) (pgs. 93-97) in the annual update for program reviews described later in 4.B. The Division Chair and VPAASL review the QIOs before inclusion in the annual budget request sent to the VP of Administrative Services.

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## **3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary**

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

### **Summary**

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NIACC prioritizes the delivery of high-quality educational offerings and programs. The College ensures that its credentials and degrees align with the Iowa Department of Education's standards and provides opportunities for input from faculty and community members. NIACC also maintains strong general education requirements and offers exceptional programs and services by employing qualified faculty and staff. The College actively identifies student needs through various surveys and provides multiple support services, including academic advising, mental health access, and financial aid assistance. NIACC is dedicated to student success and offers cocurricular activities and resources to enhance students' experience.

### **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*

## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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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

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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.

### Argument

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#### 4.A.1.

NIACC programs/academic disciplines engage in a comprehensive review on a five-year rotation as per [Iowa Code 281-IAC24.5\(4\)](#), which requires a minimum of 20 percent of programs reviewed each year. Academic Programs/disciplines are on a [rotation cycle](#). The [Academic Program/Discipline Review](#) process facilitates a purposeful and continuous cycle of improvement led by faculty and academic staff to gain a comprehensive understanding of the overall quality/health of the program, identify areas for improvement, set goals, and design action plans to achieve those goals. During the intervening years, the program/discipline completes [Annual Academic Program Planning](#) documents. The 5-year and annual reviews are integral to overall institutional evaluation, planning, and budget processes and are aligned with the College's mission "to enrich lives."

A [timeline](#) has been developed to facilitate the program review process, with [submissions](#) required most months during the academic year. NIACC's program review is unique as this process is intricately intertwined with the assessment process. Thus, SLOs, PLOs, and ILOs are reviewed during this process, along with additional data points and information to complete the comprehensive

analyses. The Academic Program and Discipline Review [manual](#) outlines this process. The five-year process is a thorough [analysis](#) of [programs/disciplines](#) in which [arts and sciences student](#) and [program student](#) data are provided to faculty, including persistence, enrollment, retention, and completion (PERC) data complete with dashboard [definitions](#). The sections used in the program/discipline review process beyond assessment submissions are Section II (all faculty), where a review of [student demographics](#) data is analyzed to identify any achievement gaps. Section III [articulation](#) agreements (academic disciplines only) are reviewed for viability, ensuring our students have a streamlined pathway to our four-year institution partners. The remaining sections of the program/discipline review, Sections IV and V, are discussed in detail, with additional examples provided in 4.B.2.

Five-year program review findings examples are as follows:

The program faculty shared concerns during a recent [Agriculture program review](#) presented to the Education Effectiveness Committee and academic leadership. They addressed them by developing a [quality improvement opportunities \(QIO\) plan](#). [Equipment and renovations](#) were determined as necessary to keep the program functioning efficiently and effectively for the next five years. Subsequently, a renovation project was [taken](#) to the Board of Directors for their approval.

[Welding](#) faculty have identified QIOs (pgs. 15-16) as the need to stay up to date with the NC3 curriculum to best prepare students for the workforce and encourage students to remain in the program to complete a diploma, not just a certificate, which means meeting the general education requirement.

The [PTA](#) program increased entrance requirements in 2016 by adding more prerequisites. [Completion rates](#) were then monitored. Adding the PTA Clinical Application course did not impact graduation rates as anticipated; however, students receive more content on surface anatomy and additional time in the Health Simulation Center.

The College uses the same process for academic discipline review where faculty members participate in assessment at the course and institutional level each semester. The [Communications](#) discipline review results noted that faculty will investigate potential counteractions for developing technology, such as Chat GPT, and evaluate potential impacts on SLO success rates from textbook shift to OER/compiled content.

Assessment data and outcomes are [discussed](#) during professional development weeks and inform subsequent semester planning, followed by annual and 5-year review assessment processes. The VPAASL summarizes program/discipline results in the [Academic Affairs Monitoring Report](#) beginning pg.12), [shared](#) annually with the President's Council and presented annually to the Board of Directors.

Advisory Committees provide additional opportunities to review programs and gain [feedback](#). Advisory Committees are comprised of experts in their field, and the review is essential in keeping relevant and current with business and industry partner needs.

Please refer to 4.B.2 for more review results.

#### 4.A.2.

The [Student Handbook](#) communicates credit acceptance for previous education completed. The

College also allows students to earn credit for prior work experience or academic experience, ensuring alignment with HLC Assumed Practices.

Credit for Prior Learning via military training is evaluated using the student's ACE Joint Services Transcript to award credit. This practice is combined with the [American Council of Education's \(ACE\) Guide](#) in evaluating educational experiences to award credit. Guidance for students can also be found in the [Additional Credit Options](#) (pg. 54) in the Student Handbook.

College Credit may also be awarded when the appropriate scores are met by examination on a variety of standardized tests such as Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support Program (DANTES), as well as Proficiency examinations by industry-recognized credentials, portfolio examinations, and examination by departments. The College maintains [CLEP](#) and [AP](#) test scores and has determined scoring standards for credit to be awarded in alignment with the [LACTS Agreement](#).

As the College receives official college transcripts from post-secondary institutions via mail or electronically through the [National Student Clearinghouse](#), each is reviewed by the Registrar. Once transcript(s) and document review are completed, accepted transfer work is processed through the Colleague student information system. Students are notified of credit awarded through their student email account, which includes a [Transfer Equivalency Report](#) documenting approved courses and college equivalency. Students can also review course placement through degree audit in their [TrojanHome Student Self-Service](#) account.

NIACC uses Prior Learning Assessment ([PLA](#)) to determine college credit for life experience. The PLA program requires the development of a portfolio that details life experience and matches it to specific courses in the College curriculum. Credit for knowledge may be earned from work experience, employer training programs, military experience, volunteer or community service, and personal experience. The PLA process can award only career/technical and elective credits. A total of 30 semester hours of credit, or 50% of the total credits required for the chosen program, can be earned through this process. Students need to demonstrate the learning, knowledge, skills, and competencies that match the learning outcomes of the NIACC credit class.

#### **4.A.3.**

The College [Admissions Enrollment Checklist](#) requests all students seeking admission to submit an official copy of their transcript(s) from all post-secondary institutions. The [Student Handbook](#) (pg. 54) details how the College evaluates all credits it accepts from all life or academic experiences.

Credit for Prior Learning via military training credit is evaluated using the student's ACE Joint Services Transcript to award credit. This practice is combined with the [ACE Guide](#) and LACTS's [Awarding and Transferring College Credit for Educational Experience in the Armed Services Agreement](#) (pg. 18) in evaluating educational experiences to award credit. Veterans may receive credit for courses completed while in the military, provided the training applies to a specific program of study and the course is listed in the ACE Guide.

Credit awarded by examination adheres to guidelines established by ACE and the [LACTS Credit by Examination Agreement](#) (pg. 14).

As stated in 4.A.2., the College has defined policies and procedures for awarding credit for prior learning.

#### 4.A.4.

Regardless of program offering, modality, and delivery location, the College retains authority over faculty qualifications and delivered curriculum. Course prerequisites are determined as part of the curriculum approval process under the management of the Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council (CAAC). The approval [process](#) ensures that NIACC's curriculum is appropriate to the merit awarded and ensures the consistency of course rigor and articulation of course expectations. Items [submitted](#) are accompanied by rationale [documents](#) and [division](#) approval before being vetted and approved by CAAC. Through this review process, faculty and administration determine that the curricula are appropriate to the mission, a good fit with existing educational programs, and represent offerings at the appropriate degree level.

As required by the [Faculty Handbook](#) (pg. 19), CAAC approves course learning outcomes articulated in the course outlines and syllabi of all general education and career-technical education (CTE) courses. For the transfer curriculum, the [discipline curriculum maps](#) demonstrate how various courses in general education meet the institutional learning outcomes. [Program maps](#) align course outcomes with program and institutional learning outcomes for CTE programs. Curriculum maps are a framework for course sequencing and curricular assessment in the transfer and CTE programs, ensuring rigor and consistency.

Students can access learning resources within any Canvas course under the [Student Resources](#) tab. The [College Essentials](#) course is another vital resource for students to support their success in reaching their educational goals.

The Iowa Department of Education, with input from community college leadership, developed a statewide [Faculty Qualifications Guide](#), which outlines minimum academic requirements for hiring faculty members in each discipline. NIACC faculty meet or exceed those requirements. [Faculty job descriptions](#) also include standard expectations for all faculty hires, including the ability to develop curriculum and learning strategies that meet the needs of students and employers, the ability to collaborate with other faculty and staff members to provide quality instruction for a diverse student population, and the ability to perform instructional duties and responsibilities following the philosophy, mission, policies, and procedures of the College.

NIACC is [accredited](#) by the National Alliance Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) and adheres to the [standards](#) that ensure dual credit courses/programs are high quality, rigorous, and equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to NIACC's higher education curriculum. To maintain NACEP accreditation, concurrent enrollment instructors complete [grade norming](#) activities, submit paired assessments to compare with their faculty liaison, and paired syllabi to show that the concurrent instructor syllabus matches the faculty liaison's. A [review](#) is conducted every couple of years to evaluate student success.

#### 4.A.5.

NIACC's [programs](#) adhere to programmatic accreditation standards, industry-approved certification, or licensure exams that may be required for graduates to obtain employment in their chosen career field and are as follows:

- Associate Degree Nursing program (ADN) - currently [accredited](#) by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and by the Iowa Board of Nursing
- Physical Therapist Assistant program (PTA) - [accredited](#) by the Commission on Accreditation



in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)

- Automotive program - [certified](#) upon the recommendation of the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Foundation. The College has achieved ASE Master Automotive Service Technician (MAST) accreditation. [Reaccreditation](#) was awarded in September 2023.
- Medical Assistant program - [accredited](#) by the Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB), which is a Committee on Accreditation (CoA) of the Commission of Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)
- Emergency Services program - [approved](#) by IDPH Bureau of Trauma and Emergency Services.
- Nurse Aide - [approved](#) by the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing.

Also, NIACC has state [accreditation](#) through the Iowa Department of Education and is [approved](#) through NC-SARA for distance learning. The Career Link program meets the standards and satisfies NACEP accreditation requirements.

#### 4.A.6.

The National Clearinghouse of Education Statistics (NCES) reports NIACC full-time student graduation rates are consistently higher than national graduation rates. The [three-year graduation rate](#) (2016, 2017, 2018 cohorts) for first-time, full-time NIACC students within 150% of program time is 47%, 52%, and 55% compared with 34.9%, 35.9%, and 35.4%, respectively. NIACC part-time retention rates exceeded the national rates in two out of three years.

NIACC evaluates the success of its graduates who enter the workforce or transfer to a four-year partner institution. For graduates who transfer to a four-year institution, NIACC uses the following to evaluate success:

- [Transfer Report](#) from the Liaison Advisory Committee on Transfer Students (LACTS) - gaps in GPA comparisons between Iowa community college transfer students and those who started at the Regents universities and GPA by program/discipline.
  - Students transferring to Regents institutions between 2019 and 2021 who graduated with an Associate in Arts (AA) degree earned an average first-year GPA of 3.14, with 90% of the students returning for their second year at the Regent University.
  - Minority students transferring from NIACC with an AA degree are retained at Regents institutions at a rate of 88% with an average first year GPA earned at the Regent University of 2.85.
  - NIACC has a 60% five-year average for university graduation rate trends three years after transferring to a Regent University; the average of all community colleges is 52%.

NIACC solicits feedback from all graduates about how well the curriculum prepared them for the workplace through a [Graduate Follow-Up Survey](#) (e.g., [ADN](#), [Agriculture](#), [LPN](#), and [HVAC](#)).

For NIACC students who are entering the workforce, the following reports are reviewed to gain insight into their success:

- Employer follow-up [surveys](#) of CTE graduates (e.g., [Agriculture](#), [LPN](#), [HVAC](#), and [Automotive](#)) to understand how well program curricula prepare graduates for employment per the employer.
- [IACC Program Interactive Charts](#) provide data on how graduates [advance](#) in their careers and what [program](#) of study to employment.

- [Career Placement Report](#) is reviewed to gain insight into how successful graduates are in obtaining employment.
- Iowa Student Outcome [dashboard](#), offered through the Iowa Department of Education

In addition, feedback is collected during bi-annual program advisory committee meetings as a [standing agenda item](#). Annual advisory committee meetings allow faculty to hear directly from employers and [revise curricula](#) based on [feedback](#).

Data reports assist NIACC in gaining insight into how well our [programs](#) prepare students for their next step; thus, licensure exam [success](#) is tracked. Additional information about how NIACC evaluates the success of both current students and graduates is provided in 4.C.

Through a review of reports, NIACC validates that the institution offers appropriate educational opportunities that align with our mission statement "to enrich lives through comprehensive educational opportunities, a commitment to learner success."

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## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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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.

### Argument

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#### 4.B.1.

##### *Academic Assessment*

As defined in Core Component 4.A.1, the Academic Program/Discipline Review facilitates a purposeful and continuous cycle of assessment at the institutional, program, and course level through two related processes: the five-year Academic Program/Discipline Review and Annual Academic Program/Discipline Planning. NIACC's assessment process is an integral part of and is embedded in the program review process. The three levels of assessment outcomes are defined as follows:

- Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): statements that describe significant and essential learning achieved and reliably demonstrated at the end of a course; mapped to PLOs and Institutional Learning Outcomes.
- Program Level Outcomes (PLOs): statements that describe significant and essential learning that learners achieved and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a program; SLOs are mapped to PLOs, and PLOs are mapped to Institutional Learning Outcomes for measurement. The AA and AS degree Academic disciplines map to the ILOs.
- Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs): describe the abilities, skills, and knowledge students will acquire after completing their education at NIACC.

NIACC is committed to implementing effective processes for assessing academic and cocurricular student learning, acknowledging this is a continuous improvement process, a work in progress.

During the 2017-2018 academic year, the Academic Program/Discipline Review process was [revised](#), beginning Fall 2018, to increase its efficiency and effectiveness in accomplishing its goals and to leverage technology to streamline processes. During a fall workshop, program review [updates](#) were shared with faculty.

In Fall 2019, the new VPAA/SL and [Education Effectiveness Committee](#) conducted an assessment process review. Workshops were held to strengthen and build a common understanding of assessment, which included the [Assessment for Continuous Improvement](#), [Curriculum Mapping](#), and [Curriculum](#) presentations. Peer-to-peer [analysis](#) of data results occurred during professional development weeks.

The Academic Program/Discipline Review [Manual](#) is an essential resource for faculty and outlines the current process. The current five-year process thoroughly [analyses programs/disciplines](#) in which [arts and sciences student](#) and [program student](#) data are [reviewed](#). During this process, areas for improvement are identified, action plans and goals are developed, and the results of actions are assessed in subsequent semesters. An annual review update [template](#) is used when the program/discipline is not up for review.

[Program maps](#) align instruction to ensure students can gain the necessary skills and knowledge through the curriculum with SLOs mapped to PLOs, which are also mapped to ILOs. [Academic Discipline Curriculum maps](#) have been developed to document where, within a curriculum, student learning outcomes (SLOs) and institutional outcomes (ILOs) are introduced/reinforced and assessed. Faculty complete maps to ensure students are meeting outcomes and where they meet them, so students are successful in achieving their educational goals.

During the [academic year](#), program/discipline faculty complete designated sections of the Academic Program/Discipline Review template. Faculty respond to guiding questions and provide supporting data/examples, which are submitted to the appropriate [folder](#) by the end of that month. During the months listed below, faculty submissions are the assessment documents within the program/discipline review:

- September: [Section IV: A](#) SLO assessment matrix for each course in program/discipline
- December: [Section IV: B](#) SLO assessment reflection and action plans and
  - [C](#) (5-yr program review only)
- January: [Section IV: F](#) ILO assessment
- February: [Section V: A](#) Programmatic Quality Improvement Opportunity (QIO) plan
- May: [Section IV: B & F](#) SLO and ILO assessment analyses

This timeline assists faculty in smoothly and timely navigating the process. EEC supports faculty in continuous quality improvement related to effective instruction and assessment. Currently, EEC is [revisiting](#) the process to ensure that the assessment of student learning is meaningful, manageable, and sustainable, allowing faculty to offer input.

Academic Programs/Disciplines, on the [five-year cycle](#) up for review, give a [presentation](#) to the [Program/Discipline Review Committee \(PDRC\)](#) at the end of the academic year. The PDRC uses a [rubric](#) to provide feedback to faculty for their consideration of next steps. Faculty then have the opportunity to complete a short [feedback reflection](#). A substantial part of presentations is review/analyses/sharing of assessment results and is a critical aspect of program review.

Assessment begins at the course level, with faculty members meeting to discuss what SLOs are appropriate for each course. The chosen SLOs are documented on the [course outline](#), submitted to CAAC for [approval](#), and reviewed [every three years](#). This course outline is a template for all courses with the same prefix/number, providing consistency. The SLOs are listed on syllabi specific to each course, along with other requirements for students at the faculty member's discretion. A syllabus [template](#) is used to provide further consistency.

[Assessment activities](#) are developed and integrated into the course for each SLO. Faculty assess course SLOs, participate in data analysis, and determine [actions/strategies](#), if necessary, to increase student success. After completing the subsequent assessment, faculty review these data again, determining the strategy's effectiveness and how to proceed with instruction or course alterations based on the data. On-going, faculty focus on assessment data to inform curriculum changes and

delivery of instruction approaches.

### ***Cocurricular Assessment***

The process for designing, aligning, and delivering cocurricular activities resides in the Student Development Division. Students and faculty interested in forming a new cocurricular, extra-curricular club or organization approach the Vice President of Student Development & Success. To gain formal recognition as a student group, the interested party must complete a NIACC Student Club Request for Approval Form that includes information such as the purpose or function of the club and whether the club is associated with an academic department. Cocurricular clubs and organizations are vital to student engagement at the College, with [thirteen](#) of 28 directly relating to an academic program and with goals that support program outcomes. For 2018-2019, Club [goals and outcomes](#) are aligned with the Strategic Plan - Goal 1: Student Success and Enrollment.

Due to a global pandemic and a change in leadership within Student Development in 2019 and again in 2022, cocurricular assessment has taken different directions. A new Vice President of Student Development & Success was named in October 2022. A definition of cocurricular and a formal assessment plan have been created with [input](#) from Student Development leadership and a review of HLC standards for cocurriculars. The NIACC definition of cocurricular assessment is “activities and experiences that extend beyond the classroom and reinforce NIACC’s mission and vision.” With this new definition, a [formal plan](#) for cocurricular assessment has been developed and implemented in the 2023-2024 academic year. The plan requires all clubs and organizations to create a yearly [cocurricular assessment plan](#). The identified activities and experiences will align with one of the four Individual Learning Outcomes (ILOs). The club advisors will identify one to three learning outcomes that align with ILOs due by October 1 to the VPSDS. Data will be gathered and measured after the activity is completed. By July 1, a [results report](#) by the club advisors will be submitted and will inform future planning of events and assessments. Additional cocurricular activities like athletics and student government will be piloted in the 2024-2025 academic year, with other activities such as vocal and instrumental music ensembles and work-based learning activities in the future years.

#### **4.B.2.**

### ***Academic Assessment***

Continuous improvement of student learning is through the academic year program/discipline review process, as described in 4.B.1., which includes course level, program level, and institutional level assessment.

Curriculum mapping is a key part of the assessment process by providing an outline that shows the connections between the expected outcomes of an academic program/discipline and the specific courses where student learning occurs. The [Information Technology](#), [Graphic Communications](#), [Physical Fitness](#), [HVAC](#), [Associate Degree in Nursing](#), and [Accounting](#) represent submitted program curriculum maps at the program level. Curriculum maps, such as those for [Psychology](#) and [Chemistry](#), are submitted at the academic discipline level.

When the Program/Discipline Review is completed, the next step is to present a summary that includes assessment data and analyses.

Examples of recent program-level presentations include:



[Arts and Sciences](#) - strategies of focusing on active learning, greater use of formative assessment, and AI discussions were responses to identified trends (pg. 12). The Quality Improvement Opportunities (QIOs) (pgs.15-19) across disciplines were discussed, including reviewing multiple measures for correct student placement, evaluating the program of study sequencing of courses to ensure adequate student preparation, and incorporating more real-world activities.

[Information Technology](#) - key takeaways shared during the presentation: SLOs, ILOs (pgs. 25-26), and QIOs (pgs. 39-42).

[Tool and Die](#) - QIOs (pgs. 17-18) focused on updating equipment and continued training for updating CAD/CAM faculty skill set.

The [Medical Assistant](#) review determined that a dedicated MA lab space was needed to meet accreditation standards, and an increase in active learning modalities and “soft skills” was feedback received from clinical partners during their Advisory Committee meeting.

Recent academic discipline five-year reviews/presentations included [Communications](#), [Natural Sciences](#), and [History](#). Key [takeaways](#) were discussed to increase student success.

Section IV.B. is the part of the review process where faculty [analyze](#) course SLOs. Annual reports submitted include Introduction to Business ([BUS](#)), Juvenile Delinquency ([CRJ](#)), Education ([EDU](#)), Nurse Aide ([HSC](#)), and Interpersonal Communication ([SPC](#))

Section IV.F. is part of the review process where faculty analyze ILOs for given courses or discipline areas. Examples include [Physical Fitness & Wellness](#), [Natural Sciences](#), [Diesel](#), [HVAC](#), [Information Technology](#), [HSC](#), and [ADN](#).

For [Marketing and Management](#), [Accounting](#), and [Practical Nursing](#), ILO #2,#3, and #4 were analyzed in Fall 2020, strategies implemented in Spring 2021, and [results](#) reviewed in May 2021.

The wealth of information included in these reports/presentations is a testament to the dedication of faculty and academic leadership in continuing to determine strategies to improve student learning. To increase the scope of assessment, adjunct faculty were included in course assessment data collection starting in Fall 2020. Training for [SLO assessment](#) reporting was included as part of [Fall 2020](#), with adjunct faculty [submitting](#) course assessment documents in the Adjunct Professional Development course module, including additional resources.

Several programs use assessments that meet the criteria of accrediting bodies or third-party credentialing sites, such as the [nursing program](#), [physical therapist assistant](#), and medical assistant.

[Student perception surveys](#) are an indirect measure of student outcomes and are also used to identify areas for improvement in the delivery of instruction.

### ***Cocurricular***

As mentioned, the Cocurricular activities assessment before 2023-2024 was focused on club goals and achievements. With the new plan in place, assessment plans for the following have already been submitted: [Education](#), [TRIO Club](#), [PTA Club](#), [Medical Assistant Club](#), and [Math/Engineering Club](#).

### **4.B.3.**

### ***Academic Assessment***

As noted above, the processes and methodologies by which student learning is assessed reflect good practice and include substantial faculty participation throughout the academic year. Student development staff and other relevant staff members have ongoing participation and meet deadlines as outlined in the Cocurricular Assessment plan.

Assessment processes are designed so that faculty and staff have many opportunities to analyze data, implement necessary strategies, and re-evaluate student learning data results, which is best practice. At the instructional level, faculty are responsible for submitting documents during most academic months and having a comprehensive end-of-the-year presentation if required during the 5-year cycle. Assessment-focused meetings occur during professional development meetings and, as appropriate and timely, are discussed during divisional/departmental meetings.

NIACC has been dedicated to assessment with oversight from the EEC (academic) and professional development support through CETL. Academic Division Chairs support faculty by providing opportunities for [assessment discussions](#) and analyses during bi-annual professional development weeks, where groups of faculty meet and discuss the data peer-to-peer. In addition, assessment is also addressed during Division Chair department meetings. The [Academic Program/Manual](#) and [Faculty Handbook](#) (pg. 25) set the expectation that faculty will participate in the well-defined process. Faculty are responsible for selecting tools, methods, and instruments to assess the attainment of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes.

The rubrics were influenced and drafted for the Institutional Learning Outcomes in alignment with the American Association of College & University (AAC&U) adopted rubrics. Data-driven decisions used at the course and program level align with best practices. Assessment of teaching and learning is included in the [Strategic Plan](#) (pgs. 9-10) since its development in 2018.

### ***Cocurricular***

For the cocurricular assessment of student learning, the Vice President of Student Development & Success and club advisors will continue to review the activities and experiences that are selected for assessment and build upon the cocurricular learning that the club provides to students. This will allow data-driven decisions related to student learning outside of the classroom year after year.

Each year, other organizations will be provided the opportunity to assess cocurricular learning outside the classroom, like athletics, musical ensembles, and work-based learning opportunities. With this being the first year of the revised plan with the implementation of cocurricular learning outcomes that align with ILOs, this process will allow current and future clubs and organizations to collect, analyze, and determine whether changes need to be made to activities and experiences,

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## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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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.)

### Argument

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#### 4.C.1.

NIACC is an open-access institution with goals for retention, persistence, and completion in alignment with its mission, student population, and educational offerings. NIACC's [Strategic Plan](#) Priorities 1: Increase Enrollment and Retention and 2: Enhance Teaching and Learning are realized by offering quality and relevant educational experiences, proactive student support systems, and academic and non-academic opportunities that are both dynamic and diverse. NIACC and the Board of Directors are committed to student success and completion. As stated in [Board Policy 1.02](#) (pg. 9), the Board supports access to post-secondary education and training, programs and services moving students towards completion of credentials, certificates, and degrees, and educational pathways leading to high student success rates.

The College, during a comprehensive review of [student success data](#), has set the following benchmarks, which are included as an integral part of the [Title III](#) awarded SIP project:

- Increase fall-to-fall retention rate for FTFT first-gen students to 53% (baseline= 49% Fall 2020)
- Increase fall-to-fall retention rate for low-income students to 56% (baseline= 54% Fall 2020)
- Increase 3-year graduation rate for low-income students to 51% (baseline= 49% 2020 cohort)
- Increase 3-year graduation rate for underprepared students to 50% (baseline= 48% 2020 cohort)

Also, during this review process, gateway Math and English course success measures were set:

- Increase pass rate "C" or better in College Algebra to 70% (baseline = 58.9% AY 2020-2021)
- Increase pass rate "C" or better in Math for Liberal Arts to 71% (baseline = 68.57% AY 2020-2021)

- Increase pass rate “C” or better for Comp 1 to 82% (baseline = 77.93% AY 2020-2021)

These goals, though ambitious, include strategies defined and implemented to support attainability. Once benchmarks were set, strategies were defined per [Strategy 1.3 Increase Student Success](#). Increasing fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall persistence by 1% per year was selected as the expectation. Definitions used for retention, persistence, and completion align with the Iowa Department of Education [definitions](#) (pg. 82) for submitting IPEDS and state data.

As a first step in developing [Guided Pathways](#), [definitions](#) and methods were set and guided implementation.

#### 4.C.2.

NIACC collects and analyzes student success data from multiple sources. The Annual Condition of Iowa’s Community Colleges [report](#), prepared by the Iowa Department of Education, provides benchmarking data for analysis comparing NIACC with the other fourteen Iowa community colleges. Data tables include but aren't limited to [credit](#) (pg. 5) and [non-credit](#) (pg. 78) enrollments, [credit awards](#), and [student demographic enrollment](#) (pg. 14). Specific to retention and completion data reviewed and analyzed included: [Transfer rates by cohort year](#), [Graduation rates](#), [Completion per Iowa Cluster](#), and [Awards](#) (pg. 123). This wealth of information provides perspective about students served at our institution.

In addition, internal data dashboards ([Arts and Sciences](#), [Career and Technical](#)) are reviewed, especially through the program/discipline review process, as noted in 4.B. NIACC uses data to understand students' demographics, social characteristics, retention, persistence, and completion. [Institutional data reports](#) and [dashboards](#) are accessible to all employees on TrojanHome.

NIACC's commitment to using data to inform decisions was evidenced in Fall 2020. A team of cross-functional leaders, which included representatives from engagement and advising, data and technology, equity and inclusion, and teaching and learning in four major college areas, performed a thorough [analysis](#) (pgs. 1-14) of the College’s strengths and weaknesses. This review informed the development of a Title III Strengthening Institution Program (SIP) project, which aligned with the Guided Pathways efforts and the goals for student success as outlined in NIACC's [Strategic Plan](#). The comprehensive analysis of multiple reports and datasets included [IPEDS](#) reports, Voluntary Framework of Accountability ([VFA](#)) reports, [CCSSE surveys](#), [SENSE surveys](#), and National Community College Benchmark Project ([NCCBP](#)) reports to create a data baseline as a starting point. In addition to the reports, persistence and completion data reviewed include the [Strength and Opportunities](#) and [Persistence and Completion](#) (NCCBP) report. As mentioned, gateway Math and English Course pass rates were [reviewed](#) and deemed too low.

Also, during the review, in addition to quantitative data, qualitative data was used to determine overall weaknesses as noted in the NIACC Pathways to Success [report](#) (pg. 15). Specifically, the report shares information about retention and graduation [rates](#), the advising [structure](#) (pgs. 7-8), [fiscal](#) stability (pgs. 13-14), predictive modeling and [analytics](#) (pgs. 9-10), [career onboarding](#), placement and consideration of work-based learning (pgs. 8-9). In Fall 2022, the goals were reviewed and affirmed when the Title III grant was awarded and included [annual benchmarks](#) for continued progress and [monitoring](#). Each project component is supported by key assumptions and by [high-impact practices](#) research. The project goals are ambitious and continue to drive [initiatives](#), impacting student success.



The NIACC 2023 Community College [Transfer Report](#) is prepared by the Liaison Advisory Committee on Transfer Students (LACTS) each spring. The report compares NIACC to other community colleges in Iowa and breaks down success rates by Regents Institutions. The Academic team analyzes data from the Transfer Report to look for gaps in GPA comparisons between the transfer students and the students who started at the universities and GPA by program or discipline.

Completion rates or graduation [data](#) is reviewed annually through an internal report, including at CTE Advisory Committee meetings. These data are also reported to the Board of Directors, President's Council, and other stakeholders through the [Academic Affairs Monitoring Report](#) (pg. 52).

In addition, NIACC reviews [CCSSE](#) (Community College Survey of Student Engagement) results. The results from the Spring 2023 survey show that 57.2% of NIACC students talked about career plans with an instructor or an advisor often or very often compared with 34.2% of the 2023 CCSSE cohort. Also, 83.6% of NIACC students accessed academic advising/planning two or more times compared to 60.9% of the cohort.

Guided Pathways [cohort](#) data, including [persistence/completion](#) and student [demographics](#), provides valuable disaggregated data (excludes dual-enrolled, non-credit, or prior college credit students).

Online [enrollment](#) (pg. 6) and [success](#) data capture enrollment trends and online student success.

#### **4.C.3.**

NIACC uses the information to make improvements as warranted by data with the most recent comprehensive review conducted before Title III grant submission. The FTFT retention by Cohort and the FTFT graduation rates by [Cohort](#) were considered the baseline. The Goals were drafted to include a retention rate increase for first-generation & low-income students. The [Annual Activity Objectives](#) are measurable with targets set through 2027, including student success rates in Math and Composition courses. A [crosswalk](#) was developed that outlined the relationship of objectives to goals and problems to be solved, speaking to how NIACC uses the information to make improvements and to track that improvement. The next step is to [evaluate](#) measurable objectives and Title III progress/success.

NIACC established equity goals for CTE programs in Summer 2020 through the [Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment \(CLNA\)](#). This information was shared with stakeholders representing faculty, staff, students, parents, high school partners, industry, community members, and underrepresented populations. Goals set by the stakeholder group for special populations included leveraging free [exploratory camps](#), updating marketing materials, taking programs to students and families through career fairs and [other events](#), identifying barriers, and building awareness of and access to learners.

The College launched [Guided Pathways](#) in 2019 to improve persistence, retention, and completion for all students, including developing alternative pathways for students who are not successful in gateway and critical courses, adoption of predictive analytics technology, work-based learning experiences, and career exploration ([2023 update report](#)).

NIACC has focused on placement and developmental education student outcomes. A [multiple measures formula](#) (pg. 68) for student placement was implemented Fall 2021. A review of [success data](#) after the first year indicates students complete at approximately the same rate even without

developmental placement.

NIACC's developmental education includes [mastery-based instruction](#) and a co-requisite model. College-level gateway courses are paired with developmental courses to provide additional support, minimize the time and cost of completion, and increase student success. In 2022-2023, 74.1% of students who enrolled in the co-requisite course for Mastery Writing earned a C or higher in their college-level Composition course. 61% of students who enrolled in the co-requisite course for Mastery Math earned a C or higher in their college-level Math course. The result has demonstrated a significant improvement in learning outcomes with students passing co-requisite college-level courses and realizing success in their subsequent college-level courses with this model.

EAB Navigate is a newly adopted software where faculty and staff submit progress reports during weeks 1, 5, and 9 or ad hoc when needed. Using this tool, advisors and counselors [receive information](#) and can address student issues, providing just-in-time support and resources to decrease barriers and increase student success.

NIACC utilized several strategies to improve retention rates for these populations. The [TRIO Student Support Services](#) program [supports](#) first-generation students, students with disabilities, and low-income students. [Disability Services](#), [On Track](#), and [College with Confidence](#) programs support students with disabilities in reaching academic goals.

After reviewing academic performance data for all sports, the NIACC Athletic Department, Student Learning Center, and Student Development partnered to create the [IPASS Program](#) (pg. 5) for academically high-risk students (<2.00 GPA). The Athletic Department [focused](#) (pgs. 3-4) on our high-risk student-athletes needs by developing a weekly mandatory guided-study system for student-athletes who fit specific criteria, and the initial [results](#) appear promising.

CCSSE and SENSE surveys (bi-annual) are primarily used to evaluate services for students. In 2021, NIACC elected to opt into the [Race and Ethnicity Survey](#) portion of CCSSE for additional equity information, which included results distributed by [Race and Ethnicity](#). The large majority (87%) agree that they feel like they [belong](#) at NIACC (pg. 12), with 87% also reporting there is a [culture of caring](#) (pg. 13), and 98% feel that some or all of their instructors care about their success in the courses they are taking.

Pass rates of [health programs](#) are an additional resource to capture our students' completion and success rates to inform decisions. When HESI success rates were analyzed, it was found that some students needed [remediation](#), which was drafted as a contract to ensure students were committed to success. Our Nurse Aide [program](#) is tracked for skills and written test success.

Goals are appropriate to the College's mission to enrich "lives through comprehensive educational opportunities, a commitment to learner success, community engagement, and leadership." The goals explicitly indicate NIACC's commitment to comprehensive educational opportunities and learner success.

#### 4.C.4.

NIACC utilizes processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing data in alignment with the Iowa Department of Education [definitions](#) (pg. 82) for submitting IPEDS and state data. For example, NIACC used [IPEDS](#) guidelines in calculating certain measures, such as completers (150% of normal time), graduation rates, and full-time equivalent (FTE) students. NIACC aligns student

performance data at intermediate stages of completion, such as course and semester-to-semester retention, with the standards developed by the NCCBP.

Also used are accepted higher education reports such as the Annual Condition of Iowa Community Colleges Report, Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), and internal reports measuring and tracking data regarding student retention, persistence, and completion of programs.

NIACC strives for data transparency by publishing student outcome data on the Consumer Information webpage, making reports and dashboards available to all college personnel on TrojanHome (IPEDS, CCSSE, Enrollment, and Student Profile reports, etc.), and making assessment data available on the shared drive that all employees can access.

Data is reported to the NIACC Board of Directors from each Division in annual Monitoring Reports. These reports focus on What We Do, For Whom, and At What Cost. Additionally, the Academic Affairs Monitoring Report includes an [Academic Glossary](#) (pg. 4). Board members provide written and verbal feedback that is reviewed and addressed in subsequent reports to the Board.

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## 4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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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.

### Summary

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NIACC ensures program quality through a regular review process aligned with its mission, provides options for credit recognition, and offers accredited programs that meet industry standards. The College prioritizes learner success, evident in high graduation rates and comprehensive opportunities.

NIACC strives to continuously improve student learning through a five-year review process and annual planning. The College involves faculty, staff, and students in the assessment process to identify areas for improvement. NIACC makes data-driven decisions for sustainable student learning and implements cocurricular learning outcomes aligned with Institutional Learning Outcomes.

The College provides quality education, support, and opportunities for all students to achieve their goals. NIACC utilizes data to analyze student success and inform initiatives aligned with their Strategic Plan. NIACC supports first-generation and low-income students, promotes equity in CTE programs, and offers guided pathways for all students. The College also provides developmental education and programs for underrepresented populations. NIACC is committed to promoting learner success and providing a supportive learning environment for all students.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*

## 5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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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

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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.

### Argument

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#### 5.A.1.

NIACC has a [nine-member Board of Directors](#) that meets monthly to conduct business. [Meetings](#) include a Board Workshop at 5:30 p.m., where faculty and staff presentations are made during dinner with no formal action taken, followed by the Regular Meeting beginning at 7 p.m. All meetings are open to the public. All [Board books and minutes](#) are posted internally on TrojanHome, and agendas and minutes are available on the [website](#) and in the NIACC Library for review by the public. The Board has two [retreats](#) per year in April and October.

Collaborative decision-making is the norm at NIACC and is practiced through committees and working groups with representation from across the College, including the [Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council](#) (CAAC) (pg. 3), [College Senate](#), [Personnel Affairs Council](#) (PAC), and [Educational Effectiveness Committee](#) (EEC). Discussions about consistency of student learning outcomes, employee engagement and development, continuous focus on student success based on assessment data, and institutional resource prioritization occur in these meetings. All policies and procedures are vetted through a collaborative decision-making process before institutionalization. [Executive Committees](#) for the four categories also participate in the meet and confer process.

There is a regularly scheduled activity hour when no classes are scheduled (12:20 to 1:20 p.m. on Mondays). One Monday is dedicated to individual department meetings; two are for [student clubs](#)/activities, and the fourth is for professional development (examples include program review preparation, an [overview](#) of the College's early retirement plan, and a tour of the College's portal).

Student Senate meets monthly, and their feedback is instrumental in determining programming. A



student representative serves on the [College Senate](#), and a [student panel](#) (pg. 2) is included in the biannual Board Retreats. A student, when available in the past, has served on the Alumni Board. Student Ambassadors are also often tapped to test technology pilots and provide feedback.

NIACC's President sends two Friday letters weekly, one to the Board of Directors and one to the entire College. Opportunities for two-way communication between administration and faculty/staff occur at president-led [Cracker Barrel](#) discussions, [Breakfast with the President](#), and faculty and staff-led category group meetings.

[President's Council](#) includes representatives from Academic Affairs, Administrative Services, Continuing Education, Human Resources, Institutional Advancement, NIACC's John Pappajohn Entrepreneurship Center, Marketing, Student Development, and Technology Services. State and national survey results, legislative and policy updates, accreditation changes, and data reports are shared and discussed at the President's Council. Any member may bring agenda items for discussion. All members also share weekly updates from their respective areas. Minutes are accessible to all employees on TrojanHome.

Each of the nine members of the President's Council [annually prepares and presents](#) (pg. 11) individual Monitoring Reports about their areas of the College to the Board. These are published in the monthly Board Book and presented to NIACC's Board of Directors during the Board Workshop immediately preceding the regular Board meeting. They are also available to the public in the Board meeting minutes. As described in 1.A., the reports detail what each division/department does, for whom, and at what cost. Reports identify performance measures for each specific area and detail challenges and concerns for the future, including an identified focus for the coming year. The Board responds with a [feedback sheet](#) indicating what they see as upcoming challenges and opportunities they wish to see addressed in next year's report.

Members of the President's Council are also asked to provide updates on the Strategic Goals, which are then shared in an [annual update](#) (pg. 3) to the Board at the October Board Retreat.

Faculty and staff led the [Strategic Planning Leadership Team](#), which included students. Members periodically assemble by strategic priority to assist in developing and [refining goals](#) and action steps needed to satisfy each priority.

Collective governance was seen in the development of the STEM Center, hiring practices, and adoption of technology:

- In the planning phase for the STEM Center, faculty and staff visited multiple colleges to design teaching/learning spaces that would create a collaborative learning space to serve students for the next 50 years.
- When positions become available, [campus-wide, cross-discipline hiring committees](#) are engaged throughout the [process](#), from reviewing the candidate application to the final employment offer.
- The selection of Canvas as NIACC's Learning Management Software was also a collaborative decision by faculty. NIACC has strategically grown online and hybrid course offerings to provide access to higher education for our rural population. We have engaged new technology to serve students with disabilities and provided platforms through technology for sharing educational opportunities that are not readily available elsewhere, such as creating a recording studio to integrate Panopto recording of courses, accessibility software, and course blueprinting for consistency.

## 5.A.2.

NIACC makes data-informed decisions based on agreed-upon Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in regular Monitoring Reports. NIACC uses data from Integrated Post-Secondary Enrollment Data (IPEDS), State of Iowa [MIS Data](#), [Voluntary Framework of Accountability](#), The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and the [Great Colleges to Work For](#) Survey, to conduct broad-scale benchmarks of student success and completion measures while identifying opportunities for improvement.

SENSE collects and analyzes data about [institutional practices and student behaviors](#) in the earliest weeks of college. This data and analysis provide the College with meaningful information used to improve programs and services for entering students. Specifically, SENSE data is useful in improving course completion rates and the rate at which students persist beyond the first term of enrollment.

CCSSE assesses institutional practices and student behaviors highly correlated with student learning and retention. CCSSE serves as a benchmarking instrument, diagnostic tool, and monitoring device for the College by identifying [areas](#) where a college can enhance students' educational experiences while documenting and improving institutional effectiveness over time.

The [Student Perception Survey](#), completed on a rotating [cycle](#), allows students to evaluate courses and instructional techniques anonymously. The data is provided to instructors at the end of the semester.

Data use is embedded in our Program Review process. All academic programs participate in an in-depth [5-year program review process](#), described in detail in 4.B. During this process, faculty spend time reflecting on the data, [considering potential program revisions](#) (pg. 93) that may be necessary, and presenting ([Natural Sciences SLO Five Year Review](#), [Welding Program Review](#)) the findings to a committee of faculty, staff, and administrators. Each faculty member and Division Chair are expected to review student outcome data annually and adjust instructional strategies to address areas of concern. Time and leadership are provided during professional development weeks in August and January for continuous quality program improvement.

When an update to an existing academic program is necessary, faculty work with [the advisory committee](#) to pinpoint [the skills](#) that need to be addressed and with the Division Chair to incorporate [new material](#) into the program. Minor changes to existing courses are sometimes enough to handle the change. At other times, adding new courses into the programs becomes necessary to replace outdated curricula.

Faculty request changes by submitting an updated course outline or programmatic revision through an [online tracking system](#) (eTrieve), which is routed through the Division Chair and VPAASL for approval. The change request is then sent to the Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council (CAAC) for final approval after a first and second reading.

[Adding new programs](#) follows similar steps for the final approvals. On the front end, the faculty and Division Chair investigate the opportunity and feasibility of the new program. If applicable, an advisory committee is created, and the Vice President for Administrative Services is consulted to determine a budget and equipment needs.

As mentioned in 3.A.1., the Academic team analyzes data from the annual [Community College](#)

[Transfer Report](#) to identify potential gaps in GPAs between NIACC transfer students and the students who started at the Regents universities. NIACC ranks first in the state with a 68.6% overall average for university graduation rate trends three years after transferring to a Regent University.

After reviewing academic performance data for all sports, the NIACC Athletic Department, Student Learning Center, and Student Development partnered to create the IPASS Program (pg. 5) for academically high-risk students (<2.00 GPA). The Athletic Department focused on our high-risk student-athletes needs by developing a weekly mandatory guided-study system for student-athletes who fit specific criteria, and the initial [results](#) appear promising.

NIACC uses Entrisik Informer to create dashboards to gather academic and completion outcome data used at the classroom and program levels. Division Chairs review student outcomes by [course](#) and [instructor](#) annually at the classroom level. College academic leaders have established a benchmark of 70% completion for each course. Division Chairs meet with faculty for areas falling below the benchmark. Together, they identify changes that can improve student outcomes.

The College selected Edify, a companion tool to Navigate, as the data management tool with predictive analytic capabilities. Edify works as a data warehouse management system, [compiling data](#) from CANVAS, Colleague, National Student Clearinghouse, and EAB Navigate and simplifying data queries and analytic analysis processing. With the Student Enrollment Management Data module, the College can access enrollment management dashboards such as [Enrollment Overview](#), [Modality and Geography Melt](#), and [Transfer Out Data](#). The next phase of the process is to port data from Lumens (Continuing Education student platform).

NIACC's Continuing Education department consistently utilizes data in program development, such as short-term certificates, to determine the program or workforce needs and career outlook for students. For example, when exploring the possibility of partnering with the local airport to offer private pilot (non-credit) and commercial pilot (credit) programs, [data](#) was collected to assess need by analyzing commercial pilot wages, projected labor growth (local, statewide, and nationally), student enrollment in comparable Iowa programs, impacts of pilot shortages and the student experience in earning their pilot licenses and employment. The compiled data was [shared](#) with college leadership to guide decision-making.

When determining programming for the Career Centers, each laborshed area was looked at separately ([Forest City](#), [Charles City](#)). The most current [labor market information](#) was reviewed, which included primary employers, the number of positions, and projected growth for those positions in that laborshed area.

In 2022, the Schedule Management Team completed a year-long study ([2021-2022](#) and [2022-2023](#) minutes) of past semester schedules, faculty loads, room capacities, course enrollment capacities, pathways course rotation requirements, and conflict data to determine how to maximize scheduling to meet student needs. The Team [completed](#) the AY 2023-2024 schedule and will continue to meet to address unexpected outcomes and new needs.

At least once an academic year, NIACC has presented [grade norming activities](#) for adjunct and concurrent faculty members with full-time faculty [liaisons](#) to standardize grading and assessments across instructors and modalities. The Director of High School Partnerships also analyzed the grades of concurrent enrollment students and compared concurrent grades by different instructor populations. The [report](#) aimed to determine if full-time, part-time, and concurrent faculty grades were consistent. Analysis of the grades showed no statistical difference between instructor

populations in grades submitted for concurrent students, indicating consistency in course rigor.

Data is collected and analyzed on Strategic Goal progress and presented to the Board via the monthly monitoring reports. To keep Strategic Goal progress at the forefront, beginning with the [Continuing Education Monitoring Report](#) (pg. 9) in December 2022, reports now include progress updates tied to particular Strategic Priorities.

Fiscal health is reviewed by comparing annual [KPIs](#) (pg. 13). The balance of the general operating fund is compared to a two-month operating benchmark. Evaluations are performed annually by [Moody's](#) (rating part of bond sale pg. 97) on outstanding bond issuances for housing and job training that consider all factors of enrollment, financial health, and economic indicators in the region.

### 5.A.3.

All academic decisions are vetted with and through CAAC. This faculty-led committee holds final decision-making authority. Representatives from each academic area and department serve as committee members. Its [purpose](#) (pg. 2) is outlined in the CAAC Charter. Several departments and subcommittees give [reports](#) during CAAC meetings. CAAC holds responsibility for all curricular and academic program changes. The Division Chair and the Registrar vet programmatic and curricular changes to ensure that all program/degree and articulation requirements are met before becoming an agenda item.

Committee meetings are open to all College employees and students and are regularly [scheduled](#) to promote collaboration and participation. Committee agendas are [posted](#) on TrojanHome, with all meeting agendas and minutes available on the portal.

The [Educational Effectiveness Committee](#) (EEC), a subcommittee of CAAC, is chaired by a faculty member and is responsible for the systematic assessment of student learning. In addition to program/discipline review, EEC served as the forum for [general education discussions](#).

NIACC encourages participation in shared governance by providing the opportunity for comment on all matters brought before EEC and CAAC. Those individuals and departments regularly interacting with students are members of, or report to, [EEC](#) and/or [CAAC](#). Cross-departmental participation fosters collaboration.

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## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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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.

### Argument

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#### 5.B.1.

##### *Operational Staff*

As reported in the [IPEDS Human Resources Report 2022-2023](#) (pg. 32), NIACC employed 64 full-time faculty and 34 adjunct instructors, as well as 214 full-time and 184 part-time staff in FY2023.

New faculty positions are created after reviewing course load and classroom capacity data. Some work needs have changed over the last few years with the launch of Guided Pathways. Before Fall 2022, numbers in Comp I and II were on a downward trend, but numbers increased in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 as students were placed on first-year pathways. As a result, an English faculty position that had previously not been replaced was filled for Fall 2023.

Within each [job description](#), NIACC outlines the required and desired qualifications regarding the education level and job experience necessary to fulfill the duties assigned to that role. Upon hire, all faculty and staff meet the minimum required qualifications.

Faculty qualifications are addressed explicitly in the [Faculty Handbook](#) (pg. 10), and the [Iowa Community College Faculty Qualifications Guide](#) is also a resource to assist in determining qualifying fields of study.

Faculty members must meet minimum competencies by developing a personalized plan to improve their instructional skills and student success. The [Continued Professional Development Plan](#) (CPDP) for NIACC's full-time faculty members has [three components](#) (pg. 18) that must be satisfied annually to ensure continued growth and development. The first component is content expertise. Faculty must record what they have accomplished over the year to stay current in their field of study. The second component is teaching methodology and student learning, which focuses on work faculty engaged in over the year, which enhanced and improved the instructor's commitment to students and learning processes, management and monitoring of the student learning environment, development and utilization of teaching strategies and technology, and preparation, delivery, and evaluation of subject matter. Component three is based on college service.



Contracted faculty have three weeks [each year](#) dedicated to [professional development](#) when they are on contract and classes are not in session. The Iowa Department of Education requires all adjunct instructors who teach credit classes to complete a Continued Professional Development Plan annually, known as the [Quality Adjunct Plan](#) (QAP).

In addition to the QAP/CPDP, faculty complete the following training:

- All new NIACC instructors meet with the appropriate Division Chair or representative and complete specific course training.
- New adjunct and concurrent faculty members are assigned a [liaison](#) who will continue to work with the adjunct faculty member while teaching at NIACC. Adjunct and concurrent faculty members also attend at least two on-site [trainings](#) each academic year with additional training in the [LMS](#).
- New full-time faculty are assigned a [mentor](#) for their first year on campus, attend a [week](#) of new faculty orientation and regular new faculty orientation sessions during their first three years, and complete the CPDP each academic year.
- All faculty employed by the College must complete [new employee training](#) requirements and any subsequent requirements to meet state, federal, or employer requirements.

Both faculty and staff members complete the following online training modules during the first two weeks of employment (repeated as directed by the College): Discrimination Awareness in the Workplace; FERPA Confidentiality of Records; Title IX and Sexual Harassment Prevention; and Right to Understand (GHS) Hazard Communication. Title IX and [First Amendment training](#) refreshers are completed annually. Employees who work regularly with children in the scope of their duties are required to complete [Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter](#) training.

North Iowa Area Community College's (NIACC's) primary training needs are developed through strategic planning, organizational planning, and institutional and program accreditation requirements. Additional training requirements are identified while setting goals as part of the annual performance evaluation process.

NIACC is unique among Iowa community colleges in offering 13 full days of on-campus staff development. Sessions focus on various topics, including enhancing teaching and learning, workplace excellence, and [diversity and inclusion](#). Planned for January 2024 is a session presented by EAB, an entity NIACC contracts for educational research and professional development, on Hallmarks of an Anti-Racist Institution.

While NIACC organizationally holds professional organization memberships, the College encourages divisions and employees to maintain memberships that provide growth and networking opportunities.

### ***Infrastructure (Fiscal, Physical, Technological)***

#### *Fiscal*

The President and Board of Directors oversee NIACC's fiscal infrastructure, while the Vice President for Administrative Services oversees NIACC's fiscal processes daily.

NIACC strives to maintain a [reserve balance](#) (pg. 13) of at least two months of operating expenses not covered in other funds and covers the operation and support of educational programs. The reserve

balance – currently 40% of the operating budget - along with strategic budgeting, ensures that the college has the funding to respond to changes in fiscal conditions. [Financial reports](#) (pg. 66) are provided to the board every month. An [in-depth analysis](#) (pg. 3), including enrollment and state funding projections, is presented at each of the two annual board retreats. This allows the Board to make informed decisions about the budget.

NIACC has a strong history of federal grant awards to support the College mission, providing funds for equipment and increasing student success. Examples include:

- TRIO Student Support Services, 30 years, approximately \$340,000 annually
- National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (NSF ATE), two awards since 2020, a total of \$799,833
- Carl D. Perkins, most recent award of \$196,048
- NIACC was recently awarded a Title III Strengthening Institutions Program grant titled NIACC Pathways to Success. The total amount over the 5-year performance period is \$2,248,165. This is the fourth Title III grant the College has received.

NIACC also receives numerous state and local grants annually. NIACC employs a full-time grant writer who [consistently secures funding](#) for specific college initiatives through the NIACC Foundation, with funds being awarded from local, state, and federal entities.

NIACC is very fortunate to have the financial support of the NIACC Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit Type I supporting organization. The Foundation provides direct scholarships to students and offers opportunities for faculty and staff to [request funds](#) for special projects and activities to further the College mission. In 2022-23, the Foundation [awarded](#) \$1,197,982 in scholarships. Of that total, \$1,063,850 represented 674 scholarships awarded to 508 current NIACC students. As of June 30, 2023, the Foundation's asset base was almost [\\$45 million](#), with an endowment of nearly \$17 million. Assets have increased by \$25 million over the past decade and are managed by an outside investment advising firm, as directed by the Investment Committee.

Financial ratios reported to the Higher Learning Commission demonstrate the College's financial health. The College's Composite Financial Indicator (CFI) has been above the zone (1.1 to 10.0) for the last three fiscal years. NIACC's CFI ratio for FY22 is [2.15](#) (pg. 7). The College has maintained a [Moody's rating](#) of Aa2 with a stable outlook, most recently updated August 2022. NIACC has a sizeable agricultural tax base in North Central Iowa, with a total tax base of \$8.5 million. After a refund of dorm revenue bonds in 2021, annual debt service expenditures have been reduced, improving debt coverage.

### *Physical*

NIACC has one main campus in Mason City and an [approved additional location](#), the John V. Hanson Career Center (JVHCC) in Forest City. NIACC also operates four community education [centers](#) throughout the region. The JVHCC, a Regional Career Academy that opened in Fall 2021, is a regional partnership designed to provide educational opportunities to school districts, adults, families, businesses, industry, and local communities. The JVHCC was made possible through bond revenue, generous donations, and a \$1 million grant from the Iowa Department of Education.

A second Regional Career Academy is under [renovation/construction](#) in Charles City and is scheduled to open by Fall 2024. The additional location application will be forthcoming for the Charles City Career Education and Training Center.

The [Facilities Master Plan](#) (pg. 68), approved by the Board in November 2021, provides further details on facilities. The plan includes ongoing upgrades and maintenance, planned renovations, and anticipated new construction.

In 2020, NIACC successfully passed a \$15 million [general obligation bond referendum](#). 77.1% of [votes](#) in the 11-county area were in favor, [far surpassing](#) the 60% favorable vote required to pass in Iowa. [Uses](#) (pg. 25) for the funding include interior and exterior improvements for existing infrastructure, sustainable energy upgrades, and campus security improvements. In addition, several new construction projects are completed or currently in progress. Major projects include:

- John V. Hanson Career Center – construction of new facility - *Completed*
- Gymnasium – new gym floor, bleachers, other finishes – *Completed*
- Charles City Career Center – renovation and construction of new facility – *In progress*
- Student Housing Dining Hall – construction of new building – *In progress*
- Farm Lab – construction of new hog building – *In progress*
- McAllister Hall – renovation of nursing labs and campus IT department – *Planning*

Upgrades to the NIACC gymnasium began after Spring 2023 semester, with removal of the old floor, which required abatement of the mercury floor underneath. The project included the installation of new basketball hoops, bleachers, and floor, along with the replacement of entrance doors to achieve compliance with ADA requirements. The gym finishes were completed early in Fall 2023.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Charles City Career Education and Training Center was held on April 14, 2023, and construction began soon after. The construction project is both a remodel and an addition to the existing NIACC Community Education Center building. Like the John V. Hanson Career Center, the Center is a regional partnership to provide opportunities for local high school students, businesses, industries, and communities. In addition to bond revenue and another \$1 million grant from the Iowa Department of Education, NIACC has received many generous donations to finance the project. The Center is expected to open in Fall 2024.

The Campus View Student Housing Complex was completed in 2015. The complex offers several suite options and houses a convenience store, a computer lab, and common spaces. At the time of construction, the existing food service building was retained, with plans to renovate or replace the structure in the future. The College Board of Directors approved the project in 2022, and construction is currently underway, with anticipated completion in December 2023.

### *Technology*

The Technology Services department is responsible for [planning, managing, and supporting](#) technology initiatives and software solutions used by academic and administrative areas of the college.

NIACC has a multi-year technology agreement with Solutions Management Group to provide [up-to-date](#) computer lab, office, printer, and classroom technology throughout the main campus and remote teaching locations. Through this partnership, all academic and administrative departments participate annually in joint planning sessions to [review technology needs](#) by area.

NIACC maintains vendor licensing and support contracts for enterprise-wide software [solutions](#), including Enterprise Resource Planning (Ellucian Colleague); Student Success Management System (EAB Navigate); Learning Management Solutions (Instructure Canvas and Cornerstone); Web

Conferencing (Zoom); Audio/Video classroom recording (Panopto); Document Imaging (Perceptive Experience); Room Scheduling (Accruent EMS Campus); Electronic forms and workflow (Softdocs Etrieve); CRM (HubSpot); Office 365; TrojanHome Portal (Pathify); Door Access (LENEL and PERSONA); Reporting (Entrinsik Informer) and Security (FRSecure).

### **5.B.2.**

The College creates realistic goals supporting the Strategic Plan as evidenced by the post-COVID refocus plan ([Strategic Plan Revisited 2018-2025](#)). The Strategic Plan initially spanned 2018–2023. Considering the worldwide pandemic, the goals of the institution were evaluated and adjusted, with a renewed focus on the following: Elevate Organizational Excellence, Enhance Teaching, and Increase Enrollment and Retention. The Board [approved](#) extending the revised Strategic Plan through 2025. This work has resulted in an attentive focus on three Strategic Priorities while the mission stays intact.

Additionally, the [President](#) and the [Board of Directors](#) (pg. 4) set annual goals to continue helping the college move forward and meet its mission and vision.

### **5.B.3.**

NIACC's budget process follows [Iowa Code 260C](#) (pg. 14) for the certified budget. The requirements include publication in a local newspaper and a public hearing to allow public feedback, followed by board approval. This process also includes setting the property tax levy based on taxable property valuations. The College is required to submit the budget to the Iowa Department of Education for approval in a designated timeframe. NIACC follows the [Iowa Community College Accounting Manual](#) and Governmental Accounting Standards Board regulations.

Departmental budget requests are distributed to Division Chairs and department heads and are submitted to the Vice President for Administrative Services for approval. Submissions must include the rationale for each expense line item to assist in approval determination. All departmental budgets are approved and compiled to create the [working budget](#), which is presented to the Board for approval in July.

Academic equipment requests are similarly distributed to Division Chairs, who solicit requests from program leaders and instructors. Requests are ranked by priority for the next three years and must include how the request relates to the assessment plan and college strategic goals when submitted. Equipment requests are then evaluated collaboratively with Division Chairs, VPAASL, and the Vice President for Administrative Services to determine which items will be presented to the Board for approval.

Budget managers are responsible for monitoring their expenses throughout the year and have access to real-time data through [Self-Service Financial Management. Training](#) is provided for this process by the Vice President for Administrative Services, along with an overview of the structure of college finances.

Financial reports are a [standing item](#) (pgs. 2-3) on the Board consent agenda. A monthly [financial report](#) (pg. 66) is provided for review in the board packet, and a [check register](#) detailing the monthly bills is sent to a [designated board member](#) (pg. 6) before the Board meeting to allow time for a thorough review. Any questions related to the bills are directed to the Vice President for Administrative Services before or at the Board meeting, and the designated board member [leads](#)

[discussion](#) (pg. 3) at the board meeting before approval. Additional, more detailed reports are presented at the [fall](#) and [spring](#) Board Retreats, as requested for board [workshops](#), and with the annual [Monitoring Report](#). These presentations provide the board members additional opportunities for questions, suggestions, and dialogue with the Vice President for Administrative Services.

An external accounting firm conducts an independent audit ([2020](#) pg. 68, [2021](#) pg. 8, [2022](#) pg. 9) of NIACC's finances each year, as required by [Iowa Code Chapter 11](#) (pg. 4). Once the audit is complete, a representative from the audit firm is invited to [present](#) (pg. 2) their findings at the next Board meeting. NIACC has received unqualified or unmodified audit opinions for more than 30 years.

#### **5.B.4.**

NIACC's commitment to achieving its educational purposes is evidenced in its allocation of expenditures: 70% of budgeted funds are used to provide instruction, academic support, student services, and scholarships. This supports the strategic priority to enhance teaching and learning. Following are examples that demonstrate this commitment:

- The College has committed to employing full-time faculty whenever possible and utilizing adjunct faculty only as needed.
- Faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in external professional development opportunities. Financial support for training and development is incorporated into the divisional/departmental budgeting process.
- To encourage faculty and staff to pursue areas of academic interest, NIACC offers a generous [tuition reimbursement](#) based on the reimbursement rate set by the Iowa Board of Regents. IRS establishes a non-tax maximum reimbursement limit of \$5,250 per calendar year. Funds are also available for [adjunct tuition reimbursement](#) for those faculty who wish to complete credits in an additional area of instruction.
- The NIACC Foundation allocates funds each year to support special projects and initiatives of the College. Faculty and staff complete an [application](#), which the Foundation Executive Committee then reviews. Award recipients are required to report on the project to the Foundation Board.
- The NIACC Board periodically designates a portion of reserve funds for college initiatives. Employees complete an [application](#) to [request funding for their initiative](#), which includes a complete narrative of the project and a detailed budget. These Strategic Investments are reviewed and presented to the Board for approval. ([Innovation Space](#))
- As described in 5.B.1, most of the proceeds from the 2020 bond referendum were used for academic infrastructure, demonstrating NIACC's commitment to supporting educational programs.
- Potential new program offerings are continually evaluated. Market analysis, including employment opportunities, determines demand for the considered program. If demand exists, costs are determined, including equipment, staff, and required services. Part of this funding process is included in the institution's plant fund forecast, which is updated regularly throughout the year to plan for infrastructure needs, equipment for administrative use, potential construction projects, and potential new program development.
- Funding is allocated to the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) to develop programming and learning opportunities for full-time and adjunct faculty. Additionally, funding is allocated to provide spaces, equipment, or software that enables faculty to assess new teaching strategies. Allocation for equipment and software is based on need or request.



The State of Iowa holds conferences on these strategies, and NIACC allocates funds for its faculty to attend.

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## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

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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.

### Argument

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#### 5.C.1.

The mission and priorities are part of the [strategic plan](#), which guides operations, including resource allocations. Annually and during the strategic plan process, goals are identified that can be measured using KPIs to track progress toward achievement.

Partnerships allow NIACC to maximize resources for students. The [College and Career Transition Counselor \(CCTC\)](#) and the [Career Academy Incentive Fund](#) grants allow NIACC to allocate resources that align with the strategic priorities and increase options for high school students. [Agreements](#) with participating school districts at the [JVHCC Regional Career Academy](#) include annual monetary contributions to the center to provide funds for equipment needs and to offset ongoing materials and supplies costs related to CTE programs. In addition, a local industry partner donated equipment for the academy.

NIACC aligns budgeting with its mission and priorities. The College utilizes funding sources such as grants, plant funds, equipment levies, GO bond proceeds, and [260G Accelerated Career Education](#) funds to improve academic program facilities. Most recently, NIACC used 260G funds to complete upgrades in the Careers Building and Murphy Manufacturing Technology Center, which house lab spaces for Automotive, Diesel, Tool & Die, and Welding programs.

The NIACC Foundation is a separate IRS Type I supporting organization with a [mission and priorities](#) (pg. 5) dedicated to supporting the mission of the College.

#### 5.C.2.

NIACC links its assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting. As described in 5.A.2., NIACC uses multiple surveys and state of Iowa and IPEDS data to evaluate operations, compare the College to national benchmarks, and identify opportunities for

improvement.

NIACC's assessment of student learning is a robust faculty-centered process directed by the Educational Effectiveness Committee (EEC) and reported to the Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council (CAAC) and the VPAASL. The faculty [assess](#) course Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) each semester, reflects on the outcomes, and closes the loop by developing a plan to address shortcomings. Through the assessment process, SLOs are [aligned](#) (pg. 66) with Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and finally Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs).

For Career and Technical Education programs, findings are presented to the [advisory committee](#) each [fall and spring](#), with feedback from the committee noted, considered, and acted upon where appropriate. Opportunities for improvements to the programs in the form of equipment and supplies needed are also addressed and tied to the budgeting cycle during this process. For all other disciplines, findings are reviewed with Division Chairs.

Faculty submit program budget requests generated through the assessment process each spring to their Division Chair. Division Chairs offer their respective budgets to the Vice President for Administrative Services and, if necessary, meet with the VPAASL to prioritize the budgets to utilize the available funds equitably. The NIACC Board of Directors approves all equipment [purchases over \\$10,000](#) (pg. 231).

The [Student Perception Survey](#), completed on a rotating cycle, allows students to evaluate their courses and instructional techniques anonymously. The data is provided to instructors at the end of the semester. Each faculty member and Division Chair are expected to review student outcome data annually and adjust instructional strategies to address areas of concern.

All academic programs participate in an in-depth five-year [program review](#) process. During this process, faculty spend time reflecting on the data, considering any necessary program revisions, and presenting the findings to a committee of faculty, staff, and administrators. Any programmatic changes follow an [approval process](#) that begins within the Division, then the advisory committee, if applicable, and finally, the Curriculum and Academic Affairs Council (CAAC), where it must be approved through two readings before submission for final approval to the Iowa Department of Education and the Higher Learning Commission.

All of the valuable insight from external data sources and assessment of student learning informs the annual Strategic Priorities and Key Performance Indicators, which are reported in the Strategic Plan Annual Update and each division's Monitoring Report, respectively.

### 5.C.3.

The 2018-2023 Strategic Planning [process](#) facilitated by the University of Northern Iowa's Institute for Decision Making (IDM) included extensive involvement of internal and external stakeholders. This team led a [Strategic Planning Leadership Team](#) of students, staff, faculty, administration, and community members. The process for developing the strategic planning agenda is addressed in detail in 1.A.1. It [included](#) all-staff meetings, community forums, and an online survey to capture additional feedback for those unable to attend a face-to-face session. Community leaders, school districts, local governments, and businesses were identified and individually [invited](#) to participate in [public forums](#).

While engaging internal and external constituent groups to gain perspective, NIACC capitalized on

North Iowa Corridor's recent [strategic planning](#) by including their views and [SWOT analysis](#) (pg. 53) in the College's environmental scan. The North Iowa Corridor is responsible for the [economic development](#) of North Central Iowa.

The strategic planning process includes partners of Continuing Education programs to provide an economic development perspective on initiatives of the College. These viewpoints inform the service area's program, event, and activity planning. The involvement of internal and external stakeholders allows the College to successfully serve individual communities, NIACC students, alums, and businesses to maximize outcomes.

The NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center/Small Business Development Center's vision is to be the leading source for entrepreneurship education programs and to serve as a liaison for additional resources to enhance the entrepreneurial environment and improve client results. Internal stakeholders from both centers actively contribute their insights. At the same time, external constituent groups, including entrepreneurs, small business owners, industry partners, and the local community, are engaged in aligning the strategic plan with their needs. This inclusive approach empowers both centers to support aspiring entrepreneurs and existing business owners effectively, [driving economic growth](#) across the region.

The NIACC Foundation regularly seeks both informal and formal feedback from constituents. During the feasibility study for the [Keeping NIACC First capital campaign](#), 102 people were interviewed, including 82 community and business leaders from across North Iowa. This study clearly showed that the region was willing to support four main projects (renovation of the STEM center, adding a Health Simulation Lab, building a Diesel Technology Center, and acquiring new pianos for the music program). Support and feedback results are evidenced in the [NIACC- Executive Summary Report](#).

The *InTouch* newsletter is sent twice a year to 29,000+ alums and friends. In the fall edition, the annual report of the NIACC Foundation is included. In each edition, readers can provide feedback directly to the Alumni Office via phone, web form, or email.

Conversations occur four times yearly via "Cracker Barrel" meetings open to the entire campus community. Information of institutional significance is shared, and feedback is gathered through monthly department and division meetings and biannual category meetings.

NIACC is a non-union community college with four employee groups representing themselves in a meet and confer process to reach mutually binding annual agreements ([Facilities](#), [Faculty](#), [Office/Clerical](#), [Professional Salaried Staff](#)). Twice each semester, the college president meets with each group separately to discuss any topics of concern to the employee group.

In addition to these internal departments, the College also works with community partners to assess stakeholder needs. One of the most notable is the [Vision North Iowa Regional Prosperity Plan](#) (pgs. 23-26, 41-43), which named NIACC's JPEC as the lead implementer for many of the outlined strategies. JPEC is identified to lead most strategies for Goal 3, Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

#### **5.C.4.**

NIACC capitalizes on strengths and opportunities to develop goals and strategies to optimize capacity. The [2018-2023 Strategic Plan](#) (pg. 78) was based on a sound understanding of the College's current capacity and anticipated demographic challenges. The design envelops broad goals with strategies and activities that can be adjusted during the five-year cycle to meet quickly changing

needs, which became necessary toward the end of the last five-year cycle.

Factors including the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in State of Iowa-directed initiatives, and leadership changes forced the College to reevaluate its priorities for the remaining life of the Strategic Plan. In early 2022, the College devised revitalization teams with representation from across the College to study and develop strategic priorities to span the next three years. The [Strategic Plan Revisited 2018-2025](#) resulted from their collective efforts.

Declining-to-steady enrollments coupled with limited state funding increases have taught the College to practice being pliable with resources. It is well understood across the College that planning must be based on existing resources and prioritized to accomplish the Strategic Plan Priorities. As noted above, the program review and budget processes are integral in determining NIACC's Strategic Priorities.

### **5.C.5.**

At NIACC, institutional planning considers evolved trends in technology, demographics, globalization, the economy, and state funding. The President and members of the President's Council continually monitor local, state, and national information sources for changes on these fronts and share updates at weekly meetings during the "For the Good of the Cause" agenda item on the agenda.

#### ***Technology Advancements***

Technology advancements are identified by staff doing the work and discovering a better and more efficient use of technology. These products are brought forth to Division Chairs and directors of the College to learn more about the products that could change how work is done. Once a Division Chair or director has vetted the technology, the product is sent to the Information Technology Department, which follows the Information Technology Process for Purchase, which includes checking to ensure that all technology purchased meets NIACC accessibility standards.

NIACC has a multi-year technology [agreement](#) with Solutions Management Group (SMG) to provide up-to-date computer lab, office, printer, and classroom technology throughout the main campus and remote teaching locations. Through this partnership, all academic and administrative departments participate annually in joint planning sessions with SMG to review technology needs by [area](#).

The college communicates regularly with current and potential vendors to stay informed on technology trends. An example of this is the impact of artificial intelligence on Higher Education. The college is deploying a semester trial of [plagiarism](#) detection software integrated with our Learning Management Solution. Also, through close collaboration with Academic Leadership, instructor representatives, and the Director of School Partnerships, NIACC thoroughly reviews challenges and academic integrity objectives for virtual test proctoring. Their efforts identified a [solution](#) compatible with various devices (Windows, Mac, Chromebooks) and multiple modern browsers.

#### ***Demographic Shifts***

The college utilizes many resources to better understand and plan for the decline of the population in rural North Iowa. The administrative staff reviews and analyzes demographic shifts of data collected for our nine-county service region. Market Share reports, Department of Education enrollment projections for school districts, graduation reports, and [census data](#) help project future enrollment.

Enrollment projections for area graduating classes have remained steady. However, a significant decline in student class size will occur in 2026 and remain low until 2034. While NIACC has consistently enrolled approximately 29% of the area seniors following high school graduation, that market share will be impacted by fewer students available to enroll.

In addition to maintaining enrollment by recruiting students from outside our service area, NIACC's [Enrollment Plan 2023-2025](#) recognizes the changing demographics and identifies ways to increase student enrollment that align with our mission and values of a small, rural community college. The college continues to build its brand as an enrollment strategy in addition to identifying target populations and recruitment strategies. Student engagement and retention strategies are vital to keeping the students that enroll.

Overall, the total population in our area has [decreased by 3.4%](#). Every county in the region experienced a decline ranging from a 1.2% decrease to a 6.2% drop. The lack of growth in the working-age population, including prospective college students, has dropped 6.6% in the last ten years. Despite seeing an overall decline in population, the Hispanic population has increased in all nine counties. The college responded by hiring a bilingual enrollment advisor housed in the community with the highest Hispanic population. This has increased our Hispanic student enrollment by 36%.

### ***Globalization***

NIACC's vision to transform our region into a center of opportunity requires that we be mindful of our local needs. Still, for businesses and industries to compete in this economy, the College anticipates emerging factors, such as globalization. Our [general education offerings](#) focus on diversity, allowing students to explore various learning opportunities and skills that can be transferred to all aspects of living in a global society. International student programs to engage students in cultural awareness are found in curricular and cocurricular activities at the College. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Alliance (DEI Alliance) meets once per month to bring [activities and awareness](#) to the college community about the changing global society and how to move toward a more inclusive environment on campus.

With changing demographics, globalization, and the high cost of education, NIACC has developed enrollment strategies to focus on the opportunities to expand the campus of diversity. While most students are from Iowa, the College understands the importance of global diversity and has implemented recruitment strategies to increase the number of international students. In 2014-2015, recruiting initiatives were developed to increase the number of [international students](#) (pg. 15) on our campus. A part-time international student advisor was hired to recruit international students and help ease them into our campus and community. The College experienced an increase in the number of international students through the 2019-2020 academic year. In 2020, the pandemic and the closing of international borders caused our international student enrollments to plummet below our 2014-2015 numbers. The part-time international recruiter left the College, and this task was added to an Enrollment Advisor's duties. The College continues to struggle with increasing international student enrollment due to rising costs of attendance, housing costs, and a small portion of a full-time position focused on international recruitment.

In 2013, the College hired a bilingual enrollment advisor located in the southern portion of our district, which has a large population of Hispanic individuals. The goal of hiring for this position was to increase the number of Hispanic students who enroll. In 2014, the College decided to create a [Dream Scholar award](#) that provides a scholarship to three students who are undocumented or



DACAmented students. Undocumented and DACAmented students are not eligible for financial aid, so this award helps students obtain the needed education and college experience that so many undocumented students do not get due to the cost of education. The selected students go through an application and interview process and, if awarded, are eligible for this scholarship for two years if they maintain a 3.0 GPA while at NIACC. The number of Hispanic students rose until 2020, and again, the College experienced some decline due to our country's pandemic and political climate.

As globalization occurs, local businesses and industries require resources and training to succeed—training in cultural sensitivity, evolving marketing strategies, and innovative problem-solving. In addition, businesses and industries must attract, develop, and retain the best people. It has required progressive ways of recruiting and onboarding new employees and providing upskilling opportunities to existing employees. Continued training is essential for businesses to remain relevant while navigating workforce challenges.

### ***The Economy***

NIACC considers the local economy in the planning processes through a review of the most significant labor shortages in the region. Various Iowa Workforce Development informational reports contain valuable information on changes in regional demographics and greatest regional [employment needs](#) and are used to guide planning. The President serves on the [Board of Directors](#) for the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation. Advisory Committees [share](#) information about local industry and workforce needs to aid decision-making regarding academic programs and workforce training.

### ***State Funding***

The Iowa Association of Community College Presidents (IACCP) provides a forum for the chief executives of Iowa's community colleges to connect for collaborative projects, information sharing, and decision-making. The presidents [meet regularly](#) throughout the year - in-person meetings are held monthly in Des Moines, and virtual meetings are scheduled weekly. Together with [Community Colleges for Iowa](#) (CCFI), the colleges work together to advocate with one voice for accessible excellence in education.

This advocacy is often focused on state funding for community colleges, which is discussed regularly among the presidents, especially while the state legislature is in session. The President and legislative liaison spend a significant amount of time educating legislators each spring about enrollment patterns, community needs, and the [impact of community colleges](#) to lobby for additional funding from the Iowa Department of Education. As the President learns new information through this process, he meets with the Vice President for Administrative Services to adjust the current fiscal year and update budget plans and projections for the following fiscal year.

NIACC's financial planning and Board oversight help reduce the negative impacts of external factors by maintaining [reserves](#) (pg. 13) of at least two months' expenses in the operating fund.

### **5.C.6.**

NIACC strives to continually meet the needs of students, as evidenced by the strategic planning process, program review processes, and support of diverse populations. The College's focus on student success is evidenced by structured opportunities to review student success metrics weekly in Student Development Directors [meetings](#), monthly through Student Development Director [reports](#),

quarterly during NIACC all-employee meetings, and annually when each Division's Monitoring Report ([Student Development](#), [Academic Affairs](#)) is shared with the NIACC Board of Directors highlighting progress on strategic priorities. Reports and [dashboards](#) are housed and easily accessible on TrojanHome and accessed routinely by staff and faculty to identify opportunities/initiatives and develop action plans at the classroom, division, and college-wide levels.

New strategies and initiatives to improve operations and student outcomes have included required [supplemental instruction](#), the establishment of mentored study groups, a Housing Success Coach, [mastery-based instruction](#) in Applied Math, [accelerated math courses](#), required implementation of Dropout Detective (an early alert system) and newly adopted [EAB Navigate](#), a [common syllabus template](#), the expansion of [non-credit certificate](#) offerings, [implementation of Quality Matters](#), required use of the grading and attendance modules in Canvas, and piloting of a co-requisite remediation model in math and English.

NIACC identified initiatives for facility improvements, including the state-of-the-art Health Simulation Center, 30,000-square foot diesel lab, and an upgraded testing center. In 2019, NIACC opened a new STEM Center in response to student and employer feedback, as well as the State of Iowa's development of the [Future Ready Iowa](#) program (a public-private partnership between business and government leaders developed to help meet the State's goal that at least 70% of adult Iowans have credentials beyond high school by 2025).

With manufacturing as the largest source of GDP in North Iowa, NIACC has been awarded two National Science Foundation (NSF) grants. NIACC was awarded its first National Science Foundation (NSF) [Advanced Technological Education \(ATE\) grant](#) in 2019. The College recognized the need to infuse more robotics into an existing program but also recognized the heavy financial lift in adding robotics equipment. Through NSF ATE grant funding (\$299,962), the College could purchase several collaborative robots, train faculty, and provide third-party credentials in robotics to the curriculum.

The College was awarded a [second NSF ATE grant](#), an Instrumentation Acquisition grant for \$499,871, which began in 2021 and was focused on adding additional robots and faculty training. As a result of this ongoing focus on continuous programmatic improvement, the program was revamped to add an advanced robotics course and another third-party credential.

As described in 4.A., [program review](#) processes include an analysis of demographics and student success data, evaluation of program learning outcomes, institutional learning outcomes, curriculum review, program cost/benefit analysis, review of PERC (persistence, enrollment, retention, and completion) data, and quality improvement plans tied to strategic initiatives. Division Chairs use [dashboards](#) to review student outcomes by course and instructor annually. College academic leaders have established a benchmark of 70% completion for each course. Division Chairs meet with faculty for areas falling below the benchmark. Together, they identify changes that can improve student outcomes.

NIACC provides professional development to instructors to ensure they are current on the latest teaching strategies and innovations in their fields. The faculty-led Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) regularly provides instructional skill development [training](#).

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- Student Research 2022 Fall Student Profile (page number 15)
- Supplemental Instruction webpage
- Syllabus Template 2023-2024
- Template - Agenda for Breakout Committees
- Virtual Test Taking Team Meeting Agenda
- Vision North Iowa Strategic Plan 2018
- Vision North Iowa Strategic Plan 2018 (page number 23)
- Vision North Iowa Strategic Plan 2018 (page number 53)

## 5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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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.

### Summary

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NIACC promotes a culture of shared governance, where faculty, staff, and students are actively involved in decision-making processes. The College relies on collaborative structures, such as committees and working groups, to ensure that academic requirements, policies, and procedures are determined through collective input. Faculty-led committees, such as CAAC and EEC, play a crucial role in curriculum development, program review, and assessment of student learning. The College also encourages faculty and staff to participate in professional development opportunities, enhancing their expertise and contributing to institutional decision-making. NIACC's administration is committed to using data to inform their decisions and regularly shares updates on strategic goals and institutional performance with the Board of Directors. NIACC values and promotes a collaborative and inclusive approach to decision-making, ensuring that the institution's and its constituents' best interests are prioritized.

NIACC is committed to continuous improvement and regularly assesses its programs and services to ensure they are meeting the needs of students and the community. The college uses various assessment methods, including student surveys, focus groups, and program reviews, to gather feedback and data on the effectiveness of its programs. This information is used to make informed decisions about program revisions, resource allocation, and strategic planning.

NIACC is dedicated to providing its students with a high-quality education and support services. The college invests in its faculty, staff, and infrastructure to create a positive learning environment and prepare students for success in their chosen paths. Through continuous improvement and assessment, NIACC strives to meet the needs of its students and the community it serves.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*