Itasca Community College

INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDY REPORT

Submitted for Continued Accreditation
with the Higher Learning Commission
of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Spring 2009
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Introduction

Itasca Community College—
A Learning Community Organization

Itasca Community College (ICC) presents this Self-Study Report in support of formal application for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, a Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. We hope this report provides members of the visiting team with the information needed to conduct an effective comprehensive evaluation visit.

The self-study experience has provided an opportunity for the ICC community to examine ourselves in light of our vision and mission while keeping a focus on the future. The experience has been of great value for the College and will serve as the foundation for continuous improvement and future planning.

If there is a single factor that distinguishes Itasca Community College, it is our “connectedness” with those we serve—students, staff, community, and region. We are a college built on strong relationships and an organization that puts its principles into action, anticipating the needs of and responding to those we serve. We view public higher education as the key to the common good. Itasca’s values of connection, innovation, and responsiveness are vital as we strategize for the future.

Historical Perspective

Itasca Community College is a comprehensive single-campus community college located on the eastern edge of Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The College campus is on scenic wooded land leased from the University of Minnesota since 1966. This property is shared with the University of Minnesota North Central Research and Outreach Center and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service North Central Forest Experiment Station Forestry Sciences Laboratory. The College is part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, which has 32 member colleges and universities. ICC is a member of the American Association of Community Colleges, the Council of North Central Two-Year Colleges, Minnesota Campus Compact, the Midwest Institute, Education for

“Itasca was ranked the thirteenth top community college in the nation by Washington Monthly magazine in 2007. This recognition is based on the engagement and graduation rates of ICC students, demonstrating the commitment of ICC’s faculty and staff to student success.”

--Dr. Mike Johnson, ICC Provost
Global Learning, The Collaboration for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, the Minnesota College Athletic Conference, and the Rural Community College Alliance.

ICC was founded in 1922 as Itasca Junior College (IJC) and operated as part of Independent School District (ISD) Number Two (now known as Minnesota ISD 316) in Coleraine, Minnesota. Its primary purpose was to prepare students to transfer to a four-year college or university. The College operated under the jurisdiction of the local school board from 1922 to 1964 and shared facilities with the high school. With the formation of the Minnesota Junior College System in 1964, school districts supporting junior colleges could transfer their colleges to the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Junior College Board. At that time, the name of the College was changed to Itasca State Junior College (ISJC).

In the spring of 1967, the College moved to its present 26-acre site in Grand Rapids, into buildings formerly occupied by the North Central Forest Experiment Station. The ISD 318 Area Vocational-Technical School, established in 1963, was also located on the North Central campus. ICC became the state’s first comprehensive community college in the fall of 1967, when the Minnesota Junior College Board consented to a request by the ISD 318 Board of Education to combine its vocational programs with the College’s transfer and pre-professional programs. Since then, ICC has made a concerted effort to maintain a balance between academic and career offerings. In 1973, the Minnesota state legislature changed ISJC’s name to Itasca Community College to better reflect the College’s commitment to meeting the educational needs of the area it serves.

Structural Affiliations

The Arrowhead Community Colleges

ICC became part of the Arrowhead Community Colleges (ACC) regional structure when the five community colleges serving northeastern Minnesota merged in 1981. The College’s name was changed to Arrowhead Community College, Itasca Campus. In 1983, the ACC was renamed as the Arrowhead Community College Region (ACCR), and ICC’s name was restored. The regional office consolidated certain management functions for community colleges in northeastern Minnesota, providing for accounts payable, human resources, purchasing, centralized maintenance supervision, and grant management. ACCR was a multi-campus network providing educational services throughout northeastern Minnesota. The colleges of ACCR included Hibbing Community College, Itasca Community College, Mesabi Community College, Rainy River Community College, and Vermilion Community College.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System

Another merger—that of Minnesota’s community colleges, technical colleges, and state universities into a statewide system called Minnesota State Colleges and Universities—occurred in 1995. The resulting reorganization of the colleges and universities included a review of the Arrowhead governance structure. The Minnesota State Colleges and
Universities Board of Trustees dissolved ACCR in 1996, making ICC an autonomous college once again, with Dr. Joseph Sertich serving as its new president.

In 1995, Itasca Community College became a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, a consortium of 32 state-supported technical colleges, community colleges, and state universities. These institutions were comprised of 21 community college campuses, 34 technical college campuses, and 7 state universities. The merger of the state’s technical college system, community college system, and state university system resulted from legislation passed by the 1991 state legislature. Through consolidation and mergers, the system today has 5 community colleges, 8 technical colleges, 12 combined community and technical colleges, and 7 state universities. They are located on 54 campuses in 47 communities throughout the state.

The system is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees appointed by the governor. Twelve trustees serve six-year terms, eight representing each of Minnesota’s congressional districts and four serving at large. Three student trustees—one from a state university, one from a community college, and one from a technical college—serve two-year terms. The Board of Trustees selects the system Chancellor and has broad policy responsibility for system planning, academic programs, fiscal management, personnel, admissions requirements, tuition and fees, and rules and regulations. Dr. James McCormick, who has led the system as Chancellor since 2001, represents the interests of the colleges and universities before the state legislature, implements the system’s strategic plan, and leads new higher education initiatives that serve the workforce and educational needs of the state.

Figure 1. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System
The Northeast Higher Education District (NHED)

The College is also a member of the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED), an affiliation of five northeast Minnesota rural colleges, which was approved by the Board of Trustees in 1999. The District was formed as one fiscal entity with a single president who reports to the system’s Chancellor. Itasca Community College (Grand Rapids), Mesabi Range Community and Technical College (Virginia and Eveleth), and Vermilion Community College (Ely), joined the District on the date of its inception, October 1, 1999. Rainy River Community College (International Falls) became part of the District in 2002, and Hibbing Community College (Hibbing) joined in 2004. However, each member college is independently accredited and seen as a single operating unit.

Dr. Joseph Sertich, then President of Itasca Community College, became President of these five colleges under the NHED structure in 2000, and new administrative structures were put in place at each member college. The District office was designed to maximize efficiencies and economies of scale. As a result, the Board of Trustees authorized only three full-time permanent positions for the District’s office: President, Vice President, and Assistant to the President. In addition to this organizational mandate, the Board also directed that the District offices be housed centrally off campus. These stipulations were intended to demonstrate the Board’s commitment to fair and unbiased representation, as well as the leveraging of limited funds.

NHED colleges also share a number of services through the Northeast Service Unit (NESU), which was created by participating college presidents in 1998 to provide support services to the member colleges. The funding structure is a fee-for-service operation in which the colleges are charged for the costs of support services provided by NESU.
NHED, unlike ACCR, was designed to empower and promote diverse but complementary programs at its different institutions, making each of the member colleges unique. In so doing, the expectation was that member colleges could benefit from shared resources, whether fiscal, human, or program related. The strategy would allow for strong local leadership empowered to represent and manage each college. College leaders, under the direction of the President, would collectively invest resources to strengthen instruction, create or align programs, and achieve “centers of distinction” across northeastern Minnesota.

NHED adopted a vision for rural northeastern Minnesota focused on enhancing “student access and learning options throughout the region” and “on each member college’s connection to the community.” The NHED colleges’ mission would be to “provide quality higher education to the communities throughout northeastern Minnesota by developing a regional structure that will preserve college autonomy but will also align programs and services to better prepare residents for learning, employment, citizenship, and life.”

To accomplish the mission and vision of NHED, four broad goals were identified to guide the District at the time of its formation:

- **Goal 1** Increase access and improve learning opportunities for students.
- **Goal 2** Improve alignment with the Region’s employers, governmental entities, and education institutions.
- **Goal 3** Focus college leadership on strong community ties and effective institutional management.
- **Goal 4** Improve District planning.

Under NHED, Itasca’s initial structure included a Provost, Dean of Instruction, Chief Finance and Facilities Officer/Dean of Students, and Assistant Dean of Customized Training. In 2000, the Dean of Instruction retired, and this position was restructured as the Dean of Academic Affairs. In 2002-03, the administrative structure was retooled due to financial constraints. The position of Assistant Dean of Customized Training was eliminated, and the Chief Finance and Facilities Officer assumed increasing responsibilities for the financial oversight of the District (Itasca became the fiscal agent). Since then, ICC’s administration has consisted of three positions: Provost, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, and Director of Finance and Facilities. These administrative positions share responsibilities and oversight for all student service areas.

**Serving the Region**

The northeastern quadrant of Minnesota encompasses seven large counties (Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis) and covers a land area equivalent to the size of West Virginia. The outline of the seven-county region resembles the shape of an arrowhead; thus, Minnesota residents often refer to the region as “the Arrowhead.” The Arrowhead includes a three-way watershed, forests, and the richest iron ore deposits on the continent. The area is populated by 37 identified nationalities.
ICC draws approximately 76% of its students from the seven northeastern counties, 73% of whom are from Itasca County. Of the remaining 24%, almost all come from elsewhere in the state; Minnesota residents comprise 96% of the student body. ICC is the only college in Itasca County, although several four-year institutions have a presence in the county and work in collaboration with ICC. Other post-secondary colleges and universities serving northeastern Minnesota include the Duluth-based institutions Lake Superior College, the College of St. Scholastica, the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and Duluth Business University, as well as Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (Cloquet); Rainy River Community College (International Falls); Hibbing Community College (Hibbing); Mesabi Range Community and Technical College (Eveleth and Virginia); and Vermilion Community College (Ely). Other post-secondary institutions nearby are Bemidji State University (Bemidji), Northwest Technical College (Bemidji campus), and the University of Wisconsin (Superior campus).

Serving the Community

Itasca Community College is located in the city of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, a community of approximately 8,000 residents (US Census 2000) situated on the banks of the Mississippi River in Itasca County. The first county boundaries, set in 1849, included Lake Itasca, the source of the Mississippi River. Itasca County was one of the original nine counties in the Minnesota Territory. When Minnesota was granted statehood in 1858, legislators carved many new counties out of the nine large counties. Lake Itasca was eventually well outside Itasca County’s final boundary lines following several such subdivisions, but the county retained its original name.

Itasca County, with 44,347 residents (Minnesota State Demographers Office), has the second largest population of the seven northeastern Minnesota counties. The county’s population is projected to remain stable through 2025, according to the Minnesota State Demographic Center, although its demographics will continually shift to an aging population. Of Minnesota’s 87 counties, Itasca County is the third largest geographically and the nineteenth largest in population.

Slightly more than 3% of Itasca County’s population are ethnic minorities; the largest minority group is American Indian. A small portion of the Leech Lake (Ojibwe) Indian Reservation is located in western Itasca County. Other nearby reservations include Fond du Lac, Red Lake, and Nett Lake. The student population at ICC is approximately 4% minority, which reflects the racial diversity of the area.

Grand Rapids serves as the Itasca County seat and is a regional retail center, with a trade area estimated at more than 40,000 people. The city also functions as the cultural, healthcare, recreational, and educational center for county residents and for nearby communities in adjoining counties.

Eastern Itasca County contains some of the richest iron ore deposits on the continent, making taconite mining an important industry. UPM Blandin Paper Company, located in
Grand Rapids, is also a major employer. Almost half of the land in the county is held by federal, state, and county governments; most of that land is forested. The county’s many woodlands, rivers, and more than 1,000 lakes attract tourists, business, and industry. The principal industries in the county, which are taconite, timber, and tourism, are referred to as “the three T’s.” In addition, healthcare and state government play an important economic role in the area. A large new community hospital and clinic and two critical access hospitals serve the county as well.

Despite the natural wealth of the area, Itasca County’s per capita personal income is comparatively low, with 12% of the population below the poverty line (United Way “What Matters” Community Assessment). Employment and educational attainment rates are consistently lower than statewide averages, placing undue pressures on the community.

![Figure 3. Unemployment Rates](image)

Economic Impact Study

In 2003, the College engaged Anton, Lubov and Associates, Inc. to prepare an Economic Impact Study for the Office of the Chancellor. The report described the impact of the College on the community, employing the Regional Input-Output Modeling System (RIMS II). This impact includes the direct spending of the College itself, the spending of students, and the creation of jobs from the spending (including student employment). Using a Regional Impact Multiplier figure of 1.825, these figures are adjusted to show the College’s impact on the region.
### Table 1. Estimated Local Economic Impact of ICC

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Direct Spending</td>
<td>$5,135,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Spending</td>
<td>$11,271,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Direct Spending</td>
<td>$16,406,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times RIMS II (1.825)</td>
<td>$29,941,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs Impact of Spending</td>
<td>445 Jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Distinctiveness of Itasca Community College

Over the past three years, in preparation for its strategic plan update, ICC’s administration, faculty, and staff have discussed the values and traditions of the College and what we might see as our common identity. Consistently, the College views itself as a learning community that is actively engaged with students and colleagues (*Student Learning and Effective Teaching*), connected through innovation and learning (*Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge*), forward-thinking and realistic in its planning (*Preparing for the Future*), and deeply committed to the community and region it serves (*Mission and Integrity; Engagement and Service*). In 2007, ICC was one of over 250 colleges that participated in the national Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The results of this survey and graduation data were used by *Washington Monthly* magazine to place ICC the top community college in Minnesota and thirteenth ranking community college in the nation, a testament to the importance of engagement at the core of our mission.

The importance of community is apparent in the College's mission statement, strategic goals, and actions. They all incorporate themes of community enrichment and collaboration with community, business, and academic organizations. The College's faculty and staff are actively involved in the community. Through the efforts of its Provost, the College is also extensively involved with economic development in its service area. The College has ongoing, positive working relationships with the area high schools and post-secondary institutions. ICC also actively collaborates with NHED and other northeast Minnesota colleges and universities in the region to deliver educational services to the community, including 2+2 programs and Master's programs. Additionally, ICC is firmly committed to building strong K-14 pathways through its active participation with area school districts under the [Applied Learning Institute](#) and the [Itasca Area Schools Collaborative](#).

As a vital resource and community partner, the College connects with all learners from young children through senior adults. Special college programs that contribute to community enrichment include the Dialogue North speaker series, the promotion of the Reif Center Artists Series, annual conferences and symposia, College for Kids, SeniorNet, and Customized Training.
ICC’s sense of community extends to the environment and has been most concretely expressed in the College’s unique landscaping for wildlife effort. The campus quadrangle features plantings of native species which meet the ecological needs of small mammals, birds, insects, and frogs. The project was developed by Forestry faculty and implemented by over 100 volunteers from the College and community. Most recently, the College made a commitment to become a sustainable organization with a cleaner and greener campus.

The College Profile

Employees

Itasca’s 147 employees are represented by several unions: the Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF), the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE), the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Middle Management Association (MMA), and one “confidential” employee under the Commissioners Plan. The College has 41 unlimited full-time faculty and approximately 27 temporary part-time faculty (Fall 2008), as well as 32 full-time and 35 part-time non-faculty positions, including administrators, directors, and support staff.

Table 2. ICC Employees
Full-time/Part-time Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFSCME</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Unit Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPE/MMA/Commissioners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Unit Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Employees may be in more than one unit.
Source: MnSCU Office of the Chancellor, Personnel - Data Management & HRIS, December 5, 2008
Student Enrollment

ICC student enrollment has varied slightly over the past 10 years, with Fall 2008 enrollments at 1,039 headcount and 957 full-time equivalent (FTE). ICC will try to maintain approximately 1,000 students through recruitment and retention activities, with a focus on providing flexible programming for new growth areas while managing strong program communities through program retention strategies.

![Enrollment Trends](image)

Source: MnSCU Finance Division 11/03/2008

ICC’s student body is comprised of a fairly even representation of women and men. The majority of the student body is of traditional age (over 70%).
Under Minnesota law, high school students meeting certain academic criteria may attend college under the post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) program. Over the past 10 years, the PSEO enrollments have been steady, with an average enrollment of 80 to 90 students. In 2005, however, this number began to spike as the cost of education rose. Students (and their parents) began to take advantage of this opportunity, causing financial stress on area K-12 systems. The situation resolved itself, however, when area high schools began to contract for college credits in the high school. Since then, ICC’s PSEO enrollment has returned to its historical averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Post-Secondary Enrollment Option Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSEO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A challenge for Itasca as we plan for our future is the projected steady decline in regional high school class sizes. ICC is strategizing to mitigate the impact of declining high school enrollment by establishing further initiatives to attract nontraditional unemployed and underemployed residents of the area. In addition, unemployment trends project an increase in need for a prepared workforce. This poses an opportunity to Itasca to prepare students to meet the needs of the region.
In addition, the College serves several thousand people each year through its Center for Continued Learning, which addresses lifelong educational needs in the greater community via continuing education, customized training, and other educational and personal enrichment opportunities.

### Table 4. Enrollments in Continuing Education and Customized Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Classes</th>
<th>Total Students in Classes</th>
<th>Number of Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 1999</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>3,295</td>
<td>25,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2000</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>3,498</td>
<td>24,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2001</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>2,954</td>
<td>23,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2002</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4,881</td>
<td>26,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2003</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>3,592</td>
<td>25,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2004</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>2,099</td>
<td>18,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2005</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>4,071</td>
<td>22,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2006</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>3,048</td>
<td>31,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2007</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>3,179</td>
<td>28,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2008</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>2,332</td>
<td>24,653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MnSCU ISRS Operational Data
Programs

ICC offers transfer preparation, career programs, and developmental courses. Students can earn two-year transfer degrees (Associate in Arts and Associate in Science) or enroll in a career program. ICC’s largest program is its Associate in Arts program, with over 54% of students declaring this intention. ICC’s current offerings include:

Associate in Arts (AA)
- Emphasis: American Indian Studies
- Emphasis: Business Management
- Emphasis: Class Act (pre-Education)
- Emphasis: Mass Communication

Associate in Science (AS)
- Accounting
- Applied Psychology
- Business Administration/Management
- Early Childhood Education
- Engineering
- Geography/Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Pulp and Paper Technology

Associate in Applied Science (AAS)
- Natural Resources
  - Emphasis: Forestry
  - Emphasis: GIS
  - Emphasis: Law Enforcement
  - Emphasis: Wildland Firefighting
- Pulp and Paper Technology

Diplomas
- Licensed Practical Nursing
- Pulp and Paper Technology
- Wildland Firefighting

Certificates
- American Indian Studies
- Child Development
- Computer Proficiency
- GIS
- Nursing Assistant/Home Health Aide

Since the establishment of NHED, there has been an increasing focus on “centers of distinction.” ICC’s flagship program is Engineering, which boasts national recognition for its successful residential living/learning community. Responding to the employment needs of the region, ICC’s most recent program additions include the Pulp and Paper Technology
AS, AAS, and diploma, along with an Industrial Technology-Power Generation program set for launch in the Fall 2009.

**Figure 7. ICC Degrees Awarded**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSD</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MnSCU ITS Management Reporting/Academic/Awards Granted

**Accreditation History**

Itasca Community College was first accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) in 1975; subsequent reaccreditations occurred in 1980, 1983, and 1988, the latter two the result of accreditation granted to the Arrowhead Community Colleges. Following the 1981 merger of the five northeastern Minnesota community colleges into the ACC regional structure, accreditation held by the five separate member colleges was simply transferred to the Arrowhead Community College Region. ACCR was granted conditional accreditation in 1982 by the NCA. In 1983, an NCA evaluation team recommended that the ACCR be accredited at the associate degree-granting level for five years; during the 1988-89 academic year, ACCR was reaccredited for another 10-year period.

After Minnesota's community colleges, technical colleges, and state universities were merged into the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system in 1995, the Board of Trustees dissolved the Arrowhead Community College Region governance structure (1996). Because the accredited entity previously known as Arrowhead Community College Region no longer existed, but the member colleges continued to remain in operation, an NCA focused evaluation was held in April 1997. The evaluation team recommended that
the accreditation for ACCR be transferred to each of the member colleges, with ICC’s comprehensive evaluation scheduled for 1998-99.

1999 Reaccreditation Visit and Report of Findings

In April 1999, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) conducted an evaluation visit of Itasca Community College, then a stand-alone college. After a full evaluation, the team recommended continued accreditation of Itasca Community College based on their judgment that the College met the standards of expectation of the Commission as outlined in the *Handbook of Accreditation* (Second Edition). The team commented that the College had been resilient in its ability to maintain a solid financial base, building strong community support, keeping a strong experienced faculty, and hiring an effective President who provided vision and leadership. The team members felt strongly that the issues of concern (outlined below) were overshadowed by the obvious improvements since the last comprehensive visit. The team developed the following specific reasons:

1) The College meets the General Institutional Requirements and fulfills the five Criteria for Accreditation; 2) The College has made progress since the last NCA comprehensive onsite team evaluation; 3) The College has enhanced its financial condition (cash reserves) since the last NCA visit; 4) The College has survived an extended transitional period in overall governance and seems stronger for the experience; and 5) the College is making a significant and recognizable contribution to the educational, cultural, and business climate and economic development of its service area.

In the *1999 Report of a Visit*, the consultant evaluators suggested that the College address these key areas of challenge as it prepared for its future:
Table 5. 1999 North Central Association Areas of Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Area</th>
<th>Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>**Assessment of Student</td>
<td>The College has not appropriately responded to the NCA initiatives related to “faculty owned/faculty driven” assessment of student academic achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There seems to be a serious lack of full-time faculty participation in campus issues including the NCA process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some course syllabi are missing, others are incomplete, and few are tied to the assessment of student academic achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Condition</strong></td>
<td>There is concern related to the budget reserves and the College meeting its financial obligations over the next several years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low budget reserves are threatened by recent commitments to retirements/resignations for the next fiscal year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The campus continues to defer important campus facility improvements due to budget considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continued reliance on external grants, representing twenty percent of the annual budget, is too large for the longterm health of the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning and Process</strong></td>
<td>The planning strategy objectives, while commendable, are too ambitious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The College needs to develop an evening/weekend program that offers courses and services for adults more consistent with the comprehensive community college philosophy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The technology plan is not integrated into the College’s academic goals, objectives, and outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The cumbersome process of initiating and revising courses/programs hinders the College’s ability to improve its curriculum and respond to changing needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The College needs more latitude to implement new courses and programs, especially in the technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It will continue to be important for the College to remain a stand-alone institution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 1999 evaluation team also recommended that a focus visit be scheduled at Itasca Community College in 2002-03 to address the assessment of student academic achievement and the financial condition of the College. The following issues related to the assessment of student academic achievement at the College were identified:

- A program of Assessment of Student Academic Achievement should be developed and in place reflecting the “faculty owned and driven concept.”
- All academic programs, including general education, must complete identification of direct measures of student learning and collect data across each academic program.
- All academic programs should provide evidence of changes in curriculum, pedagogy, student services, equipment, professional development, etc., resulting from the analysis of data collected.
- All College programs should provide evidence that proposed changes, based on the analysis and faculty discussion of assessment results, are linked to departmental and/or institutional planning and budgeting processes.

In addition to their apprehension regarding student academic achievement, the visiting team voiced concern regarding the financial condition of the College. The team commented that although the College had made improvements in the fund reserves and showed a stable funding base, there remained issues concerning mandated contractual retirement benefits for faculty, deferred facility maintenance and improvements, declining enrollments, declining state support, and continued reliance on “soft” money to fund campus services. Specifically, these concerns related to the following points as outlined in the Report of a Visit:

- Document the College’s ability to operate annually in a positive financial condition.
- Confirm a College plan to provide important student services currently being offered through grant funds.
- Confirm a College plan to effectively manage longterm mandated faculty retirements.
- Confirm the College’s ability to respond to deferred campus facility maintenance problems.

Response to 1999 Findings: The Assessment of Student Academic Achievement

Between 1999 and 2002, Itasca Community College’s Faculty Association (ICCFA) became actively involved in dialogue concerning the subject of assessment of student learning and the “assessment movement” in higher education. Much attention was paid to developing a program that included as much involvement as possible from faculty members representing program areas. Progress was made by faculty across the curriculum to develop and document classroom assessment methods, develop and document program outcomes, and participate in comprehensive program evaluation and strategic planning to improve student learning. The result of this work, which was orchestrated and
implemented by faculty coordinators and the faculty Assessment Committee, resulted in ICC’s faculty-owned and driven assessment program, which included:

- An ongoing assessment program based on ICC’s Philosophy of General Education and the Foundational Goals and Outcomes, which offered quality improvement through a three-year cyclical research process
- An annual review process for Strategic Comprehensive Program Enhancement (SCOPE) of all disciplines, programs, and support areas, linked to the College’s strategic plan
- The move towards comprehensive program assessment
- The annual Strategic Plan Report of Accomplishments, the Institutional Effectiveness Report, the ICC Fact Book, and the Student Profile
- A revised faculty evaluation process
- Program development and review process

Response to 1999 Findings: Financial Condition of the College

From 1999 to 2002, Itasca Community College built up its reserve to 4% of its operating budget. The College made progress linking institutional planning to budgeting through the Strategic Comprehensive Program Enhancement (SCOPE) process used to set and evaluate program goals annually.

With state appropriations lagging behind inflation, the College continued to aggressively seek external funding. During this period, the College continued to be successful with grant funding that allowed the College to expand its efforts (particularly in the area of Engineering), start new programs, and grow its student body.

The College made improvements to upgrade technology for safety, teaching and learning, and distance education. In addition, improvements were made to the physical plant. The College had undergone substantial repair and betterment projects since 1999 and had put into place a plan for the replacement of most of its roofs, the tuckpointing of outer building walls, and the resizing of classrooms and computer labs.

2002 Focus Visit and Report

In 2002, the College submitted its Focus Visit Report to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and in the spring of that year, a consulting team visited the College to assess its progress as it related to the assessment of student academic achievement and the financial condition of the College.

The focus visit consultant evaluator team made these observations about the institution’s strengths and challenges:
Based upon the projected decrease in the number of high school graduates in the College’s service area, Itasca Community College will need to expand programs and services to nontraditional student populations in order to maintain its enrollment and economic stability. Based upon concerns regarding state appropriations for higher education, the College will be challenged to accomplish deferred maintenance projects necessary to its success.

With regard to the financial condition of the College, the visiting team noted ICC’s success in attracting external funding but advised that grants be monitored and managed in such a way that, should the funding source be lost, the impact on ICC would be minimized. In addition, the team advised the College to extend its presence in the community it served, find additional ways to contribute to the economic development of the area, and consider the establishment of programs of distinction. The team suggested that the ICC Foundation play a more innovative role beyond scholarship support.

With regard to the assessment of student academic achievement, the visiting team reported ongoing concerns about the College’s progress:

- Itasca Community College had not made sufficient progress in the assessment of student learning at the program level.
- Although general education outcomes have been defined by the faculty, measures aligned with those outcomes need to be fully developed so that student learning in general education can be documented at the program level.

The visiting team encouraged the College to further differentiate between assessment in individual courses and the broader measurement of student learning outcomes as a result of an academic program; they similarly recommended that faculty continue their classroom assessment efforts and expand them to the program level. Further, the visiting team advised the College to consider an annual report of direct and indirect measures of student learning to document student achievement and serve as a foundation to make changes for the improvement of student learning.

The team recommended that the College continue to be monitored in the area, with the recommendation that a monitoring report be submitted to the HLC in 2005.

2005 Monitoring Report

In 2005, the College submitted to the HLC a Monitoring Report, which was received and approved. The report outlined the progress made in the assessment of student academic achievement with special emphasis on program-level outcomes and measures. Key points of the report included:
• Ongoing budgetary allocation for program coordination of assessment efforts
• Establishment of several program-level assessment strategies, including comprehensive portfolios, standardized national exams, comprehensive program exams, capstone experiences, etc.
• Ongoing evaluation and oversight of programs by the Academic Affairs and Standards Council
• The development of a Master Academic Plan with updated reporting standards (replacing the SCOPE process)

Responses to Other Challenges

Included below are responses to both the 1999 and 2002 reports regarding process and planning not addressed above:

Challenge: Some course syllabi are missing, others are incomplete, and few are tied to the assessment of student academic achievement.

Response: The College has a complete set of syllabi and has completely revamped its course outlines to include ICC Foundational Goals and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) Goals, all tied to specified student outcomes and assessment strategies.

Challenge: The cumbersome process of initiating and revising courses/programs hinders the College’s ability to improve its curriculum and respond to changing needs.

Response: The MSCF contract has undergone several changes since 1999. One major change was the elimination of the Curriculum Committee and the establishment of the Academic Affairs and Standards Council. This provides a streamlined decision-making body, which has the ability to move program and course approval forward more efficiently. In addition, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system has improved and shortened the timing for program approval by the Office of the Chancellor.

Challenge: The College needs to develop strategies to offset declining enrollment.

Response: The College has designed a new comprehensive recruiting plan that utilizes a wide range of campus personnel. The ICC recruitment range has increased several hundred miles, drawing students from several surrounding states and metro areas. Under recent grants, funding has supported the recruiting and retention of American Indian Students and other students of color, specifically those interested in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. The College has collaborated with seven area school districts to design and deliver grade 9 to 14 curriculum in industrial technology, engineering, forestry and allied health to attract students to the College.
Challenge: The College needs to develop an evening/weekend program that offers courses and services for adults more consistent with the comprehensive community college philosophy.

Response: The College continues to offer night classes to allow students to complete their AA degree in three years (the “degree in three”). In addition, the College has responded to adult learners, particularly the unemployed, through fast-track programs and the development of its Practical Nursing program in an online/hybrid format. The College has established several alternative scheduling options (block, stacked, etc.), added online courses, and expanded offerings with specific adult populations (certificates for Child Development, GIS, Nursing Assistant/Home Health Aide, and others). The College is currently working with area agencies to establish programs specific to underemployed adults working to get out of poverty.

Challenge: The campus continues to defer important campus facility improvements due to budget considerations.

Response: The College has established a Master Facilities Plan (MFP), which includes a timeline for substantial repair and betterment projects. Most recently these have included the resizing of classrooms and computer labs, the development of mini-computer labs throughout campus, the installation of a security camera system, campus beautification and increased signage, improved and expanded parking, and the building of two new structures (Wenger Hall for Engineering and Itasca Hall for residential living). In addition, the College has recently submitted two substantial bonding projects, one for the upgrade of science labs ($500,000) and a longer-term project that will include building demolitions, a new classroom and student-services building, and rightsizing changes across campus.

Continuing Improvements

Based on the recommendations stemming from the 1999 and 2002 team visit, the College has continued to make improvements. A Master Academic Plan (MAP), MFP, and Master Technology Plan (MTP) have contributed to aligning mission and budget. The College’s MTP plays an integral part of the College’s overall operations, from program planning to student services, finance, and campus communication. The Director of Finance and Facilities and Institutional Research Office continue to work together to provide campus constituents relevant data to help guide decision making. In the past decade, ICC’s finance services have several times been recognized by the Office of the Chancellor with the Excellence in Financial Management Award.

The College has most recently participated in a special projects related to system planning and finance, including an allocation-model study, an instructional-cost study, and the Peer Review Project. Between 2005 and 2007, Itasca and the other NHED colleges participated in an intensive review of their instructional costs. Two teams of system professionals,
under the Luoma Leadership Program, examined the instructional costs of NHED schools with a focus on correcting coding issues, improving efficiencies, and determining if the system’s allocation framework disadvantaged rural “outstate” colleges (discussed further in component 2b). In 2007-08 a select team, which included senior academic and student affairs administrators and finance advisors from the Office of the Chancellor, followed up with a Peer Review of the five colleges. The Peer Review evaluated the instructional cost reports, performed site visits, and prepared a report of future recommendations for the NHED colleges to consider.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As the State of Minnesota deals with an increasingly alarming financial shortfall, the College will face tremendous challenges in balancing its budget. The state currently projects a deficit for FY 2010 of over $5 billion. The College has recently been un-allotted $110,000 for FY 2009 and is preparing for up to $700,000 in cuts in the coming biennium.

Significant Changes

Over the past decade, ICC has seen significant changes in its organization. Throughout these changes, the College has remained constant in its identity as an institution focused on student-centered teaching and learning, with a culture built on rich relationships and a spirit of innovation. Some of the most significant changes include the following:

Governance

In 1999, NHED was formed. As a result, the College underwent significant administrative changes. The College shares a single President, who oversees the five NHED colleges. ICC’s chief executive officer is the Provost, with two administrative positions reporting to him: the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and the Director of Finance and Facilities. NHED provosts (President’s Cabinet), chief academic officers, and chief finance officers meet on a monthly basis (or as needed).

Centralized Human Resources

ICC’s Human Resources staff are centralized under the NHED operation. ICC’s Human Resources office is located at Hibbing Community College.
New Buildings

- In 2002, ICC opened the Wenger Hall (Engineering). The building is designed as a living and learning community space, with 24/7 access for Engineering students. The building was secured through Minnesota state bonding as well as a $1 million grant from the Blandin Foundation for residential space on the third floor. The building houses up to 36 students.
- In 2007, ICC opened Itasca Hall, a new residential facility that houses up to 75 students in combination suites of single, double, and triple rooms with adjoining galley kitchens. Itasca Housing and Redevelopment Authority and the Blandin Foundation ($1 million) funded this structure.

Programs

ICC has seen an expansion and redesign of several programs. New programs include:

- Wildland Firefighting: Natural Resources AAS emphasis and diploma programs
- Pulp and Paper Technology: AS, AAS, and diploma programs
- Mass Communication: emphasis within the AA degree
- Early Childhood: AS and Child Development certificate programs
- Applied Psychology (redesign): AS program
- Geography/GIS: Natural Resources AAS emphasis, AS, and certificate programs
- Business Management: AS degree
- Accounting: AS degree (pending)
- American Indian Studies: emphasis within the AA degree and certificate programs
- Practical Nursing program has added an online option for distance students, which includes online theory coursework and weekend clinical experience.

Discontinued programs in the past decade include:

- AAS Webmaster program
- Paraprofessional certificate program
- Computer Network AAS program
- Vegetation Management certificate program
- AAS Accounting
- AAS Business Technology
- AAS Medical Secretary
- AAS Business Management
Expanded Technology

- In 2006, ICC adopted Desire2Learn (D2L), a systemwide online learning platform. ICC’s courses are automatically populated in D2L each semester. Faculty utilization of D2L has increased each year, with over 75% using the electronic gradebook.
- Three computer labs have been added on campus, along with three desktop operating system upgrades. The College now has a computer-based testing center.
- All classrooms and conference spaces have been upgraded with multimedia technology. In addition, interactive television areas have been upgraded and one additional distance-learning classroom added.
- In 2007, ICC installed a campuswide wireless system and security camera system.
- In 2009, the Star Alert emergency system was implemented.
- ICC now provides multiple Web-based services for students and faculty including e-services, NetStorage, GroupWise system for e-mail and scheduling services, and online applications.
- In 2008, ICC adopted a voiceover Internet protocol phone system and smart phone GroupWise integration.
- ICC implemented layer 3 network segmentation and houses virtualized data center services and a replicated data center. The College has increased wide area network bandwidth from a single one half T1 to more than 100MbS.

Customized Training

This department has seen significant expansion.

- Five Customized Training staff provide training for area businesses and industry.
- In the past decade, ICC has been awarded over $1 million under five Minnesota Job Skills Partnership grants to train new and incumbent workers.
- The UPM Blandin Paper Company has contracted for an ICC staff member to be placed at the mill.
- ICC opened offices in the Itasca Technology Exchange (ITEX) as off-campus space for training needs; this space has recently been moved to the ISD 318 administrative building as part of a collaborative venture for customized training and community education.

Master Planning

The College adopted a new Strategic Plan in 2003 and developed master plans in the following areas: academics, technology, and facilities.
K-12 Partnerships
The College has seen a significant strengthening of its relationships with area K-12 schools.

- In 2005, the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative was established under a joint powers agreement to bring new focus to a partnership of area school districts seeking increased educational opportunities for students. ICC serves as the two-year post-secondary partner within this collaborative.
- In 2007, NHED was appropriated $1 million annually to establish the Applied Learning Institute (ALI), a partnership among area school districts throughout northeastern Minnesota committed to reinvigorating K-14 technical and career education opportunities for students. ICC serves as the West Team post-secondary partner.

National Center of Excellence for Pulp and Paper Training and Technology
In 2008, ICC became the Midwest Node for the National Center of Excellence, located at Alabama Southern Community College.

Minnesota Center for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (MNCEME)
In 2006, the College became a lead partner in one of the Centers of Excellence as designated by the Governor of Minnesota. MNCEME is located at Mankato State University.

External Funding Support
ICC continues to receive significant funding from federal and state entities, as well as the Blandin Foundation. Although a historical supporter, the foundation’s giving has increased tremendously in the past ten years.
The Self-Study Process

Over the past five years, Itasca faculty and staff have been engaged in conversation regarding improving the learning experience of our students, particularly first-year students. The dialogue initiated among faculty who were seeing a new profile of students entering our college. This new generation—which Mark Taylor, who spoke to the faculty of all of the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) colleges a couple years ago, terms Generation NeXt—seemed deeply influenced by emerging technologies and new social networks, bringing to college different perspectives, expectations, and attitudes concerning academic and personal goals. Increasingly, faculty and staff felt at odds with these new attitudes, and so they began to investigate how to adapt their pedagogical practices to meet student needs while at the same time upholding high academic standards.

The Foundations of Excellence and the Higher Learning Commission

The process of our self-study began in December 2006 when Dr. Barbara McDonald, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, worked with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to organize the Northern Minnesota Community Colleges’ Workday/Self-Study Conversations. Following this session, a team of Itasca administrators, faculty, and staff attended the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) in Chicago, Illinois. These meetings and several other campuswide discussions identified a number of issues related to Itasca’s commitment to student learning and engagement. Recurring topics included learning communities, concurrent enrollment, student preparedness, critical thinking, and ICC’s Associate in Arts program and general education at the College.

At the annual HLC conference, ICC faculty and administration attended a session on the Foundations of Excellence project, hosted by the Policy Center on the First Year of College. Collectively, the group determined that this self-assessment process, if linked to the College’s HLC accreditation self-study process, would yield valuable information about the aforementioned issues. It would help the College understand and improve its practices in serving first-year students and serve as a catalyst for analyzing the College in light of the HLC criteria.

With the intent to strategically address opportunities for improvement and make ICC’s HLC self-study meaningful to the entire College community, Itasca submitted an application
to the Policy Center on the First Year of College for participation in the Foundations of Excellence project. In July of 2007, Itasca Community College joined the cohort of 26 two- and four-year institutions engaging in the Foundations of Excellence process. After consultations with the HLC and the Policy Center, the decision was made to integrate the two self-studies (HLC and Foundations of Excellence) into a single process. The College embarked on a dual-purpose journey: one that would help us develop an aspirational model to better serve a new generation of students, and one that would allow the College to examine how the institution adheres to the HLC criteria. By combining efforts under the Foundations of Excellence project, we hoped to engage in purposeful work towards improving the teaching and learning experience of present and future students.

The Foundations of Excellence process is a comprehensive, externally guided self-study and improvement process that enhances an institution’s ability to realize its goals for student learning, success, and persistence. The centerpiece of Foundations of Excellence is a set of principles that are termed Foundational Dimensions®. These Dimensions, developed by the Policy Center on the First Year of College and vetted by over 300 four- and two-year institutions, guide measurement of institutional efforts and provide an aspirational model for the entirety of the beginning college experience (including initial contact with students through admissions, orientation, and all first-year curricular and co-curricular experiences).

Although the Foundations of Excellence process was not an official special emphasis of Itasca’s reaccreditation self-study report, Foundations of Excellence informed our reaccreditation process in three ways:

- First, Foundations of Excellence created a structure of involvement and ownership by the College as a whole in evaluation and improvement.
- Second, the Steering Committee co-chairs and the Steering Committee membership were also the Higher Learning Commission co-chairs and Steering Committee, so the leadership was in place and was accustomed to collaboration and to addressing campuswide evaluation and improvement.
- Third, the Liaison Committee created a “crosswalk,” approved by the HLC, between the Foundational Dimensions and the HLC criteria for accreditation. The committees addressed both the Foundations of Excellence Performance Indicators within the Dimensions and the HLC criteria as part of their process during their Foundations of Excellence work. This process ensured an unprecedented level of involvement in producing the reaccreditation self-study.

From the start, the Foundations of Excellence/HLC dual process was designed to capitalize on the expertise and talents of faculty and staff, involve as many faculty and staff as possible, ensure student representation, and foster and promote honest and comprehensive evaluation with a focus on constructive change.

In August of 2007, a team of three attended a training retreat sponsored by the Policy Center on the First Year of College. The group consisted of a lead faculty member, an
Office of Institutional Research staff member, and the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs. There the group learned about the Foundations of Excellence process and developed a plan for the HLC/Foundations of Excellence crosswalk. A two-year timeline was then established that would build toward our HLC comprehensive evaluation visit in April 2009.

**Committee Structure**

**Steering Committee**

Foundations of Excellence committees were formed in Fall 2007 with broad representation from across the campus. At the heart of these committees was the Steering Committee, whose role was two-fold: to provide leadership for the nine Foundations of Excellence Dimension Committees and to provide oversight of the HLC process. The 17-person Steering Committee represented a cross-section of student services, staff, administration, and faculty. In addition, the Director of the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, herself a former student, served as a community representative on the committee. The Director of Institutional Research was a member of the Steering Committee and was available as a resource to all of the Dimension Committees. With the exception of the Foundations of Excellence/HLC co-chairs, the rest of the members of the Steering Committee were chairs of the remaining eight Dimension Committees. This structure ensured that the Steering Committee received regular updates on the progress of all Dimension Committees, that important questions and concerns were addressed centrally, and that the Dimension Committees got the support they needed to complete their work.

**Liaison Committee**

A subgroup of the Steering Committee, the Liaison Committee, was established with oversight responsibility to accomplish the timeline set out for both the Foundations of Excellence and HLC process. This group consisted of the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Barbara McDonald; Foundations of Excellence/HLC self-study co-chairs, Librarian Steve Bean and English instructor Teresa Alto; Enrollment Services Director Candace Perry; and Institutional Research Assistant Tracey Roy.

**Dimension Committees**

Central to the Foundations of Excellence process are the nine Foundational Dimensions. The nine committees formed to address these areas were chaired by members of the Steering Committee. The task of these groups was to assess both the Foundations of Excellence Dimension statements and utilize the electronic database, called FoEtec, to respond to critical questions, review survey results, formulate recommendations, and
create a report. Each Dimension Committee was formed with an eye toward maximizing expertise and guaranteeing a broad perspective. This structure achieved broad involvement across the College community:

- Every committee included a range of staff and faculty.
- 78 faculty and staff were involved, a total of 54% of Itasca’s employees (and almost all of Itasca’s full-time faculty and staff).
- 6 students served as representatives on three committees.
- 12 part-time or adjunct faculty served on committees.

**Figure 8. Foundations of Excellence Organizational Chart**

**Foundations of Excellence/Higher Learning Commission Self-Study Crosswalk**

Following the Policy Center on the First Year of College August 2007 workshop, the Liaison Team formulated a crosswalk between the Foundations of Excellence aspirational statements and the HLC criteria. The process included a deep review of the Foundational Dimensions and the HLC statements to see how these might be addressed simultaneously by our committee members. HLC criterion subcomponents were arranged under related Dimension areas. In almost all cases, subcomponents were placed in more than one area, thus affording multiple opportunities for addressing criteria. The crosswalk (see below)
was reviewed by Policy Center on the First Year of College staff and our HLC staff liaison prior to being accepted by the Steering Committee.

Foundations of Excellence Dimensions and Higher Learning Commission Criteria Crosswalk

**Foundations of Excellence Dimension 1 – Philosophy:**

Foundations Institutions intentionally cultivate learning environments for new students that emerge from a philosophy of two-year colleges as gateways to higher education. The philosophy is explicit and easily understood. It is consistent with the institutional mission, reflects a consensus of internal and external constituencies, and is widely disseminated. The philosophy is also the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation to support the new student experience.

HLC Criteria/Components: 1a, 1c, 1e, 5a, 5c

1a. The organization’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments. (Mission and Integrity)
1c. Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization. (Mission and Integrity)
1e. The organization upholds and protects its integrity. (Mission and Integrity)
5a. The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations. (Engagement and Service)
5c. The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service. (Engagement and Service)

**Foundations of Excellence Dimension 2 – Organization:**

Foundations Institutions provide a comprehensive, coordinated, and flexible approach to the new student experience through effective organizational structures and policies. These structures and policies guide and align all aspects of the new student experience. Through effective partnerships, critical stakeholders such as instructional, administrative, and student services units provide a coherent experience for new students that is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.

HLC Criteria/Components: 1d, 2a, 2b, 2d, 4a, 4d, 5b, 5d

1d. The organization’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission. (Mission and Integrity)
2a. The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends. (Preparing for the Future)
2b. The organization’s resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future. (Preparing for the Future)
2d. All levels of planning align with the organization’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission. (Preparing for the Future)

4a. The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning. (Knowledge)

4d. The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly. (Knowledge)

5b. The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities. (Engagement and Service)

5d. Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides. (Engagement and Service)

**Foundations of Excellence Dimension 3 – Learning:**

Foundations Institutions deliver curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage new students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the institutional mission, students’ academic and career goals, and workplace expectations. Both in and out of the classroom, these learning experiences promote critical thinking, ethical decision making, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

HLC Criteria/Components: 1c, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 4a, 4b, 4d

1c. Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization. (Mission and Integrity)

3a. The organization’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible. (Learning and Teaching)

3b. The organization values and supports effective teaching. (Learning and Teaching)

3c. The organization creates effective learning environments. (Learning and Teaching)

3d. The organization’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching. (Learning and Teaching)

4a. The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning. (Knowledge)

4b. The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs. (Knowledge)

4d. The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly. (Knowledge)

**Foundations of Excellence Dimension 4 – Campus Culture:**

Foundations Institutions make new students a high priority for faculty and staff. A culture of responsibility for the experiences of new students characterizes these
institutions. This culture is realized through high-quality instruction, services, and support as well as substantial interaction with students both inside and outside the classroom. Campus leaders nurture this culture and support it by appropriate institutional recognition and rewards.

HLC Criteria/Components: 3b, 3c, 3d, 4c
3b. The organization values and supports effective teaching. (Learning and Teaching)
3c. The organization creates effective learning environments. (Learning and Teaching)
3d. The organization’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching. (Learning and Teaching)
4c. The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society. (Knowledge)

Foundations of Excellence Dimension 5 – Transitions:
Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions beginning with outreach and recruitment and continuing throughout the period of enrollment. They communicate clear curricular/co-curricular expectations and possibilities, and they provide appropriate preparation and support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students’ responsibilities to themselves and the institution. These institutions create and maintain communication with secondary and other post-secondary institutions, families, employers, community agencies, and other sources of support for students.

HLC Criteria/Components: 1e, 5a, 5c, 5d
1e. The organization upholds and protects its integrity. (Mission and Integrity)
5a. The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations. (Engagement and Service)
5c. The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service. (Engagement and Service)
5d. Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides. (Engagement and Service)

Foundations of Excellence Dimension 6 – All Students:
Foundations Institutions serve all new students according to their varied needs. These institutions anticipate, identify, and address the needs of traditional and nontraditional students in response to their individual abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. These efforts are subject to assessment and adjustment as needed. Institutions also ensure campus environments that are inclusive and safe for all students.

HLC Criteria/Components: 3d, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d
3d. The organization’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching. (Learning and Teaching)

5a. The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations. (Engagement and Service)

5b. The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities. (Engagement and Service)

5c. The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service. (Engagement and Service)

5d. Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides. (Engagement and Service)

Foundations of Excellence Dimension 7 – Diversity:

Foundations Institutions ensure that new students experience ongoing exploration of diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and participation in pluralistic communities. Institutions cultivate an open and civil community in which students interact with people from varied backgrounds and cultures. These institutions guide students to reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.

HLC Criteria/Components: 1b, 3c, 4c

1b. In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves. (Mission and Integrity)

3c. The organization creates effective learning environments. (Learning and Teaching)

4c. The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society. (Knowledge)

Foundations of Excellence Dimension 8 – Roles & Purposes:

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education and those unique to two-year institutions, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include learning for personal growth, career enhancement, workplace preparation and retraining, transfer for additional education, engaged citizenship, and serving the public good. Institutions encourage new students to examine their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college. Students are exposed to the value of both a general education and focused study in an academic or career field.

HLC Criteria/Components: 1a, 1c, 4a, 4b, 5c

1a. The organization’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments. (Mission and Integrity)

1c. Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization. (Mission and Integrity)
4a. The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning. (Knowledge)

4b. The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs. (Knowledge)

5c. The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service. (Engagement and Service)

**Foundations of Excellence Dimension 9 – Improvement:**

Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to effect improvement. Assessment provides feedback to new students to guide their learning, to faculty to guide their teaching, and to the institution to guide planning, resource allocation, decision making, and improvement of programs and policies. As a way to facilitate improvement, these institutions are knowledgeable about current practices at other institutions as well as relevant research and scholarship.

HLC Criteria/Components: 2b, 2c, 3a, 4c

2b. The organization’s resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future. (Preparing for the Future)

2c. The organization’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement. (Preparing for the Future)

3a. The organization’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible. (Learning and Teaching)

4c. The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society. (Knowledge)

**Foundations of Excellence Self-Study Process**

The Foundations of Excellence self-study process began in earnest in the Fall of 2007 with a dual purpose. First, the Dimension Committees conducted a study of the first-year collegiate experience, utilizing FoEtec, the electronic database. The goals for each Dimension Committee included:

- Assessing the current situation and considering the big picture view of the “new student” experience, both intuitively and holistically
- Identifying and discussing opportunities and challenges
- Supporting conclusions with evidence
- Making recommendations

"Foundations of Excellence work provided a rich opportunity for discussion around serving first-year students. Our campus’ high participation rates in the process will move us as close as possible to our motto . . . the best place to start."

--2008 College Climate Survey response
Second, the Dimension Committees also examined HLC criteria areas assigned to each group as indicated in the Foundations of Excellence/HLC crosswalk document. This work was facilitated through a HLC Wiki that was developed by Steven Bean, HLC co-chair. The HLC Wiki mirrored the FoEtec electronic database, thus providing each committee a format that was familiar and easy to use, and a method for taking notes and capturing ideas in an electronic format. Each Dimension Committee accessed the Wiki through the FoEtec site, using an embedded URL. For example, the Philosophy Dimension focused on HLC Criterion One: Mission and Integrity. The Dimension Committees’ work involved the following steps:

- The committees examined the criterion statement (e.g. *The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students*).
- Keeping in mind that the Foundations of Excellence Dimensions and the related Performance Indicators were aspirational, whereas the HLC spells out specific criteria or standards that must be met, each committee discussed the evidence that would support these statements.
- Within the Wiki, committees supported statements by responding to specific questions using a candid, evaluative, and evidence-based approach (e.g. *Has the college adopted clear, understandable, and broad statements of its mission, vision, values, goals, and organizational priorities that together define the college’s mission?*) and provided documentation and evidence to support their statement.
- The committees recorded their responses and, using the FoEtec library, listed areas of evidence to support their claims.

The Foundations of Excellence process encouraged the use of multiple sources of evidence, which were stored electronically in FoEtec’s Current Practices Inventory (current practice information) and the Evidence Library. Evidence included College policies, practices, publications, qualitative data from individual experiences and expertise, and data and survey results from various existing instruments. The Policy Center also provided two surveys, one that gathered information from faculty and staff members about the effectiveness of current first-year practices and policies, and one that gathered information from first-year students about their views of campus efforts in the first year. The College response rates were excellent, with 98 employees completing the faculty/staff survey, and 302 first-year students participating in the student survey.

After completing the Performance Indicator questions and gathering information, the Dimension Committees assigned an institutional grade to their dimension, developed a set of recommendations for improvement, and wrote a Dimension report. This information was gathered from all Dimension Committees and compiled into a final report that included a list of Recommended Action Items (RAIs). All of the Dimension reports were stored in the FoEtec website.
During two professional development days in mid-April, Dimension Committees presented their top priorities. All faculty and staff were then given the resulting 90 RAIs on a ballot and voted for their 10 priority items. The action item votes were tallied and presented to the Liaison Committee. The Liaison Committee then identified six broad areas that emerged out of the RAIs and organized them, with tallies recorded, by theme. The six theme areas were:

1. Assessment
2. Associate in Arts Program
3. Communication with Students
4. Engagement
5. Intervention for Student Success
6. New Faculty Orientation/Faculty Development

The Liaison Committee assigned the six areas to Steering Committee subgroups with the charge to evaluate action items and formulate two to five recommendations from these to present to the Steering Committee as a whole. These presentations were to include a discussion of impact, institutional priorities, timeframe, and resources. These presentations resulted in 14 Priority Action Items (PAIs), which were reformulated into 10 shorter statements in preparation for inclusion in the new Strategic Plan.

The 10 priority action items are:

1. Develop a method for assigning personnel who will coordinate, promote, and assess the Liberal Arts curriculum, ensure that these foundational courses remain integral to the education of all students at Itasca, and explore and evaluate possible learning community models within the AA program.
2. Develop and communicate an explanation of the Associate in Arts program and General Education/Liberal Arts, including a rationale for requirements.
3. Re-establish an institution-wide, integrated assessment framework for both academic (curricular and co-curricular student learning) and student services divisions.
4. Develop technology and strategies for communicating with and providing information for new and first-year students (including website development, an alert system, and student contact information).
5. Establish full-year academic scheduling.
6. Formalize new faculty/staff orientation and training.
7. Develop sharing of best practices on professional development days.
8. Increase opportunities for faculty/staff interaction with students (including a voluntary mentoring program).
9. Evaluate and enhance the advising system to improve student intervention and success (including Early Warning System, working with undecided students, and support for at-risk students).
10. Expand Freshman Year Experience offerings.
The final report, matrix of action items, and the 10 priority action items were presented to and approved by the Steering Committee at a meeting in late June 2008. The Liaison and Steering Committees held a social to celebrate achievements to date in early Fall 2008. Some of these accomplishments currently underway or accomplished include:

- Development, approval, and dissemination of a first-year philosophy statement
- New orientation process that includes faculty
- Hiring of an Associate in Arts Coordinator
- Development of a process to create an institution-wide, program-based framework for assessment
- Implementation of the Star Alert system (emergency notification)
- Development of a process to collect local student contact information
- Publication of a calendar of semester events
- New student picnic

**Higher Learning Commission Self-Study**

Having completed the Foundations of Excellence self-study final report, the Steering Committee turned its full attention to the HLC self-study report. The Liaison Committee compiled the HLC Wiki criteria results and helped collect criteria feedback and information that served as the backbone of the HLC self-study.

Over the summer of 2008, the Steering Committee members were reassigned into five HLC Criterion Committees, which served as the review boards for each criterion area as the report was drafted. The Liaison Committee continued its role in driving the process along. In the fall of 2008, at the College's duty day, faculty and staff were brought up to date on the outcome of the Foundations of Excellence project and the progress of the HLC self-assessment process.

Throughout the fall, the College used an electronic messaging system (called HLC Tickets), through which information gathered through the Wiki process was clarified. Periodically, Criterion Committees came together in small groups to review drafts of the written report. Strength and challenge areas were defined and addressed through this process. As the HLC report moved forward, expert readers were called upon to review sections, and the final document was reviewed by the Liaison Committee members.

In January 2008, the College devoted a duty day with all faculty and staff for a final review of the HLC self-study. The whole campus participated in providing feedback and learning from one another about aspects of the self-study.

The combined Foundations of Excellence and Higher Learning Commission self-study process was invaluable for the College as a tool that fostered education about the institution, evaluation and planning, and collaboration. Faculty and staff commented repeatedly on how much they learned about each others’ work and the College as a whole. They undertook this work with enthusiasm and emerged with greater pride in the institution, commitment to improvement, and understanding, respect, and appreciation for each other.
Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

Itasca Community College operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of our mission through structures and processes that involve the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees and Itasca's administration, faculty, staff, and students.
Itasca Community College

Vision

Itasca Community College will be a vital resource and community partner providing accessible, responsive, and innovative opportunities that empower all learners to realize their full potential and enhance the viability of the region.

Mission

Itasca Community College provides accessible academic and career-related education which contributes to the social and economic health of the region, empowers learners to meet or exceed their expectations, and fosters critical thinking and civic and global engagement.

Values

Integrity
Focus on learners and learning
Collaboration
Responsiveness
Access

Strategic Goals

Strategic Direction: Learning Opportunities
Goal 1 Engaged Learners
Goal 2 Innovative Teaching

Strategic Direction: Enhance Diversity and Access
Goal 3 Serve Diverse Learners
Goal 4 Learner-Centered Environment

Strategic Direction: Community and Resource Development
Goal 5 Community Partnerships
Goal 6 Enhance Resources

Foundational Processes

Communicate openly and clearly
Use participatory decision making
Respect diversity
Value its human resources
Continually improve
Practice stewardship
Utilize technology
Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

Itasca Community College operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of our mission through structures and processes that involve the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees and Itasca’s administration, faculty, staff, and students.

As both an autonomous college with a mission to serve its community and a member institution of the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, Itasca Community College’s mission is unique yet aligned with the mission, vision, and planning of these larger entities.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system includes community colleges, community and technical colleges, technical colleges, and state universities, and the far-reaching mission and broad vision of the system reflects its comprehensiveness as a higher-education system:

**Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Vision**

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities will enable the people of Minnesota to succeed by providing the most accessible, highest value education in the nation.

**Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Mission**

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system of distinct and collaborative institutions offers higher education that meets the personal and career goals of a wide range of individual learners, enhances the quality of life for all Minnesotans and sustains vibrant economies throughout the state.

NHED is a unique structure, which allows five small regional community colleges to operate as a fiscal unit within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system while maintaining autonomy and independent institutional status. The District structure facilitates cost-saving efficiencies, regional planning to ensure program access, and collaborations that aid its member institutions in fulfilling their individual missions as well as the NHED and system missions.
The NHED will enhance student access and learning options throughout the region and will focus on each member college’s connection to the community.

The NHED will provide quality higher education to the communities throughout northeastern Minnesota by developing a regional structure that will preserve college autonomy but will also align programs and services to better prepare residents for learning, employment, citizenship, and life.

The new President of NHED, Dr. Sue Collins, announced “Innovation, Collaboration, and Accountability” as the theme of her first speech to the faculty of NHED institutions on a shared professional development day in August 2008. These values encapsulate what NHED offers member colleges: a larger structure and leadership that allows for innovation in program development, collaborations among disciplines, and accountability through shared resources like the Office of Institutional Research.

ICC’s mission, vision, and goals are aligned with those of the system and NHED, with an emphasis on serving the educational needs of and encouraging partnerships and engagement in our region.

### Criterion One: Core Component 1a

Itasca Community College’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly our commitments.

Itasca has undergone major changes in its 85-plus year history, and its mission has evolved accordingly. Most recently, the College’s reorganization as an independent community college in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system in the mid-1990s led to a rethinking of the mission and goals. The mission, vision, and values statements are now incorporated into the College’s Strategic Plan, and are revisited every five years by a College-wide committee drafting a new strategic plan. As part of the 2003-2008 Strategic Plan, the mission documents were approved by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees in June 2003. (For more on the mission document review process, see discussion in components 1c and 2a.) They function fundamentally as guiding documents, which identify the College’s core constituencies and our commitment to academic excellence and serve as a public expression of our values and priorities.
Strong Guiding Documents

The clear, understandable, and broad statements of mission, vision, values, goals, and foundational processes together define the College’s mission. The vision and mission are short statements employing key words that recur in all College documents:

**ICC Vision**

Itasca Community College will be a vital resource and community partner providing accessible, responsive, and innovative opportunities that empower all learners to realize their full potential and enhance the viability of the region.

**ICC Mission**

Itasca Community College provides accessible academic and career-related education which contributes to the social and economic health of the region, empowers learners to meet or exceed their expectations, and fosters critical thinking and civic and global engagement.

The mission language states the College’s commitment to its two core constituencies: students and the community. It also links learners to their communities, which reflects the College’s strong community and civic engagement focus and the reality that most of ICC’s students come from Itasca County and the surrounding region. Although the language in the mission and vision is general, the College’s careful attention to the needs of all students and its innovative partnerships and responsiveness to community challenges demonstrate its relevance and authenticity.

Itasca’s current student body is largely traditional age and from the local service area, though the College increasingly attracts students from other areas. Over one-third are low income, and half are first-generation college students. Increasing numbers of students locally and nationally are turning to community colleges as a pathway to higher education. Itasca has also long served a critical role in educating and retraining nontraditional students, and their enrollment is the highest it has been since 2003. (For more discussion of the diversity of the students we serve, see component 1b.)

The College value statements on Access, Collaboration, and Responsiveness, and its strategic directions “Enhance Diversity and Access” and “Community and Resource Development” further define the College constituencies. The College seeks to ensure access to low-income, first-generation, and minority students. Strong and longstanding TRiO programs—**Student Support Services** and **Upward Bound** and, more recently, **Talent Search**—provide outreach and support to these students. In addition, the College is a vital resource for regional business and industry needs and workforce retraining.

Foundational to the College’s identity and public service, the mission documents guide the College’s planning and day-to-day operations. They are the starting point and reference...
check for mission statements, goals, and planning at the program and division levels, shaping such other mission documents as:

- Discipline and program mission statements
- First-Year Student Philosophy
- General Education Philosophy
- ICC Foundational Goals
- Community Education Mission

College employees refer to the mission documents in planning processes and when proposing new classes or programs, changes to programs, sabbaticals, grants, and new positions. Administrative, academic, curricular, and budgetary planning decisions are guided by mission documents and the Strategic Plan.

As discussed in the Self-Study Process section, in 2007-08 we undertook an extensive, College-wide self-study of the first-year experience of our students. One important outcome of that process was a statement of our commitment to their success—a commitment that we believe underscores our tagline, “Best Place to Start.” The resulting First-Year Student Philosophy is now distributed to all new students:

**Itasca Community College First-Year Student Philosophy**

The Itasca Community College faculty and staff believe the first year is critical to the academic success and personal growth of our students. To best serve the unique needs of first-year students, we will:

- give students individual attention in a safe, supportive, and friendly environment
- provide high-quality instruction
- communicate and uphold high academic expectations
- establish positive advising relationships
- support an environment in which students experience and express diverse worldviews
- offer a comprehensive range of activities to enhance learning and personal growth
- encourage students to make connections with others on the campus and in the community
- evaluate the results of our efforts and use them for continuous improvement.

Our commitment is to provide every first-year student with the **best place to start.**

**Commitment to Academic Excellence**

**Strategic Direction: Learning Opportunities**

**Goal 1. Engaged Learners**

Itasca Community College will inspire learners to imagine and think critically about themselves, their communities, and the larger world, thereby enhancing awareness of multicultural perspectives and providing opportunities for civic and global engagement.
Goal 2. Innovative Teaching

Itasca Community College will build on its successful programs and develop learning opportunities that are innovative and responsive to the evolving needs of learners and their communities.

The mission documents describe the College’s strong commitment to high academic standards, establish ambitious stated goals for student learning, and encourage learners to apply their knowledge and perspectives for the betterment of themselves and the world. They use student-centered language to commit to education that “empowers learners to meet or exceed their expectations, and fosters critical thinking and civic and global engagement.” The College’s vision statement similarly envisions providing “opportunities that empower all learners to realize their full potential.” Strategic Goal 1, Engaged Learners, specifies what educational empowerment confers to an educated person. An educated person, we believe, thinks critically from multiple perspectives and is civically and globally engaged. This is elaborated in ICC’s General Education Philosophy, which outlines ICC’s Foundational Goals for student learning:

General Education Philosophy

Itasca Community College affirms its commitment to a broad and coherent foundation of general education fundamental to educational opportunity, individual enrichment and citizenship. Graduates will acquire the intellectual and practical essentials to create and adapt to our diverse society, now and in the future. These essentials include skills in the knowledge of:

- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Information Technology
- Mathematical/Scientific Reasoning
- Citizenship and Ethics
- Diversity

These six foundational goals underlie every academic and vocational degree, diploma, and certificate program the College offers. Every for-credit class at Itasca meets at least one Foundational Goal area. The goals are articulated with specific learning outcomes in the ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes document. Students enrolled in two-year terminal programs (Associate in Applied Science) and transfer programs (Associate in Arts and Associate in Science) also complete part or all of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC), a Minnesota State Colleges and Universities-owned curriculum, which is accepted as fulfilling completion of general education requirements at all public institutions of higher education in Minnesota. The MnTC Goals and Competencies define a two-year general education in Minnesota public higher education. These two documents—ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes and the MnTC Goals and Competencies—articulate the high academic standards of the College and its commitment to advance excellence in higher learning. They are the foundation of the College's academic programs and offerings.
Publication and Dissemination of Mission Documents

Our mission, vision, and values statements are printed in many publications: ICC Catalog, Student Handbook, Employee Guidebook, and website, as well as in the College’s 2003-2008 Strategic Plan. This concise, single-fold document states ICC’s mission, vision, values, strategic directions, and foundational processes. The Strategic Plan was disseminated to all campus employees. Starting in Fall 2008, the College’s new First-Year Student Philosophy statement is included in each semester schedule newspaper insert, which reaches 8,500 people per semester. All new students receive a Student Handbook, which highlights the College mission, vision, and values in the first pages. Starting in Fall 2008, the First-Year Student Philosophy has also been printed inside the front cover. Students have access to the catalog in print and online at the ICC website.

The College regularly features its mission in communication with the public and external constituencies. For example, the Provost’s e-mail signature includes the mission, and most of his public presentations include a slide displaying the mission. Advisory Boards and the ICC Foundation Board are educated in the mission, and the mission is referenced in all grant proposals.

Still, concerns were raised in the Foundations of Excellence process that, despite the widespread publication of mission documents, the College needs to be more proactive in publicizing and disseminating them. Advertising, promotional, recruiting, and informational material for the College do not currently include mission documents.

We have since taken additional steps to increase the visibility of the mission statement among students and the visiting public. It is posted periodically on television monitors present throughout common areas of the ICC campus, and framed copies of mission and vision statements are displayed in College buildings. We also publicize the mission and vision by, for example, printing them on the paper placemats used for breakfast and lunch meetings with external constituents. These and other measures increase understanding and heighten awareness of the mission, vision, and values of the College and will continue to expand. In this and many other ways, we continually seek to strengthen and further define the role of our central value statements in campus and civic life.
Criterion One: Core Component 1b

In our mission documents, Itasca Community College recognizes the diversity of our learners, other constituencies, and the greater society we serve.

Access: ICC embraces diversity and values service to all learners. (ICC Values Statement)

Goal 1. Engaged Learners

Itasca Community College will inspire learners to imagine and think critically about themselves, their communities, and the larger world, thereby enhancing awareness of multicultural perspectives and providing opportunities for civic and global engagement. (ICC 2003-2008 Strategic Plan)

Goal 3. Serve Diverse Learners

Itasca Community College will reach out to people from diverse backgrounds and provide them with learning opportunities and services that respect and draw upon the strengths of their cultural backgrounds and empower them to achieve their educational goals. (ICC 2003-2008 Strategic Plan)

Goal 4. Learner-Centered Environment

Itasca Community College will continually strive to provide a learner-centered environment that is inviting, civil, safe, accessible, and supportive. (ICC 2003-2008 Strategic Plan)

Respect diversity - The College will respect the strengths and experiences of learners and community members from all walks of life. (ICC Foundational Processes)

In the 2003-2008 Strategic Plan excerpts printed above, ICC addresses diversity as fundamental to its mission of serving the community; of respecting students, faculty, and staff as individuals; and of educating students to become productive members of a multicultural society. The College’s mission documents state our commitment to attracting, welcoming, and supporting students from diverse backgrounds, and our educational mission includes preparing all students to live, work, and contribute to a diverse and increasingly global society. These documents provide a basis for the College’s strategies to address diversity.

As an open-door institution, Itasca welcomes all learners and actively promotes access to diverse populations. All students who have earned a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) credential are accepted at ICC. We serve a wide range of students from our area, and our commitment to diversity means that we seek to increase the enrollment of underrepresented students. Based on demographic trends and persistent and emerging challenges and opportunities in our region, we have made special efforts to reach out to and serve the needs of the following groups:
Native Americans
• Other students of color
• First-generation college students
• Low-income students
• Underprepared students
• Nontraditional students
• Workers needing retraining

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system’s 2006-2010 Strategic Plan includes a goal to “raise Minnesota’s participation and achievement in post-secondary education by meeting the needs of students with diverse backgrounds and educational goals.” In alignment with that goal, Itasca has, in the last decade, put increasing efforts into recruiting and supporting the success of underrepresented minorities on campus. Despite our efforts, it has been challenging to attract students of color to a largely white rural college. Itasca’s student body comes primarily from regional schools, and student demographics reflect the economic and ethnic makeup of the region. The largest ethnic minority group in Itasca’s region is Native American, a group which represents 4% of Itasca County’s population (US Census 2004).

Although minority students enroll at Itasca in fairly low numbers (see Table 6 below), their enrollment is higher than their proportion of Itasca County’s population. According to 2004 US Census data for Itasca County, 0.2% of Itasca County residents are African American, 4% Native American, 0.8% Hispanic, and 0.3% Asian. Enrollment of African American and Native American students increased significantly between Fall 2003 and Fall 2007. African American enrollment increased from one student (0%) in Fall 2003 to 20 students (2%) in Fall 2007; Native American enrollment increased from 32 students (3%) in Fall 2003 to 50 students (4%) in Fall 2007. See the discussions of supporting various groups of students in component 3c and outreach to diverse groups in Criterion Five.

Table 6. Minority Headcount

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 03</th>
<th>Fall 04</th>
<th>Fall 05</th>
<th>Fall 06</th>
<th>Fall 07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Am.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fall 30th Day Enrollment Tables/MnSCU ISRS Operational Data
As discussed, however, supporting diverse students at Itasca is not limited to recruiting an ethnically diverse student body. Compared to the rest of the state, Itasca County residents are disproportionately low income and have higher unemployment rates. A recently published Community Assessment by the United Way of 1,000 Lakes reported a poverty rate of 12% (“What Matters”). Approximately 50% of Itasca County children qualify for free and reduced lunch compared to 38% statewide (Minnesota Department of Education). Itasca County’s unemployment rate of close to 9% is considerably higher than the state rate of just under 7% (Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development). In addition, the region’s population has comparatively low levels of post-secondary education, so many of our students are first-generation students or nontraditional students. See component 3c for a discussion of services supporting the success of diverse learners and Criterion Five for a discussion of outreach to diverse constituents in our community.

The College has made a sustained, concerted effort to reach out to these residents, and as a result, low-income, first-generation college students make up a large proportion of the student body. Half of our students are first-generation (see Table 7 below), and 38% self-identified as low income in data collected in recent Assessment Test Results. Because unemployment rates are high, the College is a critical resource for community residents to provide opportunities for educational advancement and retraining. As noted in 1a, nontraditional students are increasing in numbers, currently making up about 25 to 30% of the student population in recent years (Fact Book 2008 Table 8, p.4). Growth and projected growth in several sectors of the economy in our region present tremendous opportunities for both traditional-age students and older students seeking to change careers or gain education to expand their employment options (see 2a for fuller discussion). For example, the College is currently working with a number of area agencies that serve unemployed and underemployed people to develop a program, called Landing Strip, to provide retraining for them that matches workforce needs in the region.

### Table 7. First-Generation College Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Itasca Community College</th>
<th>Number of First Generation College Students - 30th Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation College Students</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Fall 30th Day Enrollment</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities ISRS Operational Database, 30th Day Enrollment Tables
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Director for Research/NORTHWEST_FIRSTGEN_20080204/No Parent Completed a Bachelor’s
In staying attuned and responsive to community needs and maintaining open-door access to higher education, the College fulfills its pledges to “reach out to people from diverse backgrounds” (Strategic Goal 3) and value service to all learners (value statement on Access).

Promoting Diversity among Staff and Faculty

The College has an Affirmative Action Plan, which is regularly updated and submitted to Minnesota Department of Finance and Employee Relations. Posted on the Human Resources (HR) webpage, the plan includes a Statement of Commitment and sets goals for hiring, recruitment, and retention of protected-class employees. All job postings include a statement that we are an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer. In a rural area, it can be difficult to recruit faculty and staff of color. Ninety-five percent of the faculty and staff at Itasca are white (Fact Book 2008). Four percent, or six individuals, are American Indian (Fact Book 2008), which is proportional to the Native American population in the region. In addition to full-time and permanent faculty and staff, in the past several years the College has had part-time and adjunct faculty members who are Korean, Chinese, and Native American.

The College's commitment to developing a diverse faculty and staff and ensuring a welcoming environment for students of diverse backgrounds is evidenced by key positions and hires in the past decade. ICC is the only two-year institution in the system with an endowed faculty chair in American Indian Studies. The endowment, held by the ICC Foundation, provides stability for the American Indian Studies program as it builds enrollment. The endowed chair of American Indian Studies is held by an enrolled member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. The staff positions of Upward Bound/Talent Search Director, Director of Multicultural Student Affairs, and the newly created Assistant Director of Multicultural Student Affairs are currently held by enrolled members of the Turtle Island, White Earth, and Nett Lake Bands of Ojibwe, respectively. This latter position is supported by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Access and Opportunity funds earmarked for diversity efforts.

Most recently, the Engineering program has received a $2 million grant from the Blandin Foundation for “Perspectives in Engineering” (PIE). Part of this grant works to improve the overall diversity of the Engineering learning community by including diversity training and education, recruiting students of color to the program, and partnering with professional engineers of color in mentoring relationships.

The College has also promoted diversity through guest speakers invited from around the world. Examples include Dr. Cliff Lamb on Zimbabwe; Fulbright scholar Dr. Maati Monjib, a Middle East scholar; Kinji Akagawa, a Japanese-American sculptor from the Minneapolis College of Arts and Design; and Iraqi-American peace activist and businessman Sami Rasouli. The information and ideas presented by these speakers not only serve to increase knowledge and appreciation for other cultures, but contribute to a campuswide understanding that diversity is valued and promoted.
Creating a Positive Campus Climate

The College strives to create a welcoming environment for people of diverse backgrounds and to foster understanding of and respect for diversity among faculty, staff and students. (See 3c for more discussion of creating a climate that promotes diversity.) In addition, periodic duty-day trainings in sexual harassment and diversity proactively address issues and set expectations. Students and employees of Itasca report the success of those efforts in surveys that ask them to respond to questions about faculty, interactions with other students, and the climate of the campus. Students report that faculty treat everyone fairly and that, even though the number of minorities is low at the College, they have opportunities to interact with other students from differing backgrounds. For example, almost 95% of students reported that their instructor for a randomly selected class often or always treated all students fairly regardless of gender/race/ethnicity (Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey). Itasca's students recorded a considerably higher mean (2.60) than the 2007 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) cohort (2.45) for encouragement of “contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds.”

The 2008 Diversity Survey results demonstrate that the College has made significant improvements in creating a positive campus climate for diversity. Almost 92% of minority respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “faculty and staff at this college are welcoming to people of color,” a slight improvement over the 2003 results on the same survey. Although a lower 72.7% agreed that “students at this college are welcoming to people of color,” this also was an improvement over the 2003 results. Ninety percent or more of minority respondents also agreed that they would feel comfortable reporting harassment or discrimination, believing that the College would respond appropriately and that the College “is making efforts to improve relations and understanding between people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.” The confidence that the College would respond appropriately and belief that the College is making efforts to improve relations and understanding were both significantly higher than the 2003 results.

The College's codes of expected behavior are congruent with its mission to create an environment supportive of diversity and to prepare students to live and work in a diverse society. The College abides by or adapts all pertinent system policies for fair treatment of employees and students. ICC also makes a concerted effort to convey to students and staff, in both written documents and oral presentations, the standards of behavior expected in an open and civil campus community. It does so through:

- Written statements of expectations, which are printed in the Student Handbook, posted on each classroom wall (Civility Statement), and included in many course syllabi as statements about the importance of respect and tolerance
- Publication (in Student Handbook and website) of the Student Code of Conduct
• Publication and dissemination via email and on HR webpage of the Employee Code of Conduct. (Employees also receive training in Code of Conduct.)
• Publication (in Student Handbook and ICC Catalog) and enforcement of Racial, Sexual, and Disability Harassment Code
• Speaker on respect at freshman orientation
• Governance of student organizations through Student Life leadership that focuses on respect, equal treatment, and freedom of speech
• Co-curricular activities that promote freedom of expression, human rights, and diverse viewpoints, such as the annual Global Education Week activities, Spring 2006 Ethics Conference, Civil Liberties Conferences, and speakers on topics like rape, domestic violence, and mental illness

“These civil liberties events have been a powerful tool in educating the public and students about human rights issues, protected classes and activities.”
—Barb Sanderson, Human Rights Commission Chairperson

Student, faculty, and staff responses on the Foundations of Excellence New Student and Faculty/Staff Surveys reflect the success of these measures. Over 74% of students in the survey believe (high/very high rating) the College communicates the importance of respecting others with differing opinions, while only 6% rated the College’s efforts in that regard slight/not at all. Itasca’s results in aggregated questions on standards of behavior were impressive in comparison with the Foundations of Excellence cohort, with higher mean scores (4.02) than any comparison group.

Students also feel respected and safe on our campus. Students feel physically safe on the campus (91% high/very high), feel respected by others (82.4% high/very high), and feel they can express their beliefs without concern about how others will react (72.3% high/very high) (Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey).

Although the College has not had reported cases of sexual violence, the prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses and the fact that these crimes often go unreported has led to several proactive measures to prevent and deal appropriately with sexual violence. First, the College hosted Keith Edwards in 2006-07 to give trainings on “Men Ending Rape” to student athletes, residence hall residents, and the campus community. Following up on that event, the College supported a collaboration between the Applied Psychology program and a community nonprofit agency Itasca Alliance against Sexual Assault (IAASA). The College made space available to open a campus office to serve victims of sexual violence. This office, Support Within Reach, is staffed by IAASA and Applied Psychology students who have undergone advocacy training.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE
The faculty and staff who have completed the True North Leadership program, a Northeast Higher Education District initiative to grow academic leaders from within, underwent diversity training with the Blandin Foundation in Fall 2008. This training is designed to prepare them to conduct awareness-raising diversity activities on campus.
Preparing Students for Life and Work in a Diverse World

In a region marked by ethnic homogeneity, institutions of higher education have an important role to play in preparing students for multicultural experiences in their future lives and work. The College’s mission statement speaks to one aspect of our preparation, as we foster “civic and global engagement” and our Strategic Goal 1, Engaged Learners, articulates our aim to enhance students’ “awareness of multicultural perspectives and [provide] opportunities for civic and global engagement.” The College’s stated goals for learning, described briefly in component 1a and at length in component 3a and Criterion 4, explicitly address our commitment to prepare them for this future.

Itasca Community College fulfills its stated commitments to a diverse student body. All of Itasca’s staff and faculty work to welcome new students, create an open and inclusive environment, support the success of diverse students, and prepare students for life and work in a diverse world. How we do so is discussed at length in other sections, primarily component 3c and Criteria 4 and 5.

Criterion One: Core Component 1c

Understanding of and support for the mission pervade Itasca Community College.

There was widespread involvement by students, faculty, staff, and administration when the College’s mission, vision, and values statements were updated in 1997. Today, mission documents are reviewed with input from these constituents and community members every five years as part of our strategic planning process.

The College mission is understood and supported by these stakeholders. According to the 2008 College Climate Survey, almost 90% of employees agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I am aware of and understand the college’s mission.” This is the highest rating for this question since 1998. Students also value and give the College high ratings for meeting its mission, as shown in their responses to a 2006 Student Survey. Ninety percent of students reported that it was important/very important that the College fulfill its mission, and 85% agreed or strongly agreed that the College does fulfill its mission.

The College looks for familiarity with the general mission of community colleges in the hiring process, listing it as a desired attribute in job postings and discussing the mission during interviews and at orientation. All new full-time faculty at community and technical colleges in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system are required to take a course in the Philosophy of Community and Technical College Education. Periodically, the College uses duty-day time to explore faculty and staff understanding of and commitment to key words in mission documents. For example, faculty and participating staff did
activities exploring the meaning of mission language in January 2007, and Student Services staff did similar activities at a summer retreat in 2007. In addition, key words in the mission statement have been reviewed in each of the past three years in the lead-up to the Foundations of Excellence self-study, the Higher Learning Commission self-study, and in preparation for strategic planning.

**Campuswide Involvement in Mission and Strategic Plan**

ICC embraces inclusion and transparency in its strategic planning process, which results in a plan that spans a five-year period. The process that resulted in the 2003-2008 Strategic Plan included an oversight committee with representation from staff and faculty across the campus. The committee worked in collaboration with staff members from the Office of the Chancellor over a nine-month period to gather input from all constituents. Twenty community members provided feedback about where the College is and where the community members would like to see it go. In addition, members from the faculty, staff, and student body participated in small focus groups. Group Systems V software streamlined the process of gathering ideas and collected them efficiently for analysis. On campus, substantial time was allotted to allow for significant contributions from faculty and staff. Collection strategies included using duty days for voting as the final philosophies and strategies were narrowed down. In January 2003, the plan was completed, and it was approved that spring by the Board of Trustees.

Most recently, the College’s year-long study of the first-year experience has been instrumental in preparing the College for shaping the new strategic plan, which will be developed in Spring 2009. As discussed in the Self-Study Process section, the Foundations of Excellence process involved nine committees, with representation of 78 faculty and staff (54% of Itasca’s employees, including nearly all full-time faculty and staff), 6 students, and a community member. The resulting final report includes nearly 100 recommendations, which were distilled into 10 umbrella priority action items. These priorities will form the basis of the new strategic plan. As that process gets underway, committee members will re-examine the mission, vision, and values statements, although they are not likely to change significantly as there is widespread support for the existing mission. In the 2008 College Climate Survey, nearly 90% of employees responded that “the college’s mission/goals are directly related to the educational and learning experiences the college provides.” This equaled the College’s highest rating for this question.

**Mission-Guided Planning**

All planning at the College references and is aligned with these key documents. The Provost, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, and the Director of Finance and Facilities lead planning, prioritizing, and decision-making processes with the involvement of faculty, staff, and students. Decisions regarding how the budget will be allocated are based on the priority of the item and its alignment with the College’s mission and Strategic Plan.
Recent examples of major mission-driven decisions include the establishment of Itasca Hall (ICC’s new residential facility), the College’s efforts to gain major external funding for program development, and the allocation of coordination credits for learning community programs. In each case, the decision to proceed on a given project was based on upholding the values of access, opportunity, and learning to benefit our students.

Academic division mission documents—General Education Philosophy, discipline mission statements, and program mission statements—align with the College’s educational mission to provide “accessible academic and career-related education which contributes to the social and economic health of the region, empowers learners to meet or exceed their expectations, and fosters critical thinking and civic and global engagement.” The Master Academic Planning (MAP) process that academic divisions use for planning, the process for proposing new courses or changes to courses and curricula, and decisions on internally awarded grants (ICC Foundation minigrants and Awards for Excellence) all consider how a project or proposal meets the College mission.

Both the MAP process and the process for reviewing and proposing changes to courses and curricula are examples of faculty setting goals in alignment with the College’s strategic goals. Administration meets with division faculty to review each division’s MAP. The Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC), which includes the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, key staff, and representative faculty, reviews all course and curriculum proposals and evaluates their alignment with the College’s mission and strategic priorities.

Student Services and other divisions and College-wide committees reference mission documents in planning. The Strategic Comprehensive Program Enhancement (SCOPE) process used by nonacademic divisions (and until 2005 by academic divisions) includes discussion of alignment with mission. The Master Facilities Plan, Master Technology Plan, and other College-wide plans are tied to the mission documents and the Strategic Plan.

**Understanding of the Mission**

Despite the widespread presence of the mission documents in ICC publications—and students’ overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the mission—the Learning and Roles and Purposes Dimension Committees during the Foundations of Excellence process contended that these documents are largely unread or poorly absorbed by students and the public. While this seems to conflict with students’ responses on the 2006 Student Survey, they were not directly asked whether they knew or understood the mission, so their affirmative responses may have been a general affirmation of their experience at the College. In addition, respondents to a 2001 Community Survey did give the statement “I am familiar with the mission and goals of ICC” the lowest mean score among the survey items. Still, that score was at the “agree” level.

Foundations of Excellence Dimension Committee members examining this criterion raised a concern that while the mission document language is readily comprehensible, it is
abstract, broad, and uses educational jargon. They recommended that mission documents be more specific, relevant, and accessible so that students and the public not only read but absorb the College’s mission, vision, values, and goals.

**Mission 101**

What students, employees, and the community are highly aware of is the College tagline: “Best Place to Start.” Students and employees in particular use the tagline to describe the College, essentially presenting it as a shorthand version of the College’s mission. Unlike the mission, the tagline is widely recognized and is prominent on the website, on banners, on t-shirts, on publications, and in other College marketing efforts.

Asking “Why?” ICC is the “Best Place to Start” has proven to be an excellent beginning for discussions in which the public, especially new students, gain a new perspective on the College’s vision and mission. During the Foundations of Excellence process, the Steering/Philosophy Dimension Committee identified a lack of an explicit philosophy for serving first-year students and conducted a discussion in the manner suggested above: Why is Itasca the “Best Place to Start” for first-year students? The group’s answers, based on the College mission, vision, and values, formed the foundation of what became the College’s First-Year Student Philosophy (discussed in component 1a).

The First-Year Student Philosophy was distributed to all new students and discussed in small, faculty-led groups during orientation in Fall 2008. Because the language of the First-Year Student Philosophy draws on the College mission, vision, and strategic goals, these discussions also made them explicit—and, for young people unaccustomed to the significance of mission documents, understandable. The College plans to continue this new model for orientation.

A duty-day session in Fall 2008 on “The Promising Syllabus” encouraged a continuation of orientation discussions by including and referencing ICC mission and discipline mission statements in course syllabi. All new part-time and full-time faculty, as well as several other faculty, attended this session.
Criterion One: Core Component 1d

Itasca Community College's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable us to fulfill our mission.

As a small rural community college, Itasca has undergone a number of structural changes in the last two decades to assure its longterm stability and capacity to support its mission of providing access to higher education to the region. These have included regional structures, including the Arrowhead Community Colleges (1981-1995), under which Itasca was one of five campuses rather than an independent institution. When the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system was created in 1995, merging all of the state’s community colleges, technical colleges, and state universities in a single system, the Arrowhead structure was reviewed and dissolved. Since 1996, Itasca has been an autonomous college in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Itasca is also a member of the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED), a group of five northeastern Minnesota colleges within the system that share administrative and other resources for greater fiscal stability and efficiency. Because of these structures, Itasca has the advantage of local control and planning with the expertise available through cost-sharing and a larger system structure. (See the Introduction for a fuller description and history of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and NHED structures.)

System Governance

Like all of the colleges and universities within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, Itasca is ultimately governed by the Board of Trustees, 15 members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the state legislature. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system Chancellor has full executive responsibility for higher education leadership and effective management and operation of the system according to Board policies and state and federal laws. The system makes budget requests of the state legislature, allocates funding, establishes policies, audits, performs program evaluation and review, and provides services such as systemwide planning, administrator training, legal and fiscal expertise, information technology, and professional development to its member institutions. The size of the system makes resources and expertise available to Itasca that would otherwise not be affordable. (See the system administrative organizational chart in the Appendices section.)

Such resources and services do not compromise Itasca’s ability to serve its constituents or to operate with independence, flexibility, and innovation. The Board of Trustees expect member institutions to adopt and act according to their individual missions while maintaining alignment with system goals. One of the system’s strategic directions in its 2006-2010 Strategic Plan is to “innovate to meet current and future educational needs efficiently.” Goals in support of this direction include:
Goal 4.2   Reward and support institutions, administrators, faculty and staff for innovations that advance excellence and efficiency.
Goal 4.3   Identify and remove barriers to innovation and responsiveness.
Goal 4.4   Hire and develop leaders who will initiate and support innovation throughout the system.

The system rewards the kind of innovation, proactive planning, flexibility, and responsiveness a small college thrives upon. It also consciously develops these qualities in future leaders through resources such as the Deans Academy and the Luoma Leadership Academy.

NHED, which includes Rainy River Community College, Vermilion Community College, Mesabi Range Community and Technical College, Hibbing Community College, and Itasca, is recognized as a fiscal unit by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, which allows the five colleges to have more stable funding despite swings in enrollment. NHED’s President provides District leadership and advocacy, representing member colleges at Board of Trustees meetings and regional meetings. The President also provides a link between ICC and the Office of the Chancellor. At remote colleges with few administrators, this representation is essential for local college leaders to fulfill their on-campus responsibilities.

The new NHED President, Dr. Sue Collins, took her position in Spring 2008 following a national search to replace NHED’s first president, Dr. Joe Sertich (who retired at the end of the 2008 academic year). Dr. Collins had been the NHED Vice President for two years, and had served at two other NHED institutions for more than two decades—as Provost for Vermilion Community College and in administrative, student services, and academic capacities for Rainy River Community College. Dr. Collins’ stated goals as she transitions into her new position include promoting collaboration among the colleges, increasing accountability, and encouraging innovation.

The District shares a President, assistant to the President, a vacant Vice President position, and other professional positions. For example, a single Human Resources (HR) Office provides service to the five colleges. This structure ensures consistency in hiring practices and policies as well as saving each college the expense of an HR Office staff. There are a total of 22 shared positions as well as 17 shared faculty in the District. Examples of shared functions and positions include the Office of Institutional Research, Applied Learning Institute, library cataloging, and the Student Support Services (SSS) Grant Director. (See the NHED organizational chart in the Appendices section.)

NHED has not only benefited the member colleges with centralized leadership, structural stability, and cost savings, it has also facilitated a number of collaborative initiatives that position the region and colleges well to serve community needs and promote economic development. For example, the Applied Learning Institute (ALI) has resulted from a partnership among the District colleges and 16 school districts in northeastern Minnesota. To meet the workforce needs in the region, ALI has developed vocational pathways and curriculum for area high school students in seven high-need skilled fields, including industrial technology, healthcare, pre-engineering, natural resources, advanced
automotive, construction trades, and business and entrepreneurship. The curriculum is designed to prepare students for vocational careers and to pique their interest with hands-on educational experiences coordinated with college curriculum in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Another important collaboration is the Arrowhead University Consortium, which facilitates the delivery of four-year programs in the Arrowhead region of northeastern Minnesota through onsite classes and distance-learning opportunities on regional two-year campuses. Other collaborations include the Northeast Alliance for Telecommunications (NEAT), which coordinates interactive television services for all the colleges and school districts in the region, and the True North Leadership Academy, which develops new leaders within the District.

NHED administrators meet regularly to share ideas and concerns, receive updates on Board of Trustees meetings, and foster a collaborative environment. The provosts meet monthly with the President in President's Cabinet meetings, chief academic officers meet monthly, and the chief finance and facilities officers meet once every two months or as needed.

One example of collaboration was the response to the findings of the Office of the Chancellor's Instructional Cost Study. The Instructional Cost Study is conducted by the Office of the Chancellor with input from the colleges as a first step in developing the annual allocation of state monies for each system institution. The study shows the instructional cost for each program or subject area in a given year, based on actual credits taken in the program and the actual cost of instruction, which includes personnel and non-personnel costs, as well as sabbatical and retirement costs.

The cost-study figures become a component of the statewide allocation framework as the costs at the institution by program are compared with the system average. Instructional costs are allowed a 20% range above and below the state average to fall into. If a program is above the range, the College is penalized by the difference, and if a program is below the range, the College is rewarded by the difference. Because the system's allocation goes to the District as a whole, both the District instructional costs by program and individual college instructional costs by program are evaluated.

In the four years of implementation of this allocation model, the District has fallen significantly above the allowed range in the instructional part of the allocation, resulting in a reduction to the District's allocation. In response to this, NHED colleges have examined course and section offerings, an analysis that has resulted in cancelation of low-enrollment sections when feasible, thus achieving fuller sections and reduced costs. At Itasca, this savings amounts to a reduction from an excess of $480,000 above the accepted range of instructional costs in FY 2006 to a much lower excess of $270,000 in FY 2007. The District as a whole reduced instructional costs by $700,000.
College Administration

Itasca, like the other member colleges of NHED, shares the NHED President, but the Provost, Dr. Mike Johnson, is the chief executive officer of the College. The Provost oversees all aspects of the College, and is responsible for making final employment, policy, and budgetary decisions. He directs the administration of the college as well as supervising the areas of Customized Training, Information Technology, and Financial Aid. The Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Barbara McDonald, oversees all academic programs (program development and review); supervises all faculty; oversees the Records Office, Enrollment Management, Food Services, SSS, and counseling, multicultural student services, and Perkins staff; and directs grant writing and management. The third administrator, Director of Finance and Facilities Pat Leistikow, oversees the budget and finances and supervises the Business Office, Residential Living, and ICC Bookstore staffs. In addition, Leistikow is the Chief Finance Officer for Rainy River Community College (RRCC), for which RRCC pays Itasca for 20% of her time. The Provost and the Dean divide supervision of director-level positions and other campus divisions and offices (see organizational charts in the Appendices section). The administrators work closely together and have regular Provost’s Cabinet meetings to make informed and timely decisions.

In the past decade, the administrative structure has changed significantly. When the College became a member of NHED, two campus positions were eliminated: President and Dean of Students. In October 1999, Dr. Joseph Sertich, then President of Itasca, took the position of President of NHED. Dr. Johnson was then appointed to the newly defined Provost position at Itasca in February 2000. In June of that year, Dr. McDonald took over from Dr. Jim Clark, then Dean of Instruction. The position was updated and re-titled Dean of Academic Affairs. In 2001 the Assistant Dean of Customized Training was also eliminated, and this area came under the direct supervision of the Provost. From 2000 to 2004, Bill Maki assumed the position of Dean of Students and Administrative Affairs while maintaining his Director of Finance and Facilities position. A new group was established, the Student Services Leadership Team, to assist Maki in planning and oversight. Made up of student services staff, this group continues to provide direction and facilitate communication and proactive planning in student services. With Maki’s departure in 2004, his position was redefined again. Pat Leistikow was hired as Director of Finance and Facilities, and the responsibilities of the Dean of Students position were distributed among the administrators. While the duties, oversight, and decision-making process for student affairs are shared among the administrators, Barbara McDonald has increasingly assumed these responsibilities since FY 2008. It was at that time that Pat Leistikow was also appointed Chief Financial Officer of Rainy River Community College. Today, the ICC administration team includes:

Dr. Mike Johnson, Provost

Dr. Johnson has a Doctorate degree in Educational Policy and Administration and an MBA in Management. He has a thirty-year history at Itasca. Following eight years as a faculty member teaching marketing and management classes, Dr. Johnson held the administrative roles of Director of College Services, overseeing finances, facilities, and auxiliary enterprises;
Director of Student Services; and Dean of Students prior to his appointment as Provost in 2000. He also served as head baseball coach for 15 years, a period that spanned both his teaching and administrative work. Dr. Johnson's longevity on campus has provided stability in times of flux and fiscal challenge, and he is known and trusted by College employees and community partners. Dr. Johnson has successfully forged relationships with regional business organizations and foundations, serving as Chair and Advisory Board member of the Itasca Economic Development Corporation, Jobs 2020 Steering Committee member, Vice-Chair and Trustee of the Blandin Foundation, Iron Range Resources Partner Advisory Committee member, and other positions. Dr. Johnson was awarded the David Martin Entrepreneurial Award in 2002 for entrepreneurship in the public sector from the University of Minnesota-Duluth's Center for Economic Development.

Dr. Barbara McDonald, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs

Dr. McDonald holds a Doctorate degree in Education and an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Prior to her current position as Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, which she has held since 2000, Dr. McDonald was the Director of Institutional Effectiveness at Itasca for seven months. She came to ICC after two and a half years at Rainy River Community College, where she served as Assessment Coordinator, English instructor, Center for Teaching and Learning campus leader, Service Learning Coordinator, and Co-Chair of Master Academic Planning. Dr. McDonald spent most of her life abroad before moving to Minnesota, living and working in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and Asia. Dr. McDonald currently serves as Chair of the Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital Board, and is past Chair of the Itasca Community Television Board. Her breadth of experience in assessment, instruction, academic coordination and planning, and her international background have contributed to her success at fostering faculty leadership and pursuing new initiatives at Itasca. She has received two statewide awards for her service, Outstanding Academic and Student Affairs Administrator from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (2003) and Women as Agents of Change Award from the American Association of University Women-Minnesota (2007).

Patricia Leistikow, Director of Finance and Facilities

Pat Leistikow earned a BA in Accounting from the University of Northern Iowa and passed the Certified Public Accountant exam in 1978. She brings to Itasca a strong history in accounting and auditing. She worked at Fox and Company (Grant Thorton) as an external auditor from 1978 to 1982, was an independent consultant from 1985 to 1988 for the Xerxes Corporation, and served as an accountant and internal auditor for Minnesota Independent School District 318 (Grand Rapids) from 1992 to 2004. She has been Director of Finance and Facilities at Itasca Community College since 2004. In recognition of her work in this position, Leistikow received a 2005 Outstanding Service Award from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

Administrators are evaluated annually by their supervisors and have performance reviews every four months; the Provost is evaluated by the NHED President. As part of
the administrator evaluation process, all employees have the opportunity to complete an annual online evaluation. Administrators meet with their supervisors to analyze these responses and use them to improve governance.

The College Climate Survey, completed approximately every two to three years and cited throughout this component, includes a series of questions evaluating leadership, communication, and decision making on campus. Responses pertinent to this core component are discussed in the following pages, but the overall trends of responses have been favorable and significantly more positive over time. In 2008, ratings of all but a handful of items were the highest in the history of the survey. Administration reviews College Climate Survey responses carefully as they consider changes to campus policy and practice.

**Participatory Decision Making**

Use participatory decision making - The College will invite and utilize the advice, ideas, and suggestions of its learners, faculty, staff, and community in order to strengthen the college and shape the future. (ICC Foundational Processes)

Itasca has benefited from a very high level of trust and cooperation between administrators and faculty, based largely on a long history of mutual respect, transparency, and authentic input and involvement in decision making. Almost 85% of faculty and staff responding to the 2008 College Climate Survey reported that “respect and concern is shown among Itasca employees,” and over 81% agreed that “college administrators are responsive to faculty/staff requests/concerns.” Positive responses to both of those questions have trended higher in this decade than in the 1990s, according to longitudinal comparison in the 2008 College Climate Survey. Administrator evaluations echo these responses. Between 70 and 75% of faculty and staff stated that the Provost “consistently” (the highest ranking) is sensitive to and shows empathy and understanding for faculty and staff feelings, and is available and approachable to discuss problems and concerns (Administrator Assessment, Dr. Michael Johnson, December 2006).

The culture of our College, including organization and decision-making structures, supports participatory decision making and collaboration on campus. Employees expressed satisfaction with these structures, with 71.2% stating “there are appropriate mechanisms in place for faculty and staff to raise and resolve issues” (2008 College Climate Survey). An impressive 87.8% reported that “college administrators promote faculty/staff input into college policies and procedures” (2008 College Climate Survey).

**Shared Governance**

The Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) union contract helps support the values of communication and participatory decision-making with the contractual guarantee of
shared governance. The contract stipulates that the institution must have a Faculty Shared Governance Council (FSGC) and an Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC).

FSGC is made up of the College’s MSCF leadership team, faculty committee chairs or representatives, and the Provost, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, and the Director of Finances and Facilities. Through monthly meetings of the FSGC, the ICC administration reports to faculty, seeks faculty input, and requests faculty action on issues such as new initiatives, grants, policies, personnel, student affairs, procedures, and fiscal matters. Faculty committee chairs and the ICC Faculty Association (ICCFA) Executive Committee report on committee actions, faculty decisions on requested actions, and bring up questions and concerns. (See FSGC and ICCFA agendas and minutes in the Resource Room for records of items discussed and actions taken.)

**Academic Affairs and Standards Council**

AASC provides oversight and leadership for academic matters including course outlines, course offerings, curricula, programs, and degrees. It makes all final curriculum decisions. The MSCF contract stipulates that AASC be directed by a faculty chair and composed of two-thirds faculty members and one-third administrators and/or other staff, ensuring faculty leadership in academics (MSCF Contract 2007-2009 Article 8, Section 2). AASC also responds to requests from the Office of the Chancellor relating to policy changes or academic initiatives. For example, AASC completed a comprehensive review all courses in the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) in 2007-08. In Spring 2009 AASC will lead the process of reviewing the Associate in Arts degree to comply with a state-mandated reduction to 60 credits from a current 64 credits.

**Faculty Association (ICCFA)**

Issues are addressed by the faculty as a whole through the ICCFA, which meets monthly during the academic year. The ICCFA refers matters to faculty committees for discussion and recommendations and also holds full-faculty dialogue on important and contentious issues. Faculty as a whole vote on committee proposals and other proposals at monthly ICCFA meetings. This structure provides campus-wide faculty input on important issues. For example, faculty voted in 2005 to participate in two pilot concurrent enrollment classes with Grand Rapids High School and in 2006 voted—in a move that sets Itasca apart from statewide trends—not to participate in concurrent enrollment classes as a rule.

**Faculty Committee Structure**

ICCFA’s committee structures foster participatory leadership. All MSCF unlimited full-time (UFT) faculty are required to serve on committees as part of their campus service. Faculty committees meet regularly or as needed and make recommendations to the ICCFA. When school is not in session, the ICCFA Executive Committee represents the faculty. Faculty committees write faculty position proposals and serve on all faculty and most staff search
committees (Personnel Committee) and advise about Information Technology needs (Technology Subcommittee), student affairs (Student Affairs Committee), and facilities planning (Facilities Committee). Faculty report that they participate in development of College policies and procedures at high rates (see Table 8), but the significant number of “no opinion” responses suggests that some faculty do not feel involved in such processes. The College utilizes the ICCFA and duty day meetings to help ensure involvement of all faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Opinion/NA</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Program Coordination

In the past decade, the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs has worked to develop faculty academic leadership on the program level. Now most academic programs have faculty coordinators responsible for program planning and assessment. In response to the Foundations of Excellence self-study, the most recent addition to this structure is an AA program coordinator. In 2008-09 a faculty coordinator was appointed for the AA program to provide faculty leadership of the College’s largest program and improve the assessment of general education learning goals. All academic programs engage faculty in Master Academic Planning (MAP) to set program goals, evaluate and assess progress toward those goals, and report results to the Dean.

Staff Leadership Structures

All staff are represented by unions—Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) for professional staff, Middle Management Association (MMA) for directors, and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) for support staff. As with the faculty union, these structures foster communication and participatory decision making. MAPE and AFSCME meet bimonthly, and their leadership meets monthly with administration, far in excess of the contractual twice-yearly requirement, to provide input on decisions.

Campuswide and Other Committees

Inclusive policies and representation of various divisions can be seen in institution-wide committees such as search committees and the Information Technology Services Advisory Committee, the Student Services Leadership Team, the Marketing Committee, the Master
Facilities Committee, the Crisis Team, and the Safety Committee. The campuswide Foundations of Excellence study of the first-year experience in 2007-08 and the criterion committees for the Higher Learning Commission self-study also had representation of a broad array of faculty and staff in different divisions on every committee (see committee rosters at the beginning of this self-study). Committees foster communication, collegiality, and “ownership” of the College’s policies and procedures among all units. Division units also meet as committees for goal setting and assessment through the Strategic Comprehensive Performance Enhancement (SCOPE) process.

Almost 63% of faculty and staff rate the committee structure as good or excellent (see Table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The democratic structures and processes used for decision making at Itasca mean that decisions are transparent and the result of extensive input. Of course, this strength can also present a challenge. The one area in which employees report some frustration in decision making is in the area of timeliness. While 56.9% agreed with the statement “The decision-making processes on campus ensure timely decisions,” a significant 29.3% disagreed. Our processes are as timely as they can be, as the monthly ICCFA meetings are scheduled a week prior to FSGC meetings. Other bargaining units also meet monthly with administration to provide input. Still, when committees must also meet to discuss issues, ICCFA recommendations can be delayed. The Executive Committee of the ICCFA provides faculty input if a decision cannot wait for the contractual process to occur. Even with these democratic processes, decisions are made much more quickly than at larger institutions.

Communication

Communicate openly and clearly - The College will communicate openly and clearly with everyone within the college and the communities it serves. (ICC Foundational Processes)

While the formal structures already outlined ensure a significant level of communication, the College administration and campus culture also promote transparency and information sharing. Other related communication practices include the:

“As a staff person who has been here for more than 20 years, it’s clear to me that one of Itasca’s greatest assets is the enthusiastic involvement of faculty, staff, and administration in College decision making, planning, and operations.”

-Staff member
- NHED President's biannual President's Information Sessions, including a formal presentation and question-and-answer session; the new NHED President holds “Conversations with Colleagues” three times a year.
- Provost’s Information Sessions
- Provost’s weekly “In Our Interest” column in the newsletter
- Provost’s “News to Use” updates each August
- Provost’s regular e-mail updates
- Provost’s and Dean of Academic and Student Affairs’ updates on biannual professional development days
- Director of Finance and Facilities’ biannual presentation on the budget on duty days
- Frequent e-mail contact
- Open-door policies for administration
- “Coffee and Conversations” with administration in each of the buildings
- TGIFs held in different buildings
- Special faculty-administration meetings on hot-button issues like the budget, concurrent enrollment, and state-mandated credit limit for degrees

A large majority (86.2%) of College employees reported that administration is available to them in the 2008 College Climate Survey, and ratings for communication between staff and administration have been higher in this decade than in the 1990s.

Table 10. 2008 College Climate Survey – Effectiveness of the Communication Process between College Staff and Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty and staff also practice open communication, due to both formal structures and a general climate that encourages information sharing. Committees report at monthly union meetings, and each union disseminates an agenda and minutes to members. FSGC and AASC agendas are e-mailed to all faculty, as are the FSGC minutes. Any proposals to AASC to change curriculum or to change or add a course are e-mailed to all faculty for review and comment.

In the past, employee evaluations in the College Climate Survey of communication among different units on campus, especially between staff and student services, included a significant ratings of only “fair” (34-35%). Happily, the 2008 College Climate Survey showed dramatically higher scores in this area, with 78% rating communication between staff and student services as good or excellent and 64.4% rating communication among all staff as good or excellent. It seems likely that the tremendous participation across
the institution in the Foundations of Excellence process led to these higher evaluations. Anecdotal commentary throughout that process supports this conclusion.

**Student Governance**

Student leadership is fostered through Student Government and recognized student groups. Student Government is consulted and asked to take action on issues relating to the student experience. For example, Student Government must vote to approve the tuition and fees proposed for the next year. The Student Government President and Vice President meet every two weeks with the Provost or Dean of Academic and Student Affairs to provide an update on Student Government activities.

Student Government and each recognized student organization has a faculty or staff advisor and is governed by a constitution and bylaws. Student Life fees paid by every student on a per-credit basis go into the Student Life budget, which is overseen by the Student Life Committee, made up of representatives of each student group and chaired by the Student Government Vice President. The Director of Finance and Facilities advises Student Life on budgetary issues, but the committee determines allocations of funds to student groups and for special expenses such as field trips and conferences.

Several structures and processes enable cooperation and collaboration among student organizations. Student Government and student organizations have office space centrally located in the Backes Student Center, while program-affiliated student organizations have space in learning community lounge areas. Monthly Student Life meetings bring all of the student organizations together. The Student Life Director helps student organizations collaborate and plan events. For example, all student organizations in 2008-09 were involved with Halloween festivities, Blizzard Week activities, and other events throughout campus. Each club is required to have at least two activities for student participation each semester. If it is to receive funding for the next year, each student organization must fulfill this goal and attend at least five Student Life monthly meetings.

Student representatives also serve on campus committees. The structure of the Information Technology Services Advisory Committee guarantees students majority voting rights. A student representative served on the NHED President Search Committee, and students frequently serve on staff and faculty search committees. Several students served on the Foundations of Excellence Dimension Committees, and many are involved with the ad hoc sustainability effort that started on campus in Fall 2008. Some program advisory committees require or recommend student or alumni representatives. Student focus groups are also utilized to improve marketing and recruiting. For example, in 2006, a focus group of incoming students of color was interviewed to explore how to make ICC the “best place to start” for them. Similar focus groups have studied the needs of nontraditional students.

The 2008 College Climate Survey, completed by College employees, gave administrators high ratings for communicating with students. These ratings, like most of the results of
the College Climate Survey that pertain to organization and communication, have been consistently higher in this decade than in the 1990s.

Student Government, Student Life, and recognized student organizations, like other structures and processes on campus, promote leadership, ensure input by all constituencies, and guarantee participatory decision making.

**Criterion One: Core Component 1e**

Itasca Community College upholds and protects its integrity.

| Integrity - Itasca Community College will put its principles into action. (ICC Values Statement) |

One of Itasca Community College’s core strengths is connectedness among students, staff, and the community. Our institution operates with integrity in all of these relationships and complies with all applicable state and federal laws and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system policies. The integrity of these relationships is ensured by fair, clear, and consistent policies and procedures; commitment of resources and expertise at the Office of the Chancellor; oversight of federal, state, system, and external auditors; and the accreditation process. This section focuses on legal compliance, data privacy and security, training, safety, and procedural fairness. For more discussion of federal compliance, see the Federal Compliance section; for more discussion of academic integrity, see component 4d.

**Legal Compliance**

Itasca Community College abides by all federal, state, and local laws, as do our auxiliary enterprises (ICC Bookstore, Viking Grill and Eatery, and Residential Living). The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system is accountable to the legislature and governed by a Board of Trustees. Thus, the system and all member institutions are bound by all state laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. The Office of the Chancellor provides mandatory training to administrative leaders and other relevant staff in all new policies as well as regular refreshers and reminders. The Office of the Chancellor has a Department of Legal Affairs, which serves as a resource for compliance with all state and federal laws. Legal counsel in the Office of the Chancellor specializes in different areas to provide expert guidance to member colleges and universities.
Itasca Community College administration, faculty, staff, and students are provided with handbooks (Employee Guidebook and work-study guidelines), which clearly state the responsibility of safeguarding state and student assets by following Board Policy 5.14 and related procedures for purchasing and contracts. The Director of Finance and Facilities reviews purchasing procedures as needed with staff. Requisitions for purchasing must be approved by the Director of Finance and Facilities, who checks for compliance and staying within budget. They are also signed by the Provost to provide a secondary review and to keep the Provost aware of purchasing trends. Quotes and bids are required for purchases over $10,000, and the Director of Finance and Facilities also encourages quotes for purchases of $2,000 to $9,999 to ensure the best value for the College’s resources. ICC’s Business Office policy is to pay all vendors on a timely basis when all proper documentation is in place.

**Audits**

Auditors monitor and ensure compliance with the law. Itasca’s processes and finances, including those of its auxiliary enterprises, are regularly audited by three separate groups of auditors: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system internal auditors, the Office of the Legislative Auditors (OLA), and external independent auditors.

**Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Internal Auditors**

Auditors serve different regions. Itasca is audited by the Northeast Region Minnesota State Colleges and Universities internal auditor Kim McLaughlin. Auditors do special compliance projects systemwide (e.g. foundations, construction, reported fraud investigations) and follow up on findings from the OLA and external independent auditors. System internal audits are public documents, available on the [Office of Internal Auditing](#) website, which also links to OLA audits.

**Office of the Legislative Auditors**

The Office of the Legislative Auditors (OLA), a state office that monitors state agencies, performs internal control and compliance audits every three years, with a focus on specific policies, which are conveyed to institutions prior to the audit. OLA audits are public documents, available on the OLA website.

**External Independent Auditors**

Reports of external independent auditors are available through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities [Financial Division](#) website.
Audit findings are publicly reported, as are the institution’s responses and the resolution of audit findings. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system internal auditors and the OLA monitor and ensure compliance with financial regulations. Independently audited financial statements, completed by external independent auditors, are available through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Finance Division website.

Compliance Training

Policies and procedures are implemented by the Office of the Chancellor on a system basis. Administrators undergo regular policy trainings provided by the Office of the Chancellor to learn policy and procedural changes; for example:

- Chief Finance and Facilities Officers attend recommended twice-yearly training conferences in policy, statutory changes, and current financial compliance (e.g. generally accepted accounting principles, government standards).
- Chief Academic Officers’ trainings twice a year have included in recent years decision-making, contract implementation, security, and faculty credentialing.
- Chief Information Officers attend trainings twice a year on topics such as data security, system upgrades, and Desire2Learn (D2L), the system’s online learning platform.
- Registrars meet three to four times a year for updates on projects and system-level changes. Student services offices go through training as needed for Integrated Statewide Records System (ISRS) updates.
- Financial Aid Directors attend recommended trainings twice a year through the system and once a year through NHED. Topics have included Return of Title IV funds (R2T4) calculation compliance for official/unofficial withdrawals, Student Loan Clearinghouse/ National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) reporting, summer aid packaging, Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP) reporting, Stafford/Perkins Loan packaging, and aggregate loan limits.

Administrative-driven duty days provide opportunities for training and education about changes to policies and procedures. In addition to presentations on these mandatory days, communication of policies, procedures, and law are provided through video and face-to-face training, e-mail notices, and posted notices. Examples include:

- System-mandated trainings on duty days
- System data security practices compliance online training
- Acceptable use policy for computers
- Posting of copyright policy next to photocopy machines
- Web training/video for search committee members on data privacy and hiring practices
- Communications about other policies, such as copyright, acceptable use of college property, procedures for encumbering college funds, data privacy, hiring practices, hazardous materials training, sexual harassment training, and disability rights and services
Other groups receive training as needed for their responsibilities. For example, all maintenance staff complete Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training, anyone using the Engineering concept labs must complete safety training, and Chemistry students undergo safety training prior to conducting lab experiments.

Resident assistants receive a week of extensive training prior to taking their positions for the semester and a one-day refresher prior to spring semester. Topics relating to upholding integrity through legal compliance and maintaining safety include:

- Sexual violence/healthy relationships
- What is a resident assistant?
- Job expectations
- Confronting situations/confronting friends
- Documentation on the job
- Crisis training
- Hall preparation

In the past four years, the College has made increasing efforts to improve audit findings. The Director of Finance and Facilities has arranged for special training and communication efforts to improve requisition procedures and ensure consistency in fiscal practices. In particular, there has been concerted effort to improve faculty and staff performance in completing approval processes prior to encumbering budgeted funds as required by the state. The Director of Finance and Facilities speaks on duty days to educate faculty and staff on legal requirements for fiscal responsibility.

To improve compliance with spending procedures and other policies, the Director of Finance and Facilities:

- Requires employees to submit a purchasing violation form, as mandated under Minnesota Statute 16A.15, when they fail to comply with spending procedures
- Provided training on avoiding fraud and Employee Code of Ethics violations on a duty day April 2006
- Provided handouts and training on a duty day Fall 2006 in business expense reimbursement filing rules, purchasing procedures, credit card procedures, and local purchase order policies
- Provided information on a duty day Fall 2006 on managing accounts receivable by dropping students for nonpayment
- Eliminated local purchase orders to improve accountability
- Provided required training on a duty day Fall 2008 in proper procedures and policies, including an extensive packet of required forms and directions for completing them
- Sends e-mail alerts and reminders about policy and procedure changes
The College has identified opportunities to improve procedural compliance:

- Streamline College fiscal requisitions
- Provide more easy-to-use forms online in one place

**Campus Safety and Wellness**

Itasca Community College is safe and largely free of crime. According to the 2008 Campus Security Report, which collected statistics from 2005 to 2007, there were no violent crimes, hate crimes, or sexual offenses reported at Itasca in that time period. Crime was limited to burglary (five reported in 2005 and 2006, four in 2007), five alcohol violations in 2007, and a single drug violation in 2007. (See the Federal Compliance section or the full 2008 Campus Security Report for more information.) In January 2009, ICC implemented a new wireless emergency notification system for students, faculty, and staff. The system, called Star Alert™, uses text and e-mail messaging to inform registrants of crisis situations impacting the campus community. Star Alert™ has been adopted across the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

Maintenance employees serve as official campus security. Itasca has staff on campus from 5am until 2am each day, with the exception of Sunday. In addition, the College utilizes student work-study security, which is scheduled by the Director of Residential Living. These students are trained by maintenance staff on how to do walk-throughs on the campus and proper security procedures in the event of any incident or emergency. They normally work from 9pm to 1am and also are scheduled for athletic contests or any other activities held on campus. Cameras have been installed at strategic locations throughout campus; additional cameras will be installed as resources become available. Students and staff may also request an escort from campus security.

Employees and students feel safe on campus. Almost 97% of employees agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “When I am on campus, I feel secure from physical harm” in the 2008 College Climate Survey, the highest-ranking perception statement on the survey. Although ratings on this question have historically been excellent, this response was the highest rating in the history of the survey. On the Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey in Fall 2007, 91% of students responded that they feel physically safe on campus; none reported feeling “not at all” safe.

The College follows federal OSHA guidelines and fire and building codes and inspection procedures, prepares mandated plans (such as the Pandemic Plan), and provides mandated health and safety training to all staff (e.g. Hepatitis B, blood-borne pathogens, defibrillator) and to pertinent staff as appropriate (such as hazardous materials training for maintenance staff). There are first-aid kits and automated external defibrillators (AEDs) at key locations on campus, and the Crisis Team keeps up to date on First Aid/Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification. The names of Crisis Team members are posted in classrooms and on the back of most bathroom doors, along with a campus map and emergency evacuation routes. All College employees have been provided a Crisis Manual, which outlines policies and procedures.
Following the passage of the state of Minnesota’s Conceal and Carry legislation, the system established a policy that all of its institutions would ban handguns on their premises. Itasca bans handguns on campus. Students who live in the residence halls and have hunting guns or other dangerous weapons must store them in a locked storage case, for which two designated College employees have the key. The Director of Residential Living does regular checks of dormitory rooms to ensure compliance with this policy.

To ensure proactive planning, the College has a Safety Committee and a Crisis Team. The Crisis Team and counselor Rick Mikesh in particular have been leaders for the District in providing crisis response training. The mission of ICC’s Crisis Team is to prevent and manage crises or unexpected tragedies that adversely affect our students, staff, and faculty. Services include education, support, counseling, referral, and mutual aid to other colleges and K-12 schools in our region.

In line with the College’s commitment to safety and wellness, a tobacco-free campus policy went into effect January 1, 2008. This policy was recommended by the ICC Faculty Association (ICCFA) in 2006. At that time, the administration limited smoking to specific areas and had smoking enclosures built in strategic locations around campus. While this did reduce the amount of smoking at the entrances to buildings and on the inner courtyard of the campus, administration decided to follow the ICCFA’s recommendation in Fall 2007 for implementation in 2008. Signage was placed in strategic locations and announcements were made through several communication channels, including the newsletter, discussions at Student Government meetings, and at information sessions held in the Fall 2007. The tobacco-free policy was adopted in Spring 2008 as planned, making ICC the first two-year college in Minnesota to go tobacco free. The College is also a drug- and alcohol-free campus. College policies about alcohol and drug use are published in the Student Handbook and ICC Catalog.

Itasca’s commitment to wellness can also be seen in its Associate in Arts degree requirements, which include a Wellness class and a Physical Education class. Wellness initiatives on campus in the past decade and strong intramural sports and other club fitness programs promote fitness and wellness for students, faculty, and staff.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Safety Committee and Crisis Team are collaborating more to improve prevention planning. One aspect of that is identifying students of concern. A January 2009 duty day presentation clarified that privacy policies and laws allow for discussion of legitimate safety concerns. The Student Services Leadership Team has developed a subcommittee to address students of concern to prevent situations in which students may do harm to themselves or others.
Data Security

Most of the College’s technology policy is driven directly by system policies, procedures, and standards. All Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system campuses are required to meet these standards, and the College complies with these requirements. The system has the following policies, procedures, and standards related to data security in place:

- Security and Privacy of Information Resources
- Protecting Private Data
- Password Standard
- Security of Wireless Access Points and Wireless Local Area Networks
- Anti-Virus Installation and Management
- Security Patch Management
- Network Segmentation
- Breach Notification
- Acceptable Use of Computing and Communication Equipment

Technology policy statements have been included in all staff and student publications for the past five years. Modification and updates of technology policies are reviewed by the Faculty Shared Governance Council (FSGC) and in committees. Student policy issues are similarly reviewed by the Information Technology Services Advisory Committee.

The College recognizes and understands the importance of information technology security matters, and the College has implemented the system security requirements for Wireless Access, Network Segmentation, Anti-Virus Protection, Protecting Private Data, and Patch Management. Additional system security guidelines are also followed to the extent practical and feasible. College information technology staff members participate in the system process of developing security standards and guidelines.

A copy of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Security Standards and Guidelines is available for review in the office of the Director of Information Technology Services. Data integrity is maintained by restricting access to authorized users. The College will adopt and implement security measures consistent with any new system requirements.

Data Privacy

The federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and the Minnesota state statutes and regulations provide for the collection, security, dissemination and confidential classification of student records. Students enrolled in the College are required by various offices, such as the Business Office, Counseling and Financial Aid Office, and Records and Admissions Office, to supply information necessary for services to be rendered. The College gives assurances that student information will be safeguarded against improper disclosure. As required under FERPA, ICC notifies students that their academic record is accessible by other Minnesota State Colleges and Universities institutions. Students may waive their right to privacy in writing to allow their parents or other specified individuals
to get information about their academic record and progress. Parents and guardians have access to student information for students under 18.

No directory or other list of students is released by the College to commercial agencies. Although the College does not publish a student directory, students are alerted about what information is public (directory) information and what is private. A student may make a written request at any time that public information not be released without his/her written permission. ICC complies with the Solomon Amendment, which allows for the release of student directory information to the Department of Defense when a written request is made by military personnel.

To protect data privacy, the College complies with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13) and the policies of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

Electronic data privacy is insured by providing each faculty, staff, and student with a unique account on the campus local area network. The operating systems on all faculty and staff computers allow the user to secure the desktop when unattended. The user’s unique account provides network storage that is password protected with strong passwords that must be changed each semester. No access is provided to a user’s network storage without written consent of the owner. Access to administrative data services is also restricted to those who have authorization to use this data. Users are prohibited from sharing their login credentials with other users.

The College makes an ongoing effort to raise awareness with faculty and staff about the importance of maintaining data privacy. This process includes discussions at duty day gatherings, online courses delivered via D2L, poster campaigns, and one-to-one discussions. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system conducted a security assessment of data security practices in FY 2008. Itasca fared well for its security technology and infrastructure, but a major recommendation of the report was to form a security committee to develop an appreciation for and implementation of data security guidelines. The process of finding volunteers for this committee was started in November 2008, when the need was discussed in the Information Technology Services Advisory Committee.

**Records Retention**

The College retains records according to the [Minnesota State Statute 138.17](http://www.leg.state.mn.us) Official Records Act. All student academic records are created and maintained within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system’s ISRS. Campus security is maintained by ICC information technology services with access to individual modules granted through the Office of the Registrar.

Hard copy student files are currently being converted to electronic versions using ImageNow. The system allows ICC to scan and link documents in a student’s file directly
to the record maintained by ISRS. Access to imaged files is maintained by campus Power Users (Registrar and Financial Aid Director).

**Public Information**

The College has a part-time Public Information Director, whose responsibilities include updating the catalog, compiling and writing a monthly ICC Page for the local newspaper, writing press releases, and coordinating other publications for the College. Other information is drafted by staff and faculty. The Provost is the official spokesperson of the College.

The College presents itself to the public with honesty. Public documents are accurate when they are published, including promotional/recruitment material, the ICC website, ICC’s weekly newsletter, and informational material such as the ICC Catalog, Student Handbook, semester schedules, brochures, program guidesheets, and press releases. Many internal reports and surveys are available on our website. The processes for conducting self-studies for the Foundations of Excellence and Higher Learning Commission have resulted in an increased amount of information available online to both internal and external constituencies.

Published materials are updated on a regular cycle (guidesheets every other year, catalog every three years, strategic plan every five years). The Foundations of Excellence process pointed to some issues in keeping published materials up to date, especially those relating to program and degree changes. Online materials are more frequently updated and will potentially improve the accuracy of College documents.

Itasca’s website has become an increasingly critical tool for recruiting and for relaying information to the College’s constituents. This poses a challenge for the College. Due to limited resources, there is no designated webmaster with the primary responsibility for site maintenance. Instead, web material is uploaded by individuals, with oversight and planning by committee. The Foundations of Excellence report recommended that a webmaster be designated, but given the current economic situation, such a hire is not feasible at this time.

The 2008 College Climate Survey of faculty and staff solicited evaluations of campus publications:
Table 11. 2008 College Climate Survey – Quality of Campus Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catalog</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Handbook</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Publications</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ratings for the ICC Catalog and the Student Handbook were the highest they have been in the past five College Climate Surveys, and the rating for admissions publications was similar. A significant percentage of faculty and staff are unfamiliar with the Student Handbook and admissions publications. To increase their exposure to these documents, faculty and staff are invited to orientation sessions and newly published admissions publications are posted in the administrative conference room and in the Enrollment Management Office.

In the Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey in Fall 2007, between 60 and 70% of students reporting on the accuracy of communication about programs, tuition/costs, and financial aid they received prior to enrollment rate it high or very high. The College’s mean responses to these pre-enrollment questions on the survey (3.77) were higher than those for comparison institutions (3.73) and significantly higher than those for the 2007-08 cohort (3.59).

**Fairness to Internal Constituencies**

In compliance with federal and state law and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system policies and procedures, ICC consistently implements clear and fair policies regarding the rights and responsibilities of each of its internal constituencies: students, faculty, and staff. College policies specifically prohibit discrimination and sexual harassment. As a resource, we also share a Regional Diversity Director/Investigator with the other northeast Minnesota community and technical colleges. The College’s Affirmative Action Plan and efforts to support a diverse student and staff are detailed in component 1b.

**Sexual Harassment**

The College has a clearly stated definition and policy prohibiting sexual harassment, which is published in the Student Handbook, Employee Guidebook, and ICC Catalog. The Provost is the designated officer to whom sexual harassment issues are reported. The Provost determines the direction of any investigation, including the involvement of the Regional Diversity Director/Investigator and which administrator will be the designated
decision-maker. Training in sexual harassment prevention and awareness is provided on an as-needed basis to various groups on campus. For example, a guest presenter from the community organization Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault is brought in to discuss healthy relationships, sexual harassment, and sexual violence during resident assistant training. Similar training occurs approximately once every three years for all employees. The system has provided sexual harassment training online for all employees and for supervisors.

The College opened a sexual assault advocacy resource center on campus, a collaboration between the Applied Psychology program and Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault. The on-campus victim-advocacy center, Support Within Reach, provides resources and training to the residence hall staff as needed.

Of employees responding to the 2008 College Climate Survey, 88.1% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I personally feel free from harassment (i.e. cultural, sexual, gender) on campus.” This is the College's highest rating historically in response to this question.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance**

The College complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure equal access to educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The College has handicap-accessible restrooms, parking, elevators, and ramps for access to upper and lower floors. The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) oversees compliance and promotes awareness while upholding its primary mission to assist students with disabilities in achieving access to higher education. OSD provides accommodations, information, advising, and supportive services to students with documented disabilities.

OSD works closely with other campus departments and resources, advocating for full inclusion of qualified students with verified disabilities in all aspects of campus life. The services of the OSD are discussed more fully in component 3c.

**Student Rights and Responsibilities**

The process for handling student complaints is discussed in the Federal Compliance section. In addition to their right to due process in complaints and grievances, students may appeal suspension. The appeals process, which is audited, is the same for any cause of suspension. The processes for making suspension and financial aid appeals are detailed in the ICC Catalog, website, registration booklet, and Student Handbook. Students complete an appeal form, which is submitted to the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs. The Dean makes a decision to approve or deny an appeal in consultation with counseling and financial aid staff and faculty (where appropriate). When an appeal is approved, the student agrees to a contract for success that details responsibilities in making academic progress. Students who fail to meet the contract requirements are suspended at the end
of the semester, and no other appeal will be considered by the Dean. In the event of extenuating circumstances, a student may make a second appeal to the Student Appeals Committee (which includes a student advocate, a counselor, Financial Aid Director, and the Dean). If the committee recommends approval, the appeal is sent to the Provost for final approval. A database of student appeals is maintained in the Records Office.

ICC students’ level of agreement that the College has readily available channels for expressing complaints is higher than that of students in the region.

Table 12. 2006 Student Survey – Student Complaints
Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employee Rights and Responsibilities

The NHED Human Resources (HR) Office ensures consistency in hiring practices, Affirmative Action policy, and faculty and staff information across the district. Faculty and staff receive one-on-one orientation by the HR representative on campus and are directed to an online Employee Guidebook upon being hired. The Employee Guidebook includes policies and procedures of the College. Employees give fairly high ratings to “college policies and procedures” in the 2008 College Climate Survey, with 62.7% rating them good or excellent. The score is nearly identical to the score in 2006 and slightly lower than in 2001.

The rights and responsibilities of faculty, professional staff, and support staff are governed by separate collective bargaining agreements, which are negotiated at the system level. All unions are protected by a contractual grievance process.

Faculty have clear avenues for expressing concerns and formally filing grievances. A faculty grievance representative is selected by the ICCFA. Itasca faculty have filed few grievances, and all have been resolved without legal recourse. The low number of appeals of grievances suggests a perception of fairness. The Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, who supervises all faculty, is responsive, encourages open communication, and is widely respected and trusted by faculty. In Dr. McDonald’s 2007 Administrator Assessment, 65.5% of staff reported that she was consistently (the highest score) “fair and impartial.” Another 27% stated that she was usually or often fair and impartial. (See component 1d for more discussion of staff evaluations of administrator fairness.)
Itasca Community College operates with integrity and fairness in support of its mission to provide “accessible academic and career-related education which contributes to the social and economic health of the region, empowers learners to meet or exceed their expectations, and fosters critical thinking and civic and global engagement.” This mission and related documents are publicized to students and the community and are the foundation of the College’s planning processes and academic programs. To uphold its integrity and to ensure fair treatment of all constituencies, the College abides by all local, state, and federal laws, and system policies and procedures. College Climate Survey results, administrator assessments, and other data attest to the culture of respect, fairness, and accountability on campus.
Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

Itasca Community College operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of our mission through structures and processes that involve the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees and Itasca’s administration, faculty, staff, and students.

Summary of Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- Itasca’s vision, mission, and Strategic Plan are “living documents” that are strongly aligned with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system strategic plan.
- There is strong implicit understanding of and support for the College’s mission among faculty, staff, students, and the wider community.
- The College operates with integrity, with a high level of trust and communication between employees and administration.
- The College’s mission documents are clearly stated and linked to discipline and program mission statements.
- The College has a strong reputation within the community it serves and is considered a leader within the District.
- The College is welcoming, inclusive, and proactive in serving diverse groups.
- The College’s inclusionary processes ensure participatory decision making and strong communication channels with internal constituents.
- System policies and training opportunities support the College’s compliance efforts; system audits provide strong internal controls.
- The NHED structure allows for efficiencies, regional planning, and collaborations; shared resources allow for consistency in policies and practices.

Challenges

- NHED's relationship with the system is not clearly defined.
- The system's strategic “high priorities” are not consistently funded.
- The College needs to improve public dissemination of mission documents.
- Community awareness and tolerance of diversity still needs improvement.
- ICC has a limited number of administrators with increasingly expanded roles and responsibilities.
- Communication and participatory decision making are time-consuming.
- As a small campus, it is difficult to meet system requests and stay on top of policy changes due to limited staff.
Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

Itasca Community College's allocation of resources and processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate our capacity to fulfill our mission, improve the quality of our education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.
Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

Itasca Community College’s allocation of resources and processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate our capacity to fulfill our mission, improve the quality of our education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Itasca Community College prides itself on being inclusive in planning and decision-making processes and constantly evaluates its mission and vision in order to meet and exceed the expectations of our students and others the institution serves. Through its Strategic Plan, the College establishes its budgetary priorities, master academic design goals, and technology and facility priorities. The College aligns its strategic goals with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system goals as well as the goals for the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED).

On an annual basis, institutional information and accomplishments are shared with the Office of the Chancellor and the College constituents through publications such as the annual Student Profile, the ICC Fact Book and the academic program review report.

Integrated College and System Planning

As a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, Itasca aligns its strategic directions and goals with those of the system office. In January 2006, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees approved its strategic plan for 2006-2010. Designing the Future, with a vision stating that:

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities will enable the people of Minnesota to succeed by providing the most accessible, high value education in the nation.
The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system vision is operationalized through its mission:

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system of distinct and collaborative institutions offers higher education that meets the personal and career goals of a wide range of individual learners, enhances the quality of life for all Minnesotans and sustains vibrant economies throughout the state.

And it is demonstrated through four strategic directions:

- Increase access and opportunity.
- Promote and measure high-quality learning programs and services.
- Provide programs and services integral for state and regional economic needs.
- Innovate to meet current and future educational needs efficiently.

Itasca’s goals are also aligned with the 2003 goals of NHED:

- Increase access and improve learning opportunities for students.
- Improve alignment with the Region’s employers, governmental entities, and education institutions.
- Focus college leadership on strong community ties and effective institutional management.
- Improve District planning.

Table 13 shows how the College’s Strategic Plan is aligned to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system’s strategic plan and the goals of NHED.
Table 13. System Planning Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Strategic Plan 2006-2010 Strategic Directions</th>
<th>ICC’s Strategic Plan 2003-2008</th>
<th>NHED Strategic Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Increase access and opportunity | Strategic Direction: Enhance Diversity and Access  
- Serve Diverse Learners  
- Learning Centered Environment | Improve District planning |
| Promote and measure high-quality learning programs and services | Strategic Direction: Learning Opportunities  
- Engaged Learners  
- Innovative Teaching | Improve District planning |
| Provide programs and services integral for state and regional economic needs | Strategic Direction: Community and Resource Development  
- Community Partnerships | Focus college leadership on strong community ties and effective institutional management |
| Innovate to meet current and future educational needs efficiently | Strategic Direction: Community and Resource Development  
- Enhance Resources | Improve alignment with the Region’s employers, governmental entities, and education institutions |

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

In preparation for the 2009-2012 strategic planning process, as well as ICC’s reaccreditation, ICC participated in the Policy Center on the First Year of College’s Foundations of Excellence self-evaluation. The Foundations of Excellence self-study yielded 10 improvement priorities that will be integrated into the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan.
Criterion Two: Core Component 2a

Itasca Community College realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

Through stated processes and values, ICC anticipates the needs of the future and plans resources accordingly. Our vision claims that ICC will be a “vital resource” and “community partner providing accessible, responsive, and innovative opportunities” that empower all learners to realize their full potential and “enhance the viability of the region.” To fulfill that vision, ICC continually assesses multiple societal trends and economic impacts in order to be posed to meet the needs of learners well into the future. The College’s internal and external research resources help shape decisions regarding our future.

Internal Resources

Office of Institutional Research

ICC and other NHED colleges share an Office of Institutional Research (OIR), which helps the colleges gather, examine, and evaluate data from multiple sources. The OIR, staffed by Director Dr. Doug Olney and Research Assistant Tracey Roy, is located in Itasca’s Administrative Building. The primary role of the OIR is to assist NHED colleges in performing external and internal scans and to provide useful data for decision-making processes. In addition, the OIR collaborates with the Office of the Chancellor in broader data collection and analysis as it relates to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system strategic plan. For example, the OIR researches and publishes transfer studies that examine the success rates of students transferring to state colleges and universities. This provides valuable data related to student academic success. The OIR is also involved in several system-level initiatives such as the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Accountability Dashboard, and the system’s Access and Opportunity Initiative to recruit and retain underrepresented students. The Director of the OIR attends meetings of the NHED President’s Council, chief academic officers, chief finance officers, and provosts when data-driven decisions are to be made. Examples of these decisions might be program closures, instructional cost analysis, allocation discussions, District-wide research studies, and so on. For the past two years, ICC’s OIR has participated in a system-wide study on the impact of the allocation model on rural “outstate” colleges and a pilot instructional cost study for the NHED District colleges. (This is further discussed in component 1d and 2c.)

Each year, the OIR produces a College Fact Book, an annual report of the College’s institutional benchmarks. The Fact Book includes information such as enrollment trends, student demographic information, academic progress and degrees earned, financial data, regional populations, employment data, other data regarding faculty and staff, and
survey results. This information is available to the public and serves as a primary resource for decision making.

Office of Enrollment Management

In addition to the OIR, ICC relies on its Office of Enrollment Management for internal scanning. Historically, the Office of Enrollment Management has provided data that helps the College administration monitor enrollment patterns, retention rates, graduate feedback, and other information that assists the administration in decision making. For example, the data collected across years provides comparisons that guide recruiting practices, course offerings, program development, and a host of other issues.

Each year the Director of Enrollment Management produces a Marketing Plan that guides the College’s recruiting team. Elements of this plan include website development, publications, and new recruitment strategies. In addition, the Student Profile, produced annually by the Office of Enrollment Management, tracks enrollment, retention, withdrawals, demographics, academic preparedness, degrees awarded, and future intent for students as a whole, as well as enrollment for subgroups of students, including feeder school graduates, minority and international students, and post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) students. The Student Profile collects data about ICC students from other divisions—Placement Testing, Student Support Services, and Developmental Education, as well as the New Student Survey report, and the Graduate Survey report—in a single convenient booklet. Throughout the year, the Director of Enrollment Management keeps the College abreast of enrollment data for the upcoming year.

National and College-Developed Surveys

In order to better understand our student demographics, needs, and educational experiences, the College administers questionnaires and surveys at key times throughout the year. These instruments, both nationally normed and internally created, collect information about student satisfaction with services, engagement in learning, and assessment of the campus climate. Externally normed surveys (with the most recent administration dates) include:

- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (2007)
- Foundations of Excellence Faculty/Staff Survey (2007)

College-developed surveys serve ICC and other NHED institutions. The Director of OIR works with college enrollment and assessment officers and chief academic officers to determine and develop the following surveys:
• **New Student Survey:**
The New Student Survey is conducted each fall term. This survey is intended to obtain student opinions about the information and services they received upon entering college. It also asks students to give themselves grades in various academic areas and seeks to determine what educational goals were important for students as they entered college. The self-grading and educational goal questions are also asked of graduates in the Graduate Survey. Survey results are compared to results from the previous four years and other District colleges.

• **Graduate Survey:**
Each year, all students graduating from Itasca are asked to complete a survey that they submit with their Intent to Graduate form. This survey is intended to examine graduates’ satisfaction with the College and their ideas for how it could be improved. It also asks students to give themselves grades in various academic areas and indicate how much progress they made toward reaching educational goals. In 2008, there were 297 graduate survey respondents, a high rate of return for ICC’s graduates, which number over 360 students.

• **General Education Student Survey:**
All students who graduate from ICC are asked to complete the General Education Student Survey. The majority of graduates comply with this request. The purpose of this survey is to obtain students’ perceptions of the degree to which classes and related experiences at ICC improved their achievement of ICC’s Foundational Goals and Outcomes listed on the survey.

• **College Climate Survey:**
The College conducts a Climate Survey every three to four years, which seeks faculty, staff, and administration’s perceptions of the College. The data is analyzed and presented at faculty duty days. The OIR Director meets with smaller groups from various departments to review the results and provide feedback on possible improvement areas. The results are published in the Fact Book.

• **Diversity Survey:**
In 2003, the College administered its first Diversity Survey at the request of the Office of the Chancellor. The systemwide survey was distributed to all colleges, and results were compiled and compared among area colleges. The survey was administered again in 2008. The purpose of the survey was to examine perceptions among underrepresented students of color as they related to their experiences on and off the campus.

Aside from surveys that provide feedback for improving educational and student services, ICC conducts surveys on particular initiatives as well. Examples include annual surveys on ICC’s Global Education experiences, the annual Civil Liberties Conference, and ICC’s Ethics Conference. This information helps ICC determine whether to continue funding these initiatives.
External Resources

In addition to the aforementioned resources, ICC accesses the Office of the Chancellor’s staff and other state resources to gather data that help the College address future issues. Trend data is gathered from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics when determining program development needs for the region. On a regional level, in partnership with Iron Range Resources (an Iron Range economic development agency), NHED has a Regional Workforce Development Coordinator who tracks economic and demographic trends, industrial development, and workforce needs throughout northeastern Minnesota’s Arrowhead region. Locally, ICC partners with the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Development Committee, the Itasca Economic Development Corporation, and industry partners to determine immediate needs for the area we serve. Using these resources, ICC analyzes its population trends, and plans for the future.

Some specific outcomes of these efforts include:

- Program development in high need/growth areas
- Refinement and growth of niche areas, such as Engineering, Nursing and Allied Health fields, Human Service fields, and Natural Resources
- Expansion of customized training in Pulp and Paper Science and Lean Health
- Facilities planning to meet changing demographics and expanded recruiting
- Infrastructure planning to meet technology needs

Demographic Indicators

In determining its future goals, the College analyzes demographic factors that may shape decisions or impact outcomes. Important indicators for the College’s service area include population trends, employment and poverty rates, and area K-12 enrollment.

Aging Population/Retirements

According to the most recent Minnesota demographic studies, rural areas will continue to be older on average than growing metropolitan areas. Minnesota’s overall population will not grow as fast in the future as it has in the past, with an average growth of approximately 5% through 2016. The aging of the population is a major reason for the slower growth. The age of employees in major Arrowhead region employment sectors is older, ranging from 48 to 50 among employees in the utilities, mining, paper manufacturing, education, city government, and healthcare fields. While the median age of Minnesota’s population as a whole is 35.4 years, the median age in northeastern Minnesota is 44.3. For northeast Minnesota, the data shows in dramatic increase in the aging populations and a decrease in the workforce.

“Coming back after 24 years was scary but all the staff here has made it great!!”
-Student Opinion Survey response
Figure 9. Projected Population Profile for Northeast Minnesota

Unemployment and Poverty

In comparison with the rest of the state as well as the nation, Itasca County residents face disproportionately high unemployment, underemployment, low wages, and poverty. According to the Minnesota Department of Economic Security, unemployment in Itasca County rose to an average of just under 9% in 2008, the highest level since 2004. Average annual wage paid per job in Itasca County was $10,000 less than in the rest of the state (Itasca Economic Development Corporation 2007 Community Report). While 38% of Minnesota’s children statewide qualify for free-and-reduced school lunch prices (a measure of poverty levels), approximately half of Itasca County’s students do (IEDC 2007 Community Report). In addition to unemployment and poverty, northeastern Minnesota’s population has a disproportionately low percentage of college attainment. While just less than 60% of Minnesotans lack any college degree, nearly 68% of northeastern Minnesotans lack that education and training.
Declining K-12 Enrollments

Area high schools are experiencing longterm declining enrollment. By 2009, Independent School District (ISD) 318 (Grand Rapids), for example, will graduate fewer than 300 students in comparison to 425 in 2003. The same trends are occurring throughout area school districts, with many fewer children entering school than in past years. For example, the total enrollment of kindergartners in all the districts was just 471 in 2006-07, compared to a graduating class of 647.
With this profile, however, comes an expected change on the horizon: a new employment boom on the Iron Range, which is expected to provide an opportunity for growth while at the same time posing serious challenges to the region. The region needs educated young people to meet projected workforce vacancies due to both retirement and new industrial projects.

Most pressing today is the expanded workforce need due to ten major projects valued at $5 billion that have been proposed for northeastern Minnesota in the next few years. These represent a cross-section of industries, including mining (iron and non-ferrous), timber/paper, energy, and aviation. The jobs created by these industries are in addition to the 75,000 replacement jobs due to retirement in the next decade. Northeast Minnesota is projected to gain between 7,000 and 16,000 jobs between 2004 and 2014, according to long-term employment projections from DEED. Of the new mining and energy industry jobs, 18% are projected to require a four-year professional degree, 65% a two-year technical degree. With the number of graduates projected to decline among the seven K-12 feeder school districts, this poses a challenge to industry and educational institutions such as ICC.

In response to these trends, ICC has partnered with area school districts in an effort to refocus on industrial engineering and healthcare fields, and partnered with area industries to develop responsive programming.

**Planning for the Future**

ICC charts its course for the future by combining the aforementioned resources with institutional planning processes prescribed by the system, including cyclical development of a Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan. The Office of the Chancellor calls for the development of these integrated master planning documents, and has an official process for reviewing and approving strategic plans by the Board of Trustees.

**Strategic Planning**

Itasca began to develop its first five-year Strategic Plan in February 2002. Presentations at the kick-off event included an overview of ICC’s history, a landscape analysis, and faculty-led discussions about the needs and expectations of Itasca students. Leo Christenson, System Director of Planning, presented information on the process and facilitated subsequent planning activities. In May 2002, community members, students, faculty, and staff used Group Systems V software to respond to a series of questions about the College’s strengths and challenges and about how well ICC prepares students for transfer and future employment. The 2003-2008 Strategic Plan was presented to the College community at a February 2003 Provost’s Information Session.

The 2003-2008 Strategic Plan consisted of three major directions and six specific goals, all of which were aligned with the system’s plan formulated by the Office of the Chancellor:
Strategic Direction: Learning Opportunities

• Goal 1. Engaged Learners
• Goal 2. Innovative Teaching

Strategic Direction: Enhance Diversity and Access

• Goal 3. Serve Diverse Learners
• Goal 4. Learner-Centered Environment

Strategic Direction: Community and Resource Development

• Goal 5. Community Partnerships
• Goal 6. Enhance Resources

Master Academic Planning

In August 2003, Itasca engaged Leo Christenson, System Director of Planning, and Todd Harmening, System Associate Director of Planning, to assist the College in designing a Master Academic Plan to serve as an ongoing mechanism for continuous program development and improvement. A 22-member Academic Design Team under the leadership of the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs was formed that included 11 faculty members, 1 community member, 1 representative from ISD 318 administration, and 9 administrators and staff members. Guided by the system’s Academic Design Handbook and the publication Academic Design: Sharing Lessons Learned, Christenson and Harmening advised the faculty to consider what academic traditions the College wants to preserve and strengthen; to anticipate student, community, and labor market needs for the future; and to review existing learning paradigms, such as learning communities. Christenson and Harmening guided the Academic Design Team over the course of nine months.

ICC planning and evaluation practices such as the Strategic Plan, the annual Strategic Comprehensive Program Evaluation (SCOPE) process, the program review process, and the Assessment of Academic Achievement Program, were integrated into the academic planning process.

A review of the Strategic Plan was the starting point for discussions about an academic plan. The following considerations guided the Academic Design process:

• The academic plan must align with ICC’s values, vision, mission, and goals.
• Improving teaching and learning is the paramount purpose of the College and should inform all planning efforts.
• Planning should be integrated into the fabric of the College and should involve the entire campus community in an ongoing conversation within the College about how well its organization, programs, and services meet the needs of its learners.
The Academic Design Team met seven times from August 2003 through February 2004, in addition to several separate meetings held by the eight Design Team work groups. Teams conducted an analysis of internal and external data (a landscape analysis) using information provided in the ICC Fact Book and Student Profile, as well as data from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, the US Census Bureau, the Minnesota Demographer’s Office, the Minnesota Department of Economic Security, the Minnesota Job Vacancy Survey, the Minnesota Job Outlook to 2008 (statewide and for northeast Minnesota), and ISD 318. The team considered the challenges the College faced, as well as future workforce opportunities identified by external data. It also reviewed internal data on ICC programs and trends.

The participants then formed eight work groups to conduct reviews of the following programs: AA/Liberal Arts, Accounting, American Indian Studies, Applied Psychology/Human Services and Child Development Associate (CDA), Business Management, Class Act (pre-Education) and Paraprofessional Educator, Engineering, Natural Resources/Forestry, and Nursing. Work groups performed analyses in which they considered each program’s strengths, challenges, and opportunities. They reported to the full group on their findings, and participants shared ideas for design goal statements linked to the College’s Strategic Plan. The goals had to be measurable, contribute to program improvement or growth, achievable within a three-year period, meet the ICC mission and vision, and be affordable. The Academic Design Team developed the following four goals:

- Academic Design Goal 1 - College programs expand/enhance internal and external relationships, including external partnerships and internal program and discipline collaborations.
- Academic Design Goal 2 - College programs offer alternative delivery options to support student learning.
- Academic Design Goal 3 - College programs demonstrate continuous improvement in teaching and learning.
- Academic Design Goal 4 - College programs are viable.

From these four broad goal statements, each work group developed specific program design objectives that would be measurable and feasible over three years. Work groups were encouraged to think about students’ sense of learning community at ICC as it related to the student development model (enrollment, retention, involvement, graduation). The Academic Design Goals were incorporated into the Worksheet for Design Criteria for Program Improvement, Enhancement, and New Initiatives. Under each of the goal statements, the work groups listed design outcomes, how they intended to measure success, what data source(s) would be used to evaluate whether or not the goal had been realized, and a target year. All Academic Design materials were then compiled and a draft of the Master Academic Plan was presented to and accepted by the faculty in August 2004.
Program Planning and Development

In its Strategic Goal 2, the College states it will be “responsive to the evolving needs of learners and their communities.” To meet this goal, ICC continually reviews the viability of its programs and considers new programs or redesigns programs to address the changing needs of learners and communities we serve. Itasca has experienced several of these changes in past decade, each development being the outcome of a new opportunity or partnership or a response to changing employment needs or demographic impact. New or redesigned programs within the past decade include:

- American Indian Studies Certificate
- AA degree emphasis areas: Mass Communications, Business, American Indian Studies, pre-Education (Class Act)
- Child Development certificate
- AS in Business Management
- AS in Early Childhood Education
- AS in Geography/Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- AAS in Natural Resources: Wildland Firefighting
- AAS in Pulp and Paper Technology
- AS in Accounting (pending)

Advisory Committees

Programs that lead primarily to employment utilize advisory committees made up of professionals in the field. These committees meet on an annual basis and provide input or feedback to program coordinators on numerous issues. For example, when the AAS in Human Services was redesigned to an AS transfer in Applied Psychology, the advisory committee provided employers’ perspective on what changes would provide the best success for students. More recently, the advisory committee to the Natural Resources program has provided input regarding the program’s upcoming Society of American Foresters accreditation process, on the development of the Wildland Firefighting Program, and on recent articulation agreements between the University of Minnesota’s four-year forestry program and ICC’s two-year terminal degree. Advisory committees are active with ICC’s Nursing program, Natural Resources program, American Indian Studies program, and Pulp and Paper Technology program.

Two highlighted examples of program development describe how Itasca utilizes its resources in its decision-making process.

- An example of a program redesign is the Human Services AAS degree program (a terminal degree for employment), which was redesigned as an AS in Applied Psychology/Human Services transfer program articulated with Bemidji State University and the University of North Dakota. This decision was made after a careful analysis of market conditions, which included a full program review, an environmental scan, focus groups with area employers, and student interviews. The program, which was on the verge of closing, was transformed into a thriving learning community that now has an annual enrollment of
approximately 40 students. Students are finding employment as well as transferring with great success.

- A program development example is the establishment of Itasca's Wildland Firefighting program, the only such program in the state and one of only two in the country. Back in 1999, ICC saw a need to expand the Natural Resources program to include a firefighting component. The Minnesota Interagency Fire Center, which represents all of the federal and state fire programs, was extremely interested in this possibility due to the increasing need to hire more trained firefighters. Itasca set out to establish a Wildland Firefighting program that would include a unique partnership with both the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Interagency Fire Center in Grand Rapids. Working with a diverse group of advisors (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the USFS, the Fire Center, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, trainers and educators), a framework for a one-year diploma and a two-year AAS degree was developed. The result is a unique program that allows Itasca to teach the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) courses with certified instructors and provides the program with the gear and equipment they need from the fire cache at no cost. In addition, several agencies assist with internship opportunities. The partnership also yielded a five-year Intergovernmental Personnel Act agreement to share a USFS employee as an instructor/coordinator. Today this individual is fully employed by Itasca. Over 300 firefighters have been trained and are active in the field, with the program continuing to grow.

New programs must address the College's mission and goals. Following a careful analysis of need and potential interest, and review and approval by the ICC Faculty Association (ICCFA) and the Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC), a new program application is submitted for system consideration. Through the system program approval process, there is assurance that no unnecessary program duplication is occurring and that the program is viable according to projected job market data. The system provides each member institution with an annually updated program inventory.

### Building Strategic Program Partnerships

Itasca actively seeks to collaborate with fellow NHED institutions and business and industry partners to improve educational options to meet current and future needs. In the past decade, Itasca has developed extensive partnerships with other system schools to develop programs, share programs, and create new opportunities for students. For example:

- In 2001 ICC embarked on a three-year program partnership with NHED’s Mesabi Range Community and Technical College to co-locate the Computer Network Engineer Technician (CNET) program to ICC. This allowed ICC to serve the needs of Itasca County in terms of educating CNET operators for our service area.
- In 2005, ICC joined Hibbing Community College and Rainy River Community
College in obtaining a three-year federal grant to develop alternative online-distance career laddering options to meet the growing need for educated nurses in our region. The result of this grant is ICC’s hybrid/online Practical Nursing program and two distance options with area Registered Nurse (RN) laddering programs.

- In 2006, ICC became the lead two-year partner in the designated Minnesota Center for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence, a partnership between Mankato State University and seven community colleges. This was in response to the growing need for engineers.
- In 2008, ICC partnered with Vermilion Community College to co-locate its entrepreneur program at ICC.

ICC has also partnered closely with area industries in response to growing needs in the area of industrial technology:

- In 2005, ICC partnered with UPM Blandin Paper Company to develop a Pulp and Paper Technology program in response to a high number of expected retirees. A three-tier program was developed that includes a diploma program, AAS, and AS transfer option with the University of Minnesota’s Bioproducts Engineering Program.
- In 2007, ICC partnered with Minnesota Power (an Allete Company) to develop an Industrial Technology – Power Generation program to meet the anticipated energy needs of new industries expected in northeastern Minnesota. ICC plans to launch this program in Fall 2009. The program prepares entry-level workers for employment in power plants and educates them in additional alternative energy areas.
- In 2008, ICC, along with NHED colleges, partnered with five southern system colleges under a Department of Labor grant to develop an Energy Technician Program focused on renewable energies. This project will include a two-year terminal degree, four related alternative energy certificates, two high school modules, and a shared curriculum design that will provide access to students across the state.
- ICC is currently involved with developing programming to meet the needs of underemployed and unemployed nontraditional students who can be trained in high-need areas. ICC’s strong partnerships with the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Itasca Economic Development Corporation, the Blandin Foundation, the Workforce Center, and KOOTASCA Community Action have allowed the College to anticipate program needs and respond appropriately with solutions to improve job readiness and employment.

In the past five years, ICC has also collaborated with area high schools to identify strategic educational pathways that prepare students for future careers in high demand areas. The efforts include:

- Since early 2000, ICC has hosted and expanded summer camps for high school and middle school students in STEM areas. Summer experiences have
included annual junior and senior engineering camps, pulp and paper science camps, and allied health camps (nursing and related careers).

- Itasca and the seven surrounding school districts have formed the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative (IASC), in which ICC is a lead partner. This partnership has allowed for stronger communication and shared resources. For example, ICC and school district faculty meet often to examine issues related to student academic preparedness and have participated in joint research projects to decrease the need for remedial education.

- Most recently, NHED was appropriated $1 million annually through legislative funding to support vocational education initiatives in northeast Minnesota. The Applied Learning Institute was formed, which includes the five NHED colleges and their respective K-12 partners split into four geographic teams. IASC makes up the West Team. ICC, together with its partners, has developed and implemented career pathway programs in the areas of pre-Engineering (Project Lead the Way), Allied Health, GIS, Natural Resources, and Entrepreneurship.

**Linking Master Academic Planning to Facilities and Technology**

The College continues to closely monitor its academic programs in relation to changing technologies and the use of space to enhance learning. As an institution increasingly engaged in learning community designs, ICC has dedicated significant space and technology over the past decade to support learning community development. For example:

- Programs such as Applied Psychology, Class Act, and Forestry have dedicated classroom space with upgraded technologies and designated learning community student learning/lounge spaces.
- The Engineering program designed and then requested and received bonding for a dedicated building, which includes 24-hour access to a living/learning environment, complete with high-tech lab space, a concept lab for project building, a third-floor dormitory, dedicated computer lab, and lounge and recreational rooms.
- The Library has transformed itself to become a center for student engagement through renovations and redesign of spaces. The Library has a high volume of patrons who access computers, meeting spaces, new quiet study areas, and testing and tutoring services.

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

In planning for the future, the College has undergone a massive facilities improvement request process this year. Our goal is to secure bonding and one-time monies for right-sizing underutilized space on campus, upgrading science labs, and constructing a new instructional and student-services building. This request will be considered for 2010 design funding with 2012 targeted for construction.
Emergency Planning

Since 2005, the Office of the Chancellor has put increasing importance on emergency preparedness and planning. The system office has a division of Fire, EMS (Emergency Management Services), and Safety, under which emergency planning is located. All colleges and universities have developed local emergency response plans that dovetail with the system’s overall emergency response.

Pandemic Avian Influenza Planning

In FY 2006 Itasca developed its local Pandemic Avian Influenza plan (completed September 2006) with guidance from the Office of the Chancellor. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Pandemic Avian Influenza Plan represents the governance and coordination plan document for the system’s colleges and universities and the Office of the Chancellor. College and university plans all share three principles of design:

- The health and welfare of students, faculty, and staff is the highest priority.
- Prudent commitment to the continuity of the student learning experience will inform planning efforts.
- Plan design will anticipate and provide for continuity of all critical operations and preservation of physical assets.

Each college and university is charged with the care and protection of its own students, faculty, staff, and physical assets. The System Plan provides guidance and direction regarding issues of system policy and procedure and outlines the areas of responsibility for all parties. The System Plan, in concert with Board policy and procedure, contains the authority for the college and university plans. Where conflicts arise, the System Plan will govern.

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

In December 2008, the College completed its Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The plan provides an operational framework in the event of an emergency that facilitates the resumption of the critical campus operations, functions, and technology in a timely and organized manner so the College can continue as a viable and stable institution.

The primary objectives of this plan are to:

- Reduce disruptions to operations
- Minimize damage and loss
- Achieve an orderly recovery from emergency operations
- Identify relocation sites
- Ensure operational and managerial requirements are met
- Maintain ability to meet employee contractual obligations
National Incident Management System (NIMS)

In addition the plans mentioned above, the Office of the Chancellor required that all key administrative personnel be trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Itasca’s Provost, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, and maintenance foreman participated in regional training and certification on June 17 and 18, 2008.

The NIMS system provides the mechanisms for emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations to work collectively by offering a consistent and common approach to preparedness. It is intended to:

- Be applicable across a full spectrum of potential incidents, hazards, and impacts, regardless of size, location, or complexity
- Improve coordination and cooperation between public and private entities in a variety of incident management activities
- Provide a common standard for overall incident management

NIMS is applicable to state, tribal, and local governments, private sector organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, nongovernmental organizations, and other organizations with an active role in emergency management and incident response. A basic premise of NIMS is that all incidents begin and end locally and that NIMS provides the framework to enhance the ability of responders, including the private sector and nongovernmental organizations, to work together more effectively.

Criterion Two: Core Component 2b

Itasca Community College’s resource base supports our educational programs and our plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

Practice stewardship - The College will demonstrate accountability through stewardship of its fiscal and capital assets. (ICC Foundational Processes)

Responsiveness – The college values accessibility, flexibility, and the agility to anticipate and respond to learner and community needs. (ICC Values Statement on Responsiveness)

Itasca Community College plans proactively and responds creatively to maintain and enhance its physical and human resources and the quality of its educational programs. To respond to challenges in major revenue streams, the College has instituted cost-saving measures and continued to pursue grant funding and other revenue sources.
Financial Resources

Itasca Community College is funded through the following revenue streams:

- State appropriation
- Tuition
- Student fees
- Customized Training/Continuing Education appropriation and income
- Capital and Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement (HEAPR) bonding bills
- Special appropriations
- Auxiliary enterprises
- Grants
- ICC Foundation

Figure 12. 2008 Revenue Streams
The College's largest sources of funding are state appropriations and tuition, and it faces challenges on both fronts due to declining state appropriations, an allocation model disadvantageous to rural colleges, and a legislative cap on tuition increases. To ensure that local legislators are aware of the impact of these issues on the College, the ICC Provost has regular contact with our state senator and state representative (whose sons are alumni of the College). The Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) President lobbies for higher education issues at the state capital.

**System Allocation Model**

The state legislature determines an appropriation for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system each biennium. The system's requested appropriation is based on projected expenses, inflation, and resources necessary to keep tuition low and achieve the system's mission. Even though the state's allocation to the system has increased, Itasca's funding has gone down because of the allocation model implemented by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities in 2007, in which NHED is treated as a single fiscal unit. Because the allocation model relies heavily on enrollment growth and class size, rural colleges with smaller class sizes and declining regional enrollments receive smaller allocations. (See Figure 14 below for appropriations in the past decade).

To ease concerns and allow institutions time to adjust to the new model, the system phased it in gradually. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, NHED (and its member colleges) received a set appropriation. After that, to decrease the impact of the new allocation model, the system adopted a temporary “hold harmless” policy, making up a percentage of the
difference between the FY 2006 NHED appropriation and its appropriation in FY 2007 under the new model. The “hold harmless” agreement meant the College was held completely harmless the first year, was impacted by 25% of the loss the second year, 50% the third year, 75% the fourth year, and 100% the fifth year. The new allocation model, with its negative financial impact on the College, will be fully implemented by the fifth year, FY 2011.

**NHED Allocation Model**

NHED reallocates system funds to District colleges based on percentage of appropriation in FY 2002. The rationale for this model is that it stabilizes funding for District colleges when enrollment shifts erratically. In recent years, this model has been disadvantageous to Itasca because ICC’s enrollment is higher than in 2002. This model is currently being reevaluated by NHED.

**Tuition**

In the past decade, tuition costs rose to make up for declining state appropriations (see Figure 14 below). While increasing tuition is not Itasca’s preferred route to fiscal stability, tuition is the sole other stable major revenue source to ensure the maintenance of programs and quality education. In response to students’ concerns statewide about rising tuition, however, the Legislature has capped tuition increases since FY 2006. (In FY 2009 the state legislature made an additional appropriation for a 2% tuition buydown to offset some of the funding losses from the cap). The NHED President has set tuition for all five colleges since 2007 to reduce competition and align allocation framework appropriation formulas. Tuition covers 43% of NHED’s costs. To increase revenue from tuition, the College is seeking to increase enrollment with more marketing, expansion of our recruitment area, and initiatives to increase enrollment through special program offerings.

![Figure 14. Ratio of Base Appropriation to Tuition Revenue](image_url)
Based on current funding projections, Itasca’s funding will not increase in the near future. Minnesota, like many states, faces an enormous budget deficit, currently projected at $5 billion, and is constitutionally required to balance its budget. The Office of the Chancellor has been requested by Minnesota Management and Budget to develop an option to reduce the budget for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system by 10% for the next biennium.

**Student Fees**

Fees charged to students on a per-credit basis fund Student Life activities (athletics, YMCA-reduced memberships, recognized student organizations, field trips, speakers, and other planned student activities), statewide student government, technology, and parking. The Student Life budget is overseen by the Student Life committee, made up of representatives of each student group and chaired by the Student Government Vice President. The Director of Finance and Facilities advises Student Life on budgetary issues, but the committee determines allocations of funds to student groups and for special expenses such as field trips and conferences.

**Customized Training and Continuing Education Appropriation and Income**

The state provides a separate appropriation for customized training (CT) and continuing education, as well as Minnesota Job Skills Partnership grants to fund instructor salaries. The income from course fees and from contracts with clients is a potential source of revenue growth. CT’s Lean Healthcare training in particular has been in demand, and Itasca’s CT program is a regional leader in Lean Healthcare and Lean Manufacturing.

**Funding for Capital Projects and Maintenance**

Major facilities improvements and building projects require special funding through the legislative capital bonding bill passed each biennium. One part of the bonding bill is called Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement (HEAPR) bonding. NHED chief financial and facilities officers, the NHED President, and then the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system prioritize projects to be included in the bonding bill. Because the process of selecting projects for the bill and the process of passing the bill is long (and subject to approval by the legislature and governor), planning for major projects begins many years before they might come to fruition. In the past decade the College has received capital bonding bill funding for Wenger Hall and HEAPR bonding funding for brickwork, roof replacements, and other projects. For FY 2010 ICC is requesting funding to improve lab space for STEM classes, “rightsizing” renovations campuswide, and a new classroom and student-services building to replace the current administration building and Donovan Hall.
Special Appropriations

The legislature funds special initiatives for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system in addition to the system base appropriation. Through these sources, ICC has secured funding for **Awards for Excellence** (teaching and learning initiatives), hired an Assistant Director for Multicultural Affairs (through the **Access, Opportunity, and Success** funding), invested in information technology improvements, and partnered with Minnesota State University-Mankato as a **Minnesota Center for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence**. While all of those are short-term appropriations, ICC is also a partner in a sustaining special appropriation for the **Applied Learning Institute**, in which NHED institutions and regional high schools collaborate to provide high school students accelerated pathways to key higher education programs.

Auxiliary Enterprises

**Resident Housing**

In the past decade, ICC has opened two residence halls, the third floor of Wenger Hall (December 2002) and Itasca Hall (August 2005), the latter of which was funded with Itasca County Housing and Redevelopment Authority revenue bonds. The residence halls house 110 students. Income pays the principal and interest payments on the bonds as well as a portion of operational expenses. Occupancy during the academic year has exceeded projections, maintaining a 95% occupancy rate. The residence halls break even on a cash-flow basis.

**Viking Grill and Eatery**

The Viking Grill and Eatery is the longtime food service operation at ICC, which operates as an auxiliary enterprise providing catering services for campus events, breakfast and lunch meal plans for 110 on-campus residents, and breakfast and lunch services for the campus and larger community. The food service goal is to break even financially while providing a critical student service.

**ICC Bookstore**

The ICC Bookstore sells textbooks, supplies, novelties, and college apparel. The retail markup funds the cost of labor (one part-time staff and work-study positions), utilities, repair and replacement, and contributes to the College budget as needed with approval of the Provost.

Grants

**Goal 6. Enhance Resources**

Itasca Community College will pursue a wide variety of public and private resources to ensure the ongoing support of its mission and vision. (ICC 2003-2008 Strategic Plan)
Itasca has a long history of success in receiving grants from the federal and state governments and from state and national granting organizations. In particular, it has been a beneficiary of substantial grant funding from the federal TRiO programs and from the Blandin Foundation, a major foundation based in Grand Rapids with a mission to support rural communities and a mandate to focus 55% of grant funding on the local community. Although grant funding can raise questions with regard to sustainability, the College has successfully sought grants as a strategic priority to enhance student services and educational quality in the face of severe budget challenges.

**Federal and State Grants**

In the last decade, the College has more than tripled its federal grants, to a total of $814,535 in 2008. Most of these grant dollars are from longterm federal sustaining grants that are stable and predictable—TRiO grants for Student Support Services (SSS), Upward Bound, and, more recently, Talent Search; and Perkins grants for college lab assistants, equipment, and the Testing Center. The College relies on sustaining SSS and Perkins grants for important programming and student services. Talent Search and Upward Bound sustaining grants fund outreach and college preparation for underprepared and underrepresented regional students. Significant additional federal grants include several from the National Science Foundation. The Engineering program has been particularly successful in attaining grants for scholarships. Total federal grant-funded expenditures for the College from 1999-2008 were approximately $7.3 million.

The College has also been successful in securing state grants, increasing these awards from just under $20,000 in 1999 to over $318,000 in 2008. For the 1999-2008 period, the College made state grant-funded expenditures totaling $1.1 million. Significant grants have included Minnesota Job Skills Partnership grants, which help to fund the College’s Customized Training (CT) staff, and a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency grant for water assessment.

**Private Grants**

The Blandin Foundation has generously supported a wide variety of programs and initiatives at the College and has started an endowment fund for an American Indian Studies chair at the ICC Foundation. The Mdewakanton Sioux Nation and the Grotto Foundation have been particularly supportive of Native language preservation efforts and the creation of an American Indian Studies program. Other private grantors have funded an array of teaching and learning projects and initiatives to support students. The College made a total of $4.4 million in expenditures through private grants in the 1999-2008 period, of which $3.6 million were from the Blandin Foundation.

The College’s strength in attaining grant funding ($12.9 million total 1999-2008) was cited as a concern by the North Central Association in 1999 due to the uncertainty involved in basing future plans on funding sources which may fluctuate. Indeed, the College has a mixed history of sustaining grant-funded programs. Still, grant resources have been a powerful strategy for investing in programs and stimulating future growth.
ICC Foundation

The College receives an allocation each year of minigrants for program enhancement from the ICC Foundation. In addition, the Foundation helps to support eleven endowed programs, including the Library, Chemistry and Physics, and Nursing. Most significantly, the ICC Foundation provides dozens of student scholarships each year, improving access and enrollment.

Budgeting

The College strives to maintain a balanced budget and avoid deficit spending. To maintain fiscal stability, The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system requires a reserve of between 5% and 7% of operating revenues (Policy 5.10). The College had a large fund balance in 2005-06 due to realigning tuition and increasing enrollment. After that year, the College was subject to a new allocation formula that, as discussed, presents a challenge to rural community colleges. To make up for the loss, and to avoid exceeding the system maximum for required reserves of 7% of operating revenues, the College spent down its fund balance to the 5% level, with an emphasis on investing in program development and technology. Our goal is to maintain a reserve of 5% of operating revenues. The College met that goal until FY 2009. In this year, appropriation decreased about $60,000 while wages and benefits from a systemwide contract settlement went up an average of 8%, tuition went up 2%, and enrollment went down 4%. The College is addressing this issue by decreasing expenses and increasing revenue.

Given the College’s fiscal challenges, budgeting must be based on sound principles and aligned with the College mission and Strategic Plan. The fundamental principles which underlie the budgeting process include:

- history of funding
- preservation of core programs
- ensuring adequate staffing and student services
- enhancement of growing and strong programs
- investment to increase efficiencies
- innovation to serve the region’s needs
- matching grant allocations

The College projects enrollment five years into the future as a baseline for budget decisions, and budget processes begin in late fall and winter for the next fiscal year. Using annual enrollment projections, the budget starts with personnel costs (72% of the budget) and then includes fixed costs (e.g. leases on equipment, utilities, insurance). Detailed budget proposals are submitted by the Library, Information Technology, physical plant, and the Engineering program (because of matching grant requirements), and input is generated from the Master Academic Planning process, the Facilities Committee, and the Faculty Shared Governance Council (FSGC). The rest of the budget is based on what has been budgeted in past years adjusted for inflation.
All budget expense requests are aligned with projected revenue in the budgeting process. When increases are requested, rationales are required. If the proposed budget does not balance, the Provost’s Cabinet (Provost, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, and the Director of Finance and Facilities) evaluates priorities with respect to the College mission, the Master Academic Plan, and the Strategic Plan. Prior to decision making, conversations are held with ICC Faculty Association (ICCFA) leadership and, when appropriate, the greater College community.

Just over half of College employees in the 2006 College Climate Survey expressed satisfaction with the budget process, with 51.3% rating it good or excellent (18.9% said they didn’t know). A somewhat higher percentage (59.4%, with 21.6% having no opinion) agreed with the statement “The allocation of human and financial resources supports the college's mission.”
Figure 16. 2008 General Operating Expenditures

2008 General Operating Expenditures

- Instructional - 40%
- Student Services - 14%
- Institution/Administration Support - 11%
- Physical Plant Operations - 10%
- Academic Support - 9%
- System Chargebacks - 5%
- Community Ed/Customized Training - 5%
- Professional Development - 3%
- Other - 2%
- Scholarship Financial Aid - 1%
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The College faces major budget challenges in the current fiscal year and in the coming biennium. Due to state revenues that are much lower than projected, the state has a nearly $5 billion budget deficit. To balance the budget, all state agencies, including the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, have been “unallotted” funds in their current budgets. The system was unallotted $20 million; Itasca’s share of that is $110,000, which must be cut from the budget by the end of FY 2009. In addition, the College may experience budget reductions of approximately $350,000 per year for the next biennium, a 10% reduction in the budget.

The College faced a similar challenge in the past decade. Due to an economic downturn in FY 2002, a projected decrease in state funding and a decrease in enrollment led to a projected shortfall of more than $400,000. In response, Itasca’s FY 2002 budget process included a significant reduction in many of the College’s programs, staffing, and class offerings, as well as a substantial tuition increase. (A planned 5% increase was doubled to 10%.) There was also a delay in the hiring of several unlimited full-time (UFT) faculty positions, including the librarian and an English instructor. Administration positions were reduced from four to three, and several staff positions were reduced and/or eliminated. This process was inclusive, with campuswide budget meetings and information sessions. According to Provost Dr. Mike Johnson, “We came through this challenging time quite well and were able to maintain morale during very difficult circumstances. The key was open communication while respecting the privacy of individuals and appropriate union processes.”

A Fiscal Advisory Council has now been established by administration to ensure campuswide representation during the current budget reduction process as well as any that may arise in the future. The Fiscal Advisory Council has representation from each of the major bargaining units on campus as well as administration. In addition to this council, every staff member on campus will have the opportunity to provide input on the budget, anonymously if they wish, through an online wiki and suggestion boxes. Information on the budget and College finances is available to all employees on a shared drive in the College’s computer system.

The Fiscal Advisory Council will remain a permanent part of the budget process in support of decision making by the Cabinet. This council should help to provide a regular conduit of information about the budget process, a necessary change if we are to address the fact that approximately one in five employees reported having no opinion or knowing nothing about resource allocation and the budget process.
Institutional Capacity

Human Resources

The College seeks to operate with minimal staffing levels adequate to meet needs when effectively utilized. Instead of hiring as a first recourse to meet new or growing needs, the College first turns to its existing human resources. Investment in faculty and staff development and training are critical to promoting the efficiencies required by this approach as well as to fostering a culture of excellence, continuous improvement, and satisfaction among employees.

The College has also consistently shown its commitment to educational quality by maintaining small class sizes and investing in student services personnel who provide guidance and academic support. As discussed in component 3c, Itasca students are retained and graduate or transfer at higher rates than do students at comparison institutions. We feel the dollars we spend on student services—$2,634 per full-time equivalent (FTE) v. $971 per FTE at comparison institutions—(IPEDS Data Feedback Report) have a direct and meaningful impact on student success.

As shown in Table 14 below, the College maintains lean staffing, using part-time employees as well as intermittent employees and work-study students to fill in gaps and provide support for full-time staff and faculty:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFSCME</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Unit Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPE/MMA/Commissioners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Unit Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Employees may be in more than one unit.

Source: MnSCU Office of the Chancellor, Personnel - Data Management & HRIS, December 5, 2008

“Our competitive advantage is that we take care of people. . . . Students tell us it’s totally different here than at other colleges.”

--Provost Dr. Mike Johnson
Employee-to-student ratios have remained stable over the years, as has enrollment. Compared to the other colleges in the region, Itasca has a lower percentage of faculty (48% of total employees). Other northeast Minnesota colleges range from 46% faculty (Vermilion Community College) to 65% faculty (Fond du Lac Community and Tribal College). Still, student-to-faculty ratios are low.

Table 15. Student-to-Employee Ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students to All Employees</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students to Faculty</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administration meets with Human Resources (HR) annually to discuss staffing levels and issues. When necessary, HR does an analysis of a given area to determine if needs are being met. In 2007, for example, HR did a study of the Business Office which resulted in the hire of a half-time position to meet increasing demands related to the addition of a new residence facility (student housing contracts, food cards, etc.). HR produces an annual report on hires within the district and by college that is shared at FSGC. Other staffing plans are related to program growth or closure or are identified through planning processes such as strategic planning and Strategic Comprehensive Performance Enhancement (SCOPE) processes, the Foundations of Excellence study in 2007-08, and input from the Student Services Leadership Team.

The Faculty Personnel Committee makes proposals, generally initiated by the discipline or administration, for new UFT or unlimited part-time (UPT) positions. Proposals include rationale based on credit load needs, retirements, or projected growth. If a proposal is approved by the ICCFA, it goes forward to FSGC for action by administration, which makes all final hiring decisions.

Itasca, like many institutions across the country, faces a large number of retirements in the next decade. Approximately 30% of staff are expected to retire, taking with them a wealth of institutional knowledge and valued professional experience. Ongoing professional development and leadership training opportunities, such as NHED’s True North Leadership Academy and the system’s Luoma Leadership Academy, will help to ensure that the College will be prepared for retirements of veteran faculty, staff, and administrators. Faculty and staff have considerable options for retirement (including early retirement, phased retirement, and no mandatory retirement date), so the College cannot plan for retirements in specific timeframes.

Despite efforts to maintain a limited workforce, the College’s largest budget challenge is still the percent of the budget allocated to salaries and benefits. As discussed in Criterion 1, all staff and faculty are represented by bargaining units. Contracts for all bargaining units except faculty are negotiated at the state level. The faculty contract is negotiated at the system level. Staffing costs represent the largest part of Itasca’s budget (72%).
The faculty are particularly experienced, well qualified, and committed to staying at the College, which is a huge benefit to the institution and its students, but does lead to higher costs. Forty-seven percent of ICC’s faculty/staff have been here ten or more years (Fact Book 2008, Table 39). The Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) contract sets salary by experience (step placement) and education (column placement). Because of the high number of faculty at the top experience and education level, Itasca’s faculty salaries are the second-highest for community college faculty in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

For the 2008-09 academic year, 60% of full-time faculty are at the top of the scale (Office of Institutional Research, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities ISRS Operational Data).

Itasca faculty at the top of the salary scale compared to other NHED schools:

- Hibbing - 44%
- Itasca - 60%
- Mesabi - 57%
- Rainy - 54%
- Vermilion - 38%

Despite this fact, the College’s instructional costs are a modest 42% of the budget. Compared to peer institutions nationally, Itasca's instructional costs are relatively low: $4,174 per FTE v. $4,833 per FTE (IPEDS Data Feedback Report).

The College strives to meet instructional and other staffing needs in cost-effective ways through:

- Shared positions within NHED
- Shifting responsibilities into other positions instead of replacing staff
- Effective use of part-time and intermittent staff and part-time and adjunct faculty
- Efficient use of college lab assistants (CLAs) and student work-study positions
- Grant-funded positions (including sustaining grants in SSS and Perkins-funded CLAs)
- Shared classes in NHED
- Eliminating small class sections and cutting back on sections offered

One example of this is how ICC shares its Director of Finance and Facilities with Rainy River Community College, which has purchased 20% of her time. NHED is structured to support a number of other shared positions, including Institutional Research, library cataloging, and Human Resources. (See Table 13 in the NHED Fact Book for a complete list.) Some staff at Itasca have also taken on additional responsibilities, allowing Administration not to hire new positions. For example, the Academic Resource Center and Disability Services Director has served as SSS Director since the former SSS Director left, and administrators have taken on extra roles instead of hiring a Dean of Students. Finally, safety concerns in
lab classes might have led to unsustainable maximum limits on class sizes; instead, the use of college lab assistants (CLAs) allows proper supervision in labs while still maintaining an affordable class size for the institution.

Development of Human Resources

Value its human resources – Itasca Community College will provide an environment that fosters continuous development of its faculty and staff. (ICC Foundational Processes)

In addition to the professional development provided by the College (see components 4a and 3b), different divisions have professional development budgets so that administrators or directors may ensure that employees get important continued training. For example, Information Technology Services has a significant budget for training to ensure that their small staff has cross-training and wide expertise in the information technology infrastructure and hardware and software needs on campus. Training priorities across the institution include improved student services, greater productivity, and greater efficiency. Grant support has augmented professional development funding in SSS, Engineering, and for technical staff.

Staff in the Financial Aid, Records, and Business Offices will receive cross-training so that students can stop in one place—much like a fully staffed Admissions Office—when they apply for admission. This will improve service to students at the same time that it increases efficiency. The “RightNow” feature on the College website provides answers to frequently asked questions and enables students to contact a person who can provide answers to their specific questions. Soon, training in the ImageNow program will improve record-keeping efficiency by creating electronic versions of all student records.

To develop leadership skills and enhance staff knowledge and performance, NHED has developed a new professional development program in the past five years, the Really Important People (RIP) Conference, which is a retreat and training opportunity for all NHED support staff. In existence for five years, the conference focuses on professional development by offering workshops featuring “best practices” at various colleges. Time is provided for informal dialogue to build relationships, enhance productivity, and learn what other campuses do in specific situations.

Employees also create their own professional development plans and some bargaining units have allocated funds to use for a range of professional development activities or materials at their discretion. The funds are overseen and disbursed by the elected union treasurer to help defray costs of professional development activities, including tuition, conference costs, and books. Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) employees create professional development plans as part of their annual performance review, and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) staff have less extensive professional development plans. (Faculty professional development is discussed further in component 3b.)
Facilities and Grounds

A Master Facilities Plan (MFP) is developed approximately every five years with input from administration, faculty, and staff. The MFP Committee oversaw the development of the current MFP, which was completed in Fall 2008. This was one section of a NHED contract with an architecture firm, Hay-Dobbs, to develop a master plan for the five district colleges. The MFP Committee, which had representation of faculty, staff (Director of Facilities), and administration, held open meetings during the 2007-08 academic year to get input from faculty and staff about facilities needs. Each meeting focused on one of the College buildings. The MFP Committee prioritized and presented items to the ICCFA for review and input. Towards the end of the process, priorities were presented at two open meetings. Itasca’s MFP is aligned with its Master Academic Plan and Strategic Plan, emphasizing efficient use of space, safety and upgrades for maintenance and energy efficiency, creation and enhancement of welcoming environments for students and the public, improvement of instructional technology, and facilities to promote teaching and student learning.

College buildings range in age from 1926 (Donovan Hall, a classroom building) to 2002 (Wenger Hall, a classroom building and residence hall) and 2005 (Itasca Hall, a residence hall). Most College buildings are between 20 and 40 years old and need updating for current use, general maintenance, and energy efficiency. Plans include the continuation of “right-sizing” efforts to renovate spaces for most efficient use; planting and signage to enhance the Northwoods character of the campus; longterm plans to build a new residence hall; a new classroom building; and completing major renovations to the Backes Student Center, Mullins Hall, and the Media Center.

The campus grounds give the College its Northwoods identity and are a major asset for the Natural Resources program in particular. The campus includes native plantings with interpretive signage, and University of Minnesota forest lands immediately adjacent to campus include the oldest research forest plots in the state. Enhancing these features and continuing partnerships with the University of Minnesota is an important goal of the College.

Facilities Improvements

The MFP addresses renovation, upkeep, and new building needs. Major renovations and improvements require longterm planning. To seek bonding funds for facilities improvements, ICC develops a priority list based on MFP, Master Technology Plan, and Master Academic Plan and submits its priorities to NHED. The District’s chief finance and facilities officers agree to a NHED list of priorities, which is submitted to the President’s Cabinet (President and provosts) for approval. NHED then submits its priorities to the Office of the Chancellor. As discussed above, the Office of the Chancellor sets its priorities and submits them to the state for inclusion in the legislative bonding bill.

In the past 10 years, the College has made a number of significant facilities changes to improve services for students and update its educational programs. These include two new buildings,
several renovation projects, and scheduled maintenance projects. As discussed, the College is also in the process of requesting funding to pursue important facilities projects. The following list summarizes the major projects of the past decade and their status:

- **Wenger Hall** completed in Fall 2002 – New Engineering building with concept labs, learning community spaces, and a third-floor dormitory.
- **Parking** - New parking lot added on west side of entrance road where the tennis courts were located; additional lot added in front of Wenger (south side) in 2003.
- **Itasca Hall** completed in Fall 2005 - New dormitory housing 75 students.
- **Wilson Hall** - New roof in 2000 and remodel of classrooms 128 and 133 with new chairs, tables, and instructional technology. The road on the west side of Wilson was paved with asphalt in 2007.
- **Davies Hall** - Remodeling of nursing classrooms and labs and the addition of an interactive television classroom. The roof was replaced in 2001. In 2002, ICC became a “Hub Site” for the State of Minnesota Network. This necessitated the creation of a secure, climate-controlled data center in Davies Hall. In exchange for hosting the Hub Site, the College was able to negotiate a much higher Wide Area Network bandwidth connection, going from less than 1.5MbS to more than 50MbS.
- **Dailey Hall** - Roof replaced in 2006 and remodeling of classrooms 110 and 112. New classroom is now in place of KAXE radio station, which moved off campus.
- **Mullins Hall** - Roof replaced in 2007 and cardiac conditioning room was reconfigured in classroom 207. Gym floor is refurbished at least every other year.
- **Backes Student Center** - Roof replaced and bookstore remodeled in 2008. A new office was built for the coordinator of records and admissions, and the service area in the Records Office was remodeled to better serve students. Air conditioning was installed in the cafeteria area, and a new stove was installed in the kitchen.
- **Library** - Library renovation, including the creation of the Testing Center, quiet study carrels, offices for academic support staff, and a computer lab, completed Fall 2002. A new quiet study area was developed in Fall 2008, and the circulation desk was moved to better accommodate student traffic and staff.
- **Athletic fields** - New dugouts completed Fall 2008. A new backstop was installed several years earlier for the softball field.
- **Campus grounds** - Living fence was planted in 2005 along the west side of the College entrance to reduce snow drifts and beautify the entrance. Trees have also been planted along the entrance on both sides and around campus. A nature-scaping pond with native plants in the prairie area between Dailey Hall and Wilson Hall was refurbished in the summer of 2008.
- ** Updating** - Fresh paint, new colors, new furniture, new carpeting, and art have enhanced the student commons area in Backes Student Center and the hallway connecting Backes with Davies and Dailey Halls. The hallway in front of the Library also has been repainted and has new light fixtures.
The tremendous growth in the Engineering program since the mid-1990s and student interest in residential living led the program and the College to plan for a new facility and on-campus housing. Wenger Hall, which is discussed in more detail in component 3d, was constructed to support the kind of Engineering learning environment the program envisioned. Part of this vision included a learning community that lived and recreated on campus and had 24-hour access to learning facilities, so Wenger included dormitory space for 35 students.

The student housing in Wenger Hall has been filled during the academic year since the building opened in 2002. Because residential living reinforces Itasca’s academic goal of being a “learning community campus,” the College immediately began to investigate further opportunities to build residential hall facilities. After commissioning a housing study, which affirmed the need for additional on-campus housing, the College obtained $1 million in external funding through a grant from the Blandin Foundation and completed financing with the Itasca County Housing and Redevelopment Authority. The new 75-bed housing facility, Itasca Hall, opened in Fall 2005. Residential living at the College breaks even on a cash-flow basis, and residential occupancy rates are outperforming projections. To cover costs in the long term, the dormitory must maintain 80 to 85% occupancy. Since it opened, the dormitory has had 95% occupancy. In Fall 2008, the waiting list for dormitory space was long enough to fill another residence hall.

In addition to the projects listed above, a number of rooms have been reassigned and redecorated to support learning communities and provide space for student organizations, offices supporting student needs, and faculty development activities. These include:

- Anishinaabe Resource Center and student lounge
- Natural Resources student lounge
- Class Act lounge
- Psychology Club lounge
- Student organization space (relocated to Dailey and then to Backes, where it is now centrally located on campus)
- Student Veterans’ Assistance Center
- Support Within Reach office (sexual assault outreach and advocacy for students)
- Workout room (relocated from Backes to Mullins)
- Center for Innovation (relocated from Davies to the Library)

The 2008 College Climate Survey showed that 75% of Itasca employees agreed or strongly agreed that the classroom facilities are conducive to learning. That 10% disagreed is understandable given the age of some of the facilities. Graduating students responding to the 2008 Graduate Survey were generally satisfied with the classroom (77% satisfaction) and laboratory (73% satisfaction) facilities. A slightly higher percentage (82%) of graduates were satisfied with buildings and grounds, and 89% of students responding to the 2008 Student Opinion Survey reported that the campus was well maintained.

*This project has revolutionized the Itasca Community College campus. We have gone from a commuter college to a residential campus. The whole place has a new life and new heartbeat that just previously did not exist.*

--Ron Ulseth, Engineering instructor and Engineering program coordinator
A difficulty in planning for and executing major facilities improvements is the time delay associated with bonding: two years from proposal to receiving funds, if successful. Projects that are not funded must wait an additional two years before they are reconsidered. Bonding is competitive even within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system; not all projects are funded, and any can be subject to a last-minute line-item veto.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

ICC is currently considering building another residence hall, one similar to Itasca Hall. The occupancy rates of both existing residential facilities have been well over 90% since they opened. Because recruiting efforts continue to expand beyond our historic service area, providing housing for students who need it is critical. We have a waiting list each year, and with the expansion of overall College recruitment and a new initiative in Engineering to recruit students of color, we expect a continued and increasing housing shortage. The College is also in preliminary discussions with the owners of Wan-nigan Apartments, a privately owned housing complex located next to campus.

The College’s MFP includes plans for a renovation of Backes Student Center to create a simpler admissions process and a more welcoming entrance for new students. Plans include creating an Admissions Office, which will be a “one-stop shop” for students just inside the entrance to the building. Funds are not yet available for the project, but staff who work with incoming students will go through cross-training to provide more seamless service to incoming students prior to the renovation.

The College has submitted a bonding proposal to the system that includes right-sizing renovations and a new classroom and student support building to be constructed on the footprint of the current Donovan Hall and Administration Building. Administrative offices would move to Backes Student Center.

The Media Center building will be remodeled with funds donated by an alumnus and those requested as part of ICC’s MFP. In addition to the Library’s current physical limitations and increased usage, changes in technology and expectations have transformed the way students approach learning and use of libraries. To support Itasca’s focus on learning communities, the Library will adopt an “Information Commons” model, which is more conducive to collaboration and group activities. This combination of physical space, resources, and services will better support the active learning which is common on campus. Further enhancements will include a 50-seat writing lab and multimedia room.

The College is pursuing initiatives to become a more sustainable campus. One project, which has received grant funding from the Blandin Foundation, is to improve the existing wood boiler to allow it to burn biomass. This project to provide economic savings is a collaboration between the Engineering and Natural Resources programs. The Natural Resources program faculty and students will manage a forest plot for biomass fuel.

The College has submitted a $500,000 STEM request to the system to renovate the science lab in Wilson Hall. This is being leveraged by a grant received from Itasca County for $100,000 for water quality lab testing equipment.
Technology

Utilize technology - The College will enhance the use of electronic learning tools and processes to support classroom learning and to provide learners with an appropriate range of high quality programs and services. (ICC Foundational Processes)

Itasca Community College’s technology environment consists of a modern network infrastructure and a mixture of modern and dated end user equipment. Information Technology Services’ focus is to ensure appropriate infrastructure capacity and redundancy for security and optimal performance, investing in new technology to increase efficiency and accountability in administrative functions; enhance teaching and learning; and implement cost-saving measures when performance needs would not be compromised.

The College has improved efficiency and accountability through information technology by:

• Adopting a voiceover Internet protocol telephone system that improves functionality while decreasing costs.
• Offering thin clients or slightly dated computers from labs for computer users without high-performance software or multimedia needs.
• Accessing the support of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities/State administrative information technology systems.
• Enhancing campus-based information technology functions, such as scheduling resources, database maintenance, payroll processing, directory and website maintenance.
• Providing employees with the tools necessary for archiving all official documents in an international standard format to ensure accessibility for years to come.
• Implementing the ImageNow document imaging system to create permanent electronic student files.
• Planning for information technology business continuity by virtualizing our server infrastructure and providing mirrored data centers.
• Implementing print/copy management systems enabling all users to print/copy on any network imaging device and tracking printing/copying for budgeting purposes.

The College has prioritized teaching and learning needs in its information technology improvements:

• Teaching lab support is given first priority.
• The College implemented the Desire2Learn (D2L) instructional management system platform at the beginning of the 2004-05 academic year. All courses taught at ICC are D2L enabled, so all faculty and all students have access to D2L.
• Four computer teaching labs serve the campus with the newest computers and software necessary to support courses taught in the labs. All labs contain an instructor’s computer and ceiling-mounted LCD projector.
• As of Fall 2009, all classrooms on campus were equipped with modern multimedia capabilities, including ceiling-mounted LCD projector with integrated audio, DVD/VCR, and network/video connections.
• The College has two large lecture facilities that incorporate multimedia capabilities. Wilson 120 has a ceiling-mounted projector connected to a computer, VCR/DVD and cable television, and audio speakers. Davies Theater, which accommodates audiences as large as 280 persons, has a large-screen, high-quality LCD projector, DVD/VCR playback device, and a podium wired for sound/data and video.
• Twelve classrooms on campus are considered to be “Smart” classrooms. These rooms feature a dedicated computer and an LCD projector for making presentations, DVD/VCR units connected to the LCD projector, and some have sound systems or an interactive display screen.

Information technology access is provided to students:

• There are wireless hotspots throughout campus for laptop users.
• There are two general-use student computer labs with the most up-to-date computers, instructional software applications, and printers on campus.
• There are more than 100 dispersed computers throughout campus clustered in different buildings and learning community rooms.
• Each dorm room in Wenger Hall is wired for Internet access, and wireless access is provided in the Itasca Hall residence hall.
• In September of 2008 the practice of closing teaching labs while classes were not using them was changed to allow students to use these resources when they were empty.

Satisfaction with information technology on campus has gone up dramatically in the past two years. A majority of employees responding to the 2006 College Climate Survey agreed that the college provides appropriate technological resources for faculty to enhance student learning, but a significant minority disagreed. This was the lowest ranking for this item in the past ten years. In the past two years, however, significant improvements have yielded much greater satisfaction with technology resources among Itasca employees. While 59.4% agreed or strongly agreed that “the college provides appropriate technological resources for faculty to enhance student learning” in 2006, 77.6% agreed or strongly agreed with that statement in 2008. In addition, the level of disagreement was much lower. While 24.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement on the 2006 College Climate Survey, just 8.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed in 2008.
On the 2008 Student Opinion Survey, 80% of students felt that computer lab resources were accessible. Graduates are asked to rate satisfaction with College services in the Graduate Survey. In 2007, they gave computer labs a fairly high mean score of 3.65 on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest level of satisfaction. Although this was higher than the 2006 mean of 3.57, it is significantly lower than the NHED mean of 3.91. In 2008, however, graduates gave computer labs a much higher rating, a mean of 3.94.

Criterion Two: Core Component 2c

Itasca Community College’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly inform strategies for continuous improvement.

Itasca Community College has developed evaluation and assessment processes that support an active decision-making process and continuous improvement. These processes include system accountability measures, institutional data instruments, instructional cost and allocation studies, program and curriculum review, self-study processes, and staff performance.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Processes

As a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, the College adheres to the system’s accountability framework.

System Accountability Measures

In 2008, the Office of the Chancellor established a series of accountability measures called the “accountability dashboard,” which monitors the performance of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system on selected key measures related to the system’s strategic goals. The dashboard is designed as an assessment tool for the Board of Trustees,
The Board and system institutions use this information to improve services to students and the citizens of Minnesota. The dashboard includes 10 accountability measures, 6 of which are currently tracked, while 4 others are still in development. The accountability report is generated by the system Office of Research and Planning on an annual basis and is updated as new data become available; it is posted on the system’s website. The six active accountability measures are indicated below in bold:

- Access and Opportunity  
  **Enrollment**  
  **Net Tuition and Fees**  
- Quality Programs and Services  
  **Licensure Exam Pass Rates**  
  **Persistence and Completion**  
  High Quality Learning  
  Student Engagement  
- Meet State and Regional Economic Needs  
  Partnerships  
  **Related Employment of Graduates**  
- Innovation and Efficiency  
  Innovation  
  **Facility Condition Index**

On an annual basis, as part of the President’s performance evaluation process, institutions are also asked to set targets for the following year around these additional key areas:

- the success of underrepresented students  
- enrollment in STEM courses  
- enrollment in Customized Training  
- enrollment of students over age 24 in credit courses.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system currently requires reports twice yearly on the College’s work plan and Strategic Plan in addition to annual reporting on policy compliance in the areas of technology, financial aid, and business transactions. The new accountability measures will replace this semiannual reporting.

**System Instructional Cost Study and Peer Review**

On an annual basis, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system conducts an Instructional Cost Study, which examines an institution’s general fund operating expenditures and calculates the cost per student for programs and courses at the institution. In 2006-07, the system’s Luoma Leadership Academy determined that the Instructional Cost Study should be examined, and charged a Luoma Action Learning Team with identifying a research protocol to accompany the Instructional Cost Study. This
project was in response to the fact that many rural colleges, including those in NHED, showed high instructional costs as determined by the allocation framework. The outcome of the project would help chief academic officers to understand the instructional cost framework and therefore make better decisions about efficiency and effectiveness in the instructional arena. In 2007-08, a second action research project was proposed that would utilize the same research protocol to analyze the instructional costs at each of the District’s colleges. This second Luoma Action Learning Team evaluated the instructional costs both at individual NHED colleges and for NHED collectively.

Specifically, the 2007-08 Action Learning Team analyzed academic and financial data to help determine the root causes of higher than average instructional costs in the District. The system has established a “band” of average instructional costs at its institutions. In the system allocation model, as discussed in component 1d, institutions are allowed to be 20% above the band; after that, they are penalized financially in the allocation model. The Luoma Team sought to study why the District is “outside the band” in the instructional component of the allocation framework. They also set goals to code instructional costs properly by establishing a common coding system for the District, and to identify innovative instructional cost management strategies.

The Action Learning Team recommended that NHED:

1. Identify opportunities for resource sharing and deployment.
2. Increase collaboration in the area of course offerings among the District’s colleges.
3. Develop a common course prefix, numbering, and credit structure across the District to allow for more effective comparisons of data and sharing of curriculum.
4. Improve District and system-level coding of instructional data.
5. Create benchmarks based on the operations of peer NHED institutions.

Based on these recommendations, ICC and other NHED institutions have increased collaborative efforts to streamline instructional spending by sharing courses and instructors where appropriate and by developing common coding systems.

Following this Instructional Cost Study project, NHED colleges participated in a Peer Review process in the spring of 2008. It was conducted by a visiting team of representatives from two- and four-year Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system institutions. The purpose of the Peer Review was to conduct a dialogue with each institution to gain a better understanding of current obligations, challenges, and opportunities, and to identify steps already taken to improve the institution’s operations. The Peer Review Team developed a set of questions around the following areas to gather and analyze information from each college:

- Organizational structure and philosophy statement
- Recruitment and retention
- Instructional planning and delivery
• Academic and student support
• Allocation framework
• Revenue and expenses
• Physical plant
• Multi-campus institutions

The external evaluation team produced a report of recommendations in the summer of 2008, which are now under consideration by the Provost’s cabinet.

**Itasca Community College Resources and Processes**

**Office of Institutional Research**

NHED’s Office of Institutional Research (OIR) is housed on the Itasca campus and staffed by a full-time Director of Institutional Research and a 0.75-time Institutional Research Assistant. The office and staff time are shared equally among the five NHED colleges, but colleges may purchase additional percentages of time for specific needs, as Itasca has for its Foundations of Excellence study of the first-year experience in 2007-08 and its Higher Learning Commission self-study process. OIR maintains an effective system for collecting, analyzing, and using organizational information, as discussed in component 2a.

OIR provides ICC employees and students with an executive summary of all major survey reports via e-mail to employees and publication in the College’s weekly newsletter. E-mail announcements include a link to full reports. OIR also presents findings to specific groups on request. On a biannual basis, the OIR office meets with NHED assessment officers and those responsible for data collection (registrars, institutional effectiveness officers) to determine annual survey needs or other requests. This information determines the annual work plan for the OIR.

The Director of the OIR meets regularly with NHED provosts and chief academic officers to provide input on decision making. For example, in 2002-03 the OIR office played an integral role in data analysis that led to the closure of several ICC’s terminal certificate programs.

On an annual basis the OIR meets with the NHED President to prioritize and set goals for the year. For the past two years, the OIR has been intimately involved in the system allocation study regarding instructional cost. The OIR also played a significant role in analyzing efficiencies, coding of courses and program areas, examining alternative models, and serving as liaison to the Office of the Chancellor. The outcome of this work has resulted in a $1.5 million savings for the District in FY 2008.
Survey Data

The OIR guides the colleges in the selection of surveys to be administered in the coming year and provides feedback on system initiatives. Survey data informs the College of areas of concern and improvement. For example, the results of the 2003 Diversity Survey led to the development of a comprehensive two-year diversity plan to improve services and support for underrepresented students. In addition, faculty increased efforts to highlight diversity education in courses meeting the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and ICC Foundational Goal areas related to diversity. In the most recent 2008 Diversity Survey, results indicate improvement in many of the targeted areas, which may be attributed to these research-based initiatives.

Accountability and Planning

On an annual basis ICC reports its accomplishments in relation to the system’s 2006-2010 strategic goals. The OIR collects this information from each provost in NHED and prepares a report to the Chancellor’s office. The Office of the Chancellor synthesizes information from all Minnesota State Colleges and Universities institutions and compiles a report of progress and accomplishments. Examples of items reported include progress on system initiatives such as “Access, Opportunity, and Success,” for which the College reports progress on recruiting and retention benchmarks.

Each year the Provost, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, and the Director of Finance and Facilities hold a summer retreat to set priorities for the upcoming academic year. The Provost requires that each administrator provide a list of annual goals, and these are evaluated each year as part of the administrator’s performance review. All goals must relate to ICC’s strategic directions. Examples of annual outcomes of yearly plans may include newly developed programs to meet regional industry needs and assessment and evaluation efforts.

Foundations of Excellence Self-Study

In 2007-08, Itasca was selected to participate in the Policy Center on the First Year of College’s Foundations of Excellence program. As discussed at length in the Self-Study Process section, Foundations of Excellence involves a self-study, guided by Policy Center on the First Year of College consultants, which examines how institutions deliver the first year of college and how their students experience the transition to college. Campuswide committees at ICC engaged in analysis of nine different aspects of how Itasca works with first-year students (called “Foundational Dimensions”). Itasca’s Foundations of Excellence process provided a comprehensive evaluation of our curricular and co-curricular services and provided the backbone for the Higher Learning Commission self-study. The process resulted in 10 major recommendations that the College is currently implementing, as well as over 90 action items that we are tracking. One action item was the development of a first-year student philosophy statement.
Academic Program Review

An Academic Program Review process has been developed by College administration together with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system office. This process measures these categories of program effectiveness:

- Demand for the program
- Cost efficiency of the program
- Program retention and completion
- Curriculum/student outcomes
- Graduation placement
- Student and employer satisfaction

Programs that indicate weaknesses across several of these indicators are subject to an in-depth program review process. Due to low enrollments and/or low demand, several ICC programs have been discontinued over the years. These include Computer Networking, Business Office Technology, Legal Assistant, Medical Secretary, Webmaster, E-Learning Certificate, Vegetation Management, and Paraprofessional Certificate programs, as well as the Theater program within the AA degree.

Each year the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs selects programs for more in-depth review. The selection is based on how the programs are performing. These reports are submitted to the Office of the Chancellor each fall and posted to the system website. Itasca also posts its annual Fact Book, along with program review data and assessment plans, to this website. Itasca program review information is also posted on the ICC website. The Office of the Chancellor staff reviews these reports and responds to the College with questions if they have any.

As mentioned in other areas of this report, many technical programs have advisory committees that meet annually. These include Practical Nursing, Geography/Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Natural Resources, Pulp and Paper Technology, and specialty programs such as American Indian Studies. These committees are made up of experts in the field and working professionals who provide feedback on curriculum, learning outcomes, and employer expectations.

Program Transfer

Itasca has processes in place to ensure students transfer with ease, including a host of program transfer agreements (articulation agreements) with other system and non-system four-year colleges and universities. The Associate in Arts (AA) and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) are accepted at all Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system four-year colleges and universities as well as the University of Minnesota system. The AS degrees require at least one articulation agreement between a two-year and four-year partner. These agreements are developed by academic program faculty at collaborating institutions and approved through the program approval process. To ensure that transfer
agreements continue to meet the changing program needs, these documents are reviewed on a regular basis, facilitated by Office of the Chancellor staff.

In the past four years, the OIR, in collaboration with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Research Division, has published transfer studies, which include data regarding ICC’s graduates and their success rates at transfer schools within the system. The results of these transfer studies suggest that ICC students succeed as well as or better than those who begin their college education at four-year colleges and universities.

Curricular Evaluation

The College’s Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC) maintains the integrity of the College’s programs and courses through the evaluation of all curricular proposals. The AASC is made up of a faculty chair, faculty representatives, the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, and the Records Office lead worker. The AASC oversees all program and course proposals, responds to requests from the Office of the Chancellor with regard to academic policy and procedures, and assists the Dean in developing ICC policies related to academic issues. Through program and course proposal evaluation, the AASC ensures that ICC’s curricular offerings uphold the College’s General Education Philosophy, ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes, and the MnTC where applicable.

Assessment of Student Academic Achievement

Itasca’s academic assessment program has evolved significantly over the past decade. The College has supported the assessment of student learning through the development of a comprehensive program that promotes change through continuous improvement. Although ongoing assessment of teaching and learning continues at the classroom level, Itasca’s major efforts take place at the program level. Itasca’s program for assessing student achievement is further discussed in components 3a and 4c.

Evaluation of College Staff

The College’s employees are evaluated on an annual basis by the administrator to whom they report. The College’s Human Resources Office tracks the frequency of these evaluations and provides the College with a timetable for completing evaluations. All evaluations are kept on file at the Human Resources Office.

Service Area Evaluations

Until recently, student service areas have used the Strategic Comprehensive Program Enhancement (SCOPE) process for planning and evaluating service area goals. This process has lost ground in the past two years due to a lack of time and human resources. During the Foundations of Excellence self-study, feedback from student services personnel
indicated a need to improve planning and evaluation process. In addition, they made a recommendation that would have a major impact on students and on student services staff—a proposal to redesign the physical space and processes within students services into a “one-stop” model. With the development of this model, all student services will be re-evaluated and specific job responsibilities redefined. A new program development and evaluation process for student service areas is expected to emerge from this work.

The Student Services Leadership Team (made up of representatives from across student service areas) meets on a regular basis and provides a mechanism for ongoing evaluation of services and decision making. All three administrators attend these meetings so that changes and improvements can take place in a timely way.

Individual student services divisions (e.g. orientation, registration, Student Support Services) have substantial and ongoing assessment and use of assessment data. Results from the College’s student surveys suggest that there is broad satisfaction in the area of student services.

**External Evaluations**

**Accreditations**

In addition to College-administered evaluations, external accreditation mechanisms are in place for specific programs: ICC’s Practical Nursing and Natural Resources programs. This is further discussed in component 4c.

**General Advisory Committee**

Itasca has a General Advisory Committee made up of area professionals. The Committee meets biannually with ICC’s administration to get updates on College activities and provide valuable advice and feedback from the community perspective.

**Criterion Two: Core Component 2d**

All levels of planning align with Itasca’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

Itasca’s mission is driven by its Strategic Plan, which was implemented in 2003 after a College- and community-wide participation process. As noted earlier, ICC’s strategic
The planning document is aligned with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system plan. The Strategic Plan focuses on three strategic directions: Learning Opportunities, Enhancing Diversity and Access, and Community and Resource Development.

Key to the alignment and implementation of the Strategic Plan are the values and foundational processes to which the College adheres when putting the Strategic Plan into operation. To assure the centrality of these values and foundational processes, they are published as part of the Strategic Plan. Our values include:

- **Integrity**: The College puts its principles into action.
- **Focus on learners and learning**: ICC believes that higher education is key to the success of the people and communities it serves.
- **Collaboration**: The College values engagement within the institution and the community in working toward shared goals and the common good.
- **Responsiveness**: The College values accessibility, flexibility, and the agility to anticipate and respond to learner and community needs.
- **Access**: ICC embraces diversity and values service to all learners.

Our foundational processes assure that our planning is aligned with our mission and values. These include:

- Communicating openly and clearly
- Using participatory decision making
- Respecting diversity
- Valuing our human resources
- Continually improving
- Practicing stewardship
- Utilizing technology

As noted throughout our discussion of Criterion 2, the College planning process is highly participatory, reflective of what we value, mindful of our history, and focused on innovation. Planning committees involve broad representation from across the College and often involve the community at large.

Central to aligning our planning and mission is the College’s focus on the success of our student learners. Through the Foundations of Excellence process, the College community developed and adopted a First-Year Student Philosophy, which recognizes that “the first year is critical to the academic success and personal growth of our students” and makes a commitment to “provide every first-year student with the best place to start.”

The College values integrated planning with a focus on communication, aligning efforts to enhance our capacity, using resources efficiently, and keeping a focus on the future. The
College’s decision-making processes are aligned with our mission. All hiring proposals, for example, must be justified in light of the College’s mission. The College’s decision to hire an unlimited full-time Native American Studies instructor and invest in an American Indian Studies program was aligned with our commitment to enhance diversity and provide access to education for our area Native American students.

As discussed in Criterion 1, the College’s planning documents align with the College’s mission and vision. Programs and courses are linked to the mission through course and program outline documents. Annual College events, such as the Civil Liberties Conference, the powwow, campuswide co-curricular projects, Engineering high quality teaching initiatives, and professional development activities are all planned and implemented in alignment with the College’s commitment to empower “learners to meet or exceed their expectations” and to foster “critical thinking and civic and global engagement.”

Our most recent future planning effort involved a $15 million capital improvement bonding project submitted to the Office of the Chancellor in Fall 2008. This project involved campuswide discussion and participation in developing a vision for physical improvements and the right-sizing of the campus. The plan incorporated in the bonding proposal integrates advanced technologies, best teaching and learning practices, and sound financing. This plan is aligned with Itasca’s mission to “provide accessible academic and career-related education.”

Throughout this report, the evidence demonstrates how the College’s mission and vision, guided by our values and implemented with our ethical foundational processes, help the institution remain flexible, responsive, and innovative as we meet the challenges and opportunities that the future holds.

CRITERION TWO SUMMARY

Itasca has prepared for its future through a variety of strategies. The College applies environmental scanning techniques involving integrated institution-level and system resources to recognize trends and opportunities and to develop educational programs. Ongoing internal and external evaluation and assessment present reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness, which is used for continuous improvement. The College provides effective stewardship of its financial resources while continuing to pursue grant funding and other additional revenue sources. As an institution, Itasca has the quality personnel, adequate facilities, up-to-date technology, and feasible plans for improvement to ensure a quality education for students. Planning is driven by the College Strategic Plan, which was developed with broad participation by internal and external constituents, and which is focused on educational excellence and the success of our student learners.
Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

Itasca Community College's allocation of resources and our processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate our capacity to fulfill our mission, improve the quality of our education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Summary of Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- Itasca's Master Academic Plan and Master Facilities Plan support the College's capacity for high quality programs.
- ICC's Master Technology Plan supports District-wide and statewide collaboration and uses technology resources provided by the Office of the Chancellor to ensure low cost and efficiencies.
- The Northeast Higher Education District structure allows for collaborative opportunities.
- The College has proactive relationships with its K-12 partners through such structures as the Applied Learning Institute and the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative.
- The College proactively prepares for future program opportunities.
- The College is well prepared for small- and large-scale crises and emergencies.
- Itasca has a strong record of attaining external funding to support future initiatives.
- The Office of the Chancellor provides guidance to the College in developing its policies and procedures.
- Itasca's Office of Institutional Research provides data-driven research that supports sound decision making.
- ICC's faculty and staff take leadership roles in serving on systemwide committees.

Challenges

- The College needs to better align its Master Technology Plan to its Master Academic Plan.
- The College's budget process needs to be more aligned with its Strategic Plan.
- The system's allocation framework is not friendly to rural colleges.
- Declining state appropriation and tuition caps do not keep pace with increasing costs, resulting in fewer choices and services for students when enrollment is steady or slightly increasing.
- There is limited system funding to support new program development.
- Economic hardship and rising education costs impact enrollment.
- Itasca's facilities are aging.
- The residence halls need a plan for repair and replacement as well as added security.
- The state of Minnesota's unprecedented budget shortfall will have a strong impact on the College's future.
Criterion Three:
Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Itasca Community College provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates we are fulfilling our educational mission.
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ICC’s mission speaks to the practical benefits of education to students and to society, promising “accessible academic and career-related education which contributes to the social and economic health of the region.” The mission further states that Itasca Community College “empowers learners to meet or exceed their expectations,” a clause that pledges to foster the intellectual growth of each student. The mission also commits to the broader goals of “critical thinking [and] civic and global and engagement.” In alignment with the College’s educational mission, ICC’s Strategic Plan has established directions for the College, one of which has the goals of fostering engaged learners and promoting innovative teaching:

**Strategic Direction: Learning Opportunities**

**Goal 1. Engaged Learners**

Itasca Community College will inspire learners to imagine and think critically about themselves, their communities, and the larger world, thereby enhancing awareness of multicultural perspectives and providing opportunities for civic and global engagement.

**Goal 2. Innovative Teaching**

Itasca Community College will build on its successful programs and develop learning opportunities that are innovative and responsive to the evolving needs of learners and their communities.

Through our engagement with each of our students as individuals, through innovative and responsive teaching, and through investments in effective learning environments and needed learning resources, Itasca fulfills our mission to educate our students.

Itasca’s faculty, staff, and administration do not see students as a set of enrollment numbers or demographic groups. Rather, we see students as individuals with fears,
hopes, and goals and recognize that each learner comes to us with a different history, level of academic preparation, and set of expectations about education. This concept was fully realized in Itasca’s Foundations of Excellence self-study, which yielded the First-Year Student Philosophy statement of our commitment to learners (see component 3c).

Stories we hear from and about our students illustrate the importance of access, opportunity, and our focus on empowering learners. Andrew LaZella attended Itasca as a post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) student and is now a PhD candidate who has been awarded two Fulbright scholarships. LaZella cites Itasca as “one of the greatest influences on my intellectual and personal development.” Dan Curry, a former prison inmate who started in a job-skills program, Future Connections, in our Customized Training division, decided to enroll at Itasca and then completed a BA in Management through ICC’s 2+2 program with St. Scholastica. During this time, Curry got involved in community human rights efforts to educate people in poverty. He recently was hired as Itasca’s Assistant Director of Multicultural Affairs. Alisha Brinkman, a traditional-age student who came to ICC from the small rural northern town of Little Fork, Minnesota, excelled in ICC’s Engineering program, went on to earn a BS in Engineering and an MBA, and now works at Boston Scientific. ICC strives to empower all of our learners by focusing on incoming students’ knowledge and abilities and working to empower them to meet and exceed their goals.

Criterion Three: Core Component 3a
Itasca Community College’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

Itasca Community College has been developing and implementing a program assessing student academic achievement since 1995. We have clearly stated learning outcomes for every course and program, have established program-level assessment in most academic programs, and have conducted periodic assessments of general education goals. The College is in the process of developing strong program-level assessment within the Associate in Arts program, which will facilitate broad general education assessment.

History of Assessment at ICC
Itasca first established an assessment plan in 1995 as one of the member institutions taking part in the development of the Arrowhead Community Colleges Academic Assessment Plan. After a couple of years of major institutional flux, in which ICC became an independent member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (1996),
the North Central Association 1997 focus visit report noted that the plan was obsolete in the new institutional structure and was inadequate in “documenting outcomes” and showing “evidence of corrective actions taken.”

With new administrative leadership and a committed core group of faculty, the College took steps between 1997 and 1999 to establish an assessment program with faculty coordination and leadership. A faculty academic assessment coordinator was appointed in May 1997 to work with an Assessment Committee to engage the faculty and ICC community in explorations of assessment and to create a five-year assessment program implementation plan. In 1997-98, faculty and staff articulated a General Education Philosophy and developed general education learning outcomes (ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes). These general education goals and outcomes were aligned at the one-year level with the goals and competencies of the statewide two-year general education curriculum, the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC). In addition to ongoing assessment workshops presented by state and national assessment leaders and discussions via duty days and the Center for Innovation (the faculty professional development center on campus), faculty began to build on their course-level assessment strategies, using a variety of assessment tools, such as rubrics, scoring guides, as well as traditional evaluation instruments.

The College underwent a comprehensive evaluation for reaccreditation in Spring 1999. Although the College had made some headway, the visiting team felt that not enough progress had been made in the development of a program to assess the achievement of student learning and recommended a 2002-03 focus visit to address the following issues:

1. The assessment program needed to demonstrate that it was faculty owned and driven.
2. All academic programs, including general education, needed to identify direct measures and collect data.
3. Changes resulting from analysis of assessment data should be documented.
4. These changes should be linked to planning and budgeting.

In response to the concerns of the visiting team and in alignment with the Assessment Committee’s goals for developing an assessment program, the College:

- Developed a research-based assessment program of the ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes for general education.
- Initiated a three-year research cycle assessing one or two of the six ICC Foundational Goals each year using a pre-/post-test model.
- Instituted a discipline- and program-based review and planning process called SCOPE (Strategic Comprehensive Program Enhancement) to formalize goal setting for improving student learning and the teaching and learning environment.
- Drafted discipline and program mission statements.
- Developed and completed new course outlines, which were linked to ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes. Course outlines for courses in the MnTC are
also linked to the MnTC Goals and Competencies. All outlines include methods of course-level assessment.

- Collected rubrics from faculty to analyze and share in order to improve course-level assessment.
- Conducted direct assessments of the ICC Foundational Goals of written communication and information technology, the analysis of which led to pedagogical and testing changes and follow-up assessments.
- Began to assess growth in general education areas via an indirect assessment, a General Education Survey of graduates.
- Developed program-based assessment in Engineering, Class Act (pre-Education), and Practical Nursing.
- Established a set of annual public reporting documents on institutional effectiveness, including the Fact Book and the Student Profile.

The visiting team for the October 2002 focus visit recognized ICC’s significant efforts toward developing a comprehensive assessment program, including faculty involvement and direction, course-level assessment, and administrative support of the assessment program. They identified challenges in the areas of program-level assessment and the development of measures of general education outcomes. To respond to these challenges and report on continued progress, the team recommended that the College submit a monitoring report to the Higher Learning Commission in 2005.

Between 2002 and 2005, the College intensively focused on developing program-level assessment and continued to conduct and analyze direct measurements of ICC Foundational Goal areas of general education. To facilitate program-level assessment, the College:

- Appointed faculty coordinators with release time for developing program-level assessment.
- Established a Master Academic Plan (MAP) to foster program-level academic planning. The MAP process completed at the program level utilizes four design criteria specific to teaching and learning and linked to ICC’s mission and strategic directions.
- Replaced the SCOPE process with MAP in academic program areas. As mentioned, MAP is explicitly linked to the mission and includes demonstrating “continuous quality improvement in teaching and learning” as one of the four design criteria.
- Used the Center for Teaching and Learning campus leader and the Center for Innovation as resources to facilitate sharing progress and “best practices” in program-level assessment.

These efforts resulted in significant growth and maturation in program-level assessment in Engineering, Applied Psychology, Class Act, Natural Resources, and Practical Nursing. Each of these programs has established learning outcomes based on state (Practical Nursing) or national standards; uses direct measures of student learning, including portfolios (Engineering, Applied Psychology, and Class Act), pre-/post-testing (Applied...
Psychology), comprehensive exam (Engineering), external licensure examination (Practical Nursing), or DACUM processes (Natural Resources). The programs collect and analyze student assessment data and implement changes on the basis of the results. Annual reports and other data may be found in the Resource Room.

The College also continued its cyclical assessment of ICC Foundational Goal areas of general education, examining math, critical thinking, and writing and ethical reasoning between 2003 and 2005. Each used an internally created (written communication and ethical reasoning) or national (math and critical thinking) pre-/post-test model. Faculty involved in the assessment projects wrote reports analyzing the results and making recommendations, which were shared via duty day or brown bag presentations. Results of these studies led to pedagogical changes (Socratic method, lab-centered instruction) and new course offerings (paired composition and Ethics courses), as well as curriculum review and curricular changes in the area of developmental math.

The Higher Learning Commission recognized ICC’s significant progress in developing a student academic assessment program by accepting the report. The Commission Staff Liaison noted the faculty involvement and coordination, attention to assessment via faculty development opportunities, dedicated time on duty days to report on assessment, academic planning, and budgetary commitment. Although she recommended no further reporting prior to the next comprehensive evaluation, she advised that ICC institute periodic reviews and reports for information sharing, collect more intervention information, and place more emphasis on direct measures of learning. She recommended that the next comprehensive visit examine budget allocations to improve learning, review the MAP process, and gather information on how faculty and students participate in data analysis, dissemination, and changes.

Since 2005, ICC has continued to focus on program-level assessment. The programs listed above have been able to further develop their assessment programs, make improvements on the basis of their assessments, and analyze the success of those interventions. Other programs, including Early Childhood Education, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and Wildland Firefighting, have developed assessment programs. Each program is asked to submit an annual assessment report documenting the assessment measures, results, analysis, recommended changes, and evaluation of interventions. Reports may be found in the Resource Room.

Over the past three years, the College has been rethinking its general education assessment for several reasons:

1. Faculty and institutional leaders have found the results of national exams inconclusive or not specific enough to guide interventions.
2. The internally produced and evaluated assessments depend upon a pool of faculty able to commit the time to create an assessment tool and rubric and evaluate a large number of essays, which was proving unsustainable.
3. The lack of student motivation to do their best work when not linked to a grade compromises the results.
4. Due to the broad scope of general education, faculty have struggled with program-level assessment within the AA program.

5. There has not been a consistent assignment of faculty coordination of general education to facilitate program-level assessment.

Assessment Structure

The College’s assessment structure developed over time, and has been affected both by financial opportunities and constraints. Blandin Foundation grant funding secured in the late 1990s allowed the College to support the early development of an assessment program with a full-time Director of Institutional Effectiveness, which the institution “matched” with a half-time Faculty Assessment Coordinator position. In Fall 2000, ICC secured an additional $111,500 grant from the Blandin Foundation, which provided funding for faculty-driven classroom-based assessment projects. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness was reduced to a half-time position in June 2000 due to funding, and, in 2002, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness position was discontinued due to severe budget cuts. The half-time release for faculty coordination continued through 2005, after which assessment credits were shifted to program coordinators with the expectation that assessment efforts were to become an integral part of program-level planning. This release time was built into the College’s annual budget.

The current assessment structure at the College includes institutional oversight by the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs; program-level coordination by assigned faculty; program, curricular, and course review by the Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC); and an annual program review report submitted by the Dean to the Office of the Chancellor.

The College’s assessment efforts are faculty driven and supported. The ICC Faculty Association (ICCFA) has input on significant assessment issues, such as a December 2001 vote to adopt the three-year cycle of assessment for ICC Foundational Goals, and ICC faculty are responsible for setting learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level for the College. In 2006, all program coordinators participated in a workshop on program-level assessment. With the new appointment of a faculty coordinator for the Associate in Arts program in Fall 2008, the College seeks to continue the development of a constructive assessment program for general education.

College-Wide General Education Learning Goals: ICC Foundational Goals

In keeping with its mission to provide high-quality access to both liberal arts and career-related education, ICC has developed specific and comprehensive learning goals for its students in its transfer curriculum and degree, diploma, and certificate programs. All courses have learning goals aligned with the institution’s learning goals. ICC’s learning goals are guided by the College’s General Education Philosophy, which expresses a “commitment to a broad and coherent foundation of general education fundamental to educational opportunity, individual enrichment and citizenship.” ICC’s Foundational Goals
for general education were developed by faculty in 1997-98 to articulate the foundational knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of all students who complete at least one year of coursework for a certificate or degree. The goals are reviewed annually and underwent some modification in 2003:

**ICC Foundational Goals**

1. **Communication:** To develop students’ skills in the use of written and oral language in the various contexts of personal and professional life.

2. **Critical Thinking:** To increase students’ abilities to engage in and apply effective critical/creative thinking and reasoning skills to personal and professional decision making, problem solving, and evaluative reasoning.

3. **Information Technology:** To develop students’ skills in and knowledge of computers and other technology.

4. **Mathematical/Scientific Reasoning:** To increase students’ skills in and knowledge of mathematical and logical modes of thinking. / To improve students’ understanding of scientific principles and of the methods of scientific inquiry.

5. **Citizenship and Ethics:** To develop students’ capacity to understand the ways in which they can exercise responsible and productive citizenship.

6. **Diversity:** To increase students’ understanding and acceptance of individual and group differences (e.g. cultures, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class).

Each of these areas has between two and six specific outcomes. See the ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes in the Resource Room for a complete listing of outcomes.

After the Foundational Goals were developed, faculty instructors completed documentation on the courses they taught to demonstrate that each course at the College met a given goal or goals through coursework and suggested assessments, such as tests, written reports, or oral presentations. This process was directed by the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and is now overseen by the AASC. Whenever an instructor desires to show that a course meets different or additional goal areas, he/she must submit documentation demonstrating what class activities and requirements meet the specified goal(s). The goal areas, outcomes, and possible assessments are documented on the course outline (see section on course outlines below).

**General Education Learning Goals: Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC)**

The Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) is the format in which general education is accomplished within the public two- and four-year colleges and universities in Minnesota. Students who complete the MnTC have satisfied their general education requirements at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities institutions and the University of Minnesota. The MnTC defines a common 40-credit curriculum that integrates a body of knowledge and skills with a study of contemporary concerns, which are essential to meeting an
individual's social, personal, and career challenges. The MnTC includes 10 goal areas, each of which has between two and seven specific competencies:

**Minnesota Transfer Curriculum Goals**

1. **Communication:** To develop writers and speakers who use the English language effectively and who read, write, speak, and listen critically.

2. **Critical Thinking:** To develop thinkers who are able to unify factual, creative, rational, and value-sensitive modes of thought.

3. **Natural Sciences:** To improve students' understanding of natural science principles and of the methods of scientific inquiry.

4. **Mathematical/Logical Reasoning:** To increase students' knowledge about mathematical and logical modes of thinking.

5. **History and the Social and Behavioral Sciences:** To increase students' knowledge of how historians and social and behavioral scientists discover, describe, and explain the behaviors and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, events, and ideas.

6. **The Humanities and Fine Arts:** To expand students' knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behavior, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought.

7. **Human Diversity:** To increase students' understanding of individual and group differences (e.g. race, gender, class) and their knowledge of the traditions and values of various groups in the United States.

8. **Global Perspective:** To increase students' understanding of the growing interdependence of nations and peoples and develop their ability to apply a comparative perspective to cross-cultural social, economic, and political experiences.

9. **Ethical and Civic Responsibility:** To develop students' capacity to identify, discuss, and reflect upon the ethical dimensions of political, social, and personal life and to understand the ways in which they can exercise responsible and productive citizenship.

10. **People and the Environment:** To improve students' understanding of today's complex environmental challenges.

Each of the 10 general education goal areas articulates the broad skills and knowledge in which students should be competent. Each college specifies the minimum number of credits students must take to fulfill each goal area, with Critical Thinking embedded in all courses. A course claiming to meet a particular MnTC area must document that its learning outcomes meet at least at least 51% of the specified competencies. (See the [Minnesota Transfer Curriculum Goals and Student Competencies](#) in the Resource Room for a full listing of the competencies.)
As noted, the ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes closely align with those of the MnTC and thus reinforce the value of general education in all programs. Table 17 illustrates how the ICC Foundational Goal of Communication and the MnTC Goal of Communication are aligned.

Table 17. Sample Alignment of ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes and MnTC Goals and Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICC/MnTC Goal</th>
<th>ICC</th>
<th>MnTC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Goal</strong></td>
<td>To develop students’ skills in the use of written and oral language in the various contexts of personal and professional life.</td>
<td>To develop writers and speakers who use the English language effectively and who read, write, speak, and listen critically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes/Competencies</strong></td>
<td>Students will be able to:</td>
<td>Students will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Read, evaluate, synthesize and apply information from a variety of sources.</td>
<td>a. Understand/demonstrate the writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revising, and editing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Understand/demonstrate the writing and speaking processes through planning, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing.</td>
<td>b. Participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Write and speak clearly, concisely and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats.</td>
<td>c. Locate, evaluate, and synthesize in a responsible manner material from diverse sources and points of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Employ appropriate language use, vocabulary, and mechanics in academic, professional, and personal settings.</td>
<td>d. Select appropriate communication choices for specific audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.</td>
<td>e. Construct logical and coherent arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f. Use authority, point-of-view, and individual voice and style in their writing and speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>g. Employ syntax and usage appropriate to academic disciplines and the professional world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Documentation of Competencies: Course Outlines

Course-level and institutional-level learning outcomes and assessments are documented and addressed in course outlines. A course outline is a permanent institutional document that specifies the content and learning outcomes of a given course.

Each course outline includes the following components:

- College mission
- Discipline mission
- Course description
- ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes specific to the course
- MnTC Goals and Competencies specific to the course (if course is in MnTC)
- Course-specific learning outcomes linked to ICC (and MnTC) learning outcomes
- Assessment strategies

The College has two distinct course outline models, one for technical and elective courses that meet ICC Foundational Goals, and one for courses that meet both ICC and MnTC goal areas. All course outlines are approved by the AASC. The AASC requires a completed course outline for any new course. These are evaluated to ensure that ICC and MnTC student learning outcomes and related course assessments are valid and well documented. In 2007-08, the AASC oversaw an extensive review of all courses meeting the MnTC as part of a systemwide mandate. The intent of the review was to ensure that all courses met specified MnTC goal areas and to confirm alignment of these courses at the system level.

Communication of Learning Goals to Students

Students receive an information sheet on Itasca’s assessment program during orientation. The ICC Catalog, the ICC website, and program guidesheets available outside the Counseling Office and in Student Support Services all explain the MnTC and program/degree requirements in easy-to-follow formats. These guides list the MnTC general education goal areas courses meet. Counselors explain requirements to students and guide their registration choices. (See the Itasca Community College Credit Transfer Information for AA and MnTC and the various program guidesheets in the Resource Room.)

Although the College communicates its learning goals to students in a variety of ways, first-year students still appear unsure of learning goals. In the 2007 Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey, just shy of 54% of new students reported that they understood the institution’s learning goals for the first year at a high or very high level. These Foundations of Excellence findings prompted Enrollment Services to design a new model of orientation for Fall 2008. The College committed a full day of activities to engage faculty and students enrolled in their programs in small group discussions about College’s commitment to students and their learning goals.
Students also receive specific learning expectations through the course syllabi. Instructors are encouraged to include the ICC Foundational Goals and, when applicable, MnTC Goals met by their courses in their syllabi. According to the 2007 Foundations of Excellence Faculty/Staff Survey, over 95 percent of instructors state that they communicate their expectations to new students to a high or very high degree. At the course level, students taking the 2007 Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey reported fairly strong communication of academic expectations, with more than 76% reporting that the instructor (of a randomly selected course) often or always communicated academic expectations, and only 5% reporting that the instructor did so only slightly or not at all.

**Faculty Involvement in Assessment Processes**

In keeping with ICC’s foundational processes, the structure of the AASC ensures faculty leadership in establishing and documenting learning goals and assessments at the course, program, and institutional levels. According to the Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) contract, the AASC must be chaired by a faculty member, and two-thirds of the committee must be faculty. The council strives to have representation from faculty teaching in diverse disciplines and programs. The remaining one-third includes the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and the registrar.

Following the 1999 evaluation visit, the College spent considerable time engaging the faculty in substantive discussions about the assessment of student learning. Discussions included interviews with faculty, presentations, workshops, and book groups. Through these efforts, ICC’s instructional practices focused more intentionally on the continuous improvement of student learning. Faculty members have participated in general education assessment projects and other classroom-based research. At the institutional level, the ICC Faculty Association (ICCFA) endorsed a campuswide assessment strategy to support systematic data collection efforts in December 2001. The ICCFA voted to allow classroom time (one hour per semester) to be utilized for institutional assessment efforts. Specifically, the faculty agreed to a three-year cycle to assess one to two general education goal areas per year, allowing ICC administration access to classes each semester to implement this plan.

At the program level, faculty program coordinators are responsible for developing learning goals and assessments. These program coordinators have presented their development of program-based assessment to faculty in past years at brown bags organized by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) campus leader and Center for Innovation (CFI), the College’s faculty-led professional development center. (See CTL and CFI Annual Reports in the Resource Room.)
Assessment of ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes

Itasca’s assessment of ICC’s Foundational Goals for general education has included regular indirect measures, through student surveys and transfer studies, and several piloted and rotational direct measures, including assessment projects and College Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) and other nationally normed tests of specific ICC Foundational Goal areas. Itasca’s general education assessment has focused on ICC Foundational Goals as these are met by both technical and transfer courses.

Direct Measures of ICC Foundational Goals

At the institutional level, in the past decade Itasca has conducted projects assessing general education goal areas, including Communication (written and oral communication), Ethical Reasoning, Critical Thinking, Mathematical Reasoning, and Information Technology. Some of these assessments (one of the critical thinking assessments and the math assessment) were completed with CAAP national standardized exams. Others were assessed with tests developed, normed, and evaluated on campus.

Between 2002 and 2005 the faculty engaged in research projects targeting specific goals. The first study completed involved the area of communication. English faculty conducted a double-blind study across sections of Expository Writing and developmental writing to assess communication skills. The results of this two-year project uncovered a significant deficiency in the area of thesis development and support. Faculty took action across the discipline to implement changes that led to measurable improvements (see the study in the Resource Room). In a separate 2005 study, a team of faculty examined the goal areas of ethical reasoning and written communication. Students in selected classes wrote in-class essays in response to a prepared prompt. The result of this study demonstrated a significant deficiency in students’ ability to think critically about ethical issues.

In response to students’ poor understanding of ethical reasoning, the College decided to hold a campuswide Ethics Conference the following year (2006). Participant and attendee feedback on the conference was excellent, and over 200 students were directly involved in conference sessions or poster presentations. However, students did not self-report a higher level of ethical understanding on the 2006 General Education Survey than they had the previous year.

Course-Level Direct and Indirect Assessment of ICC Foundational Goals

Portfolios and reflective pieces required as part of projects and reports in many classes ask students to reflect on their learning. In addition, faculty evaluations completed by students include open-ended questions that ask students to assess what most helped them learn and what was least helpful for learning. Many faculty use classroom assessment techniques (CATs) recommended by Angelo and Cross which elicit immediate feedback on comprehension. Classes in the Engineering program also have access to “clickers” for such immediate assessment. Finally, faculty in some classes use exit interviews or exit...
essays as an opportunity to gather information about and sometimes discuss students’
learning with them.

As noted above, faculty are encouraged to include on their syllabi the ICC Foundational
and/or MnTC Goals their course meets, and to explain these links to students when
introducing assignments. Direct assessment of student learning in courses is, of course,
conducted through grading and sometimes also through pre-/post-tests and exit exams.

While course outlines include assessment strategies, assessment of learning outcomes
is not standardized across all sections of a given course. ICC’s faculty have the academic
freedom to choose the assessment strategies that best meet their course goals. Itasca’s
small size and collegial relationships foster cooperation and communication among
faculty about assessment of learning outcomes that provides some de facto consistency.
Faculty teaching different sections of the same class tend to use similar assessments. The
following are examples of consistent assessment across sections of some of the College’s
highest enrollment classes:

- **Elementary Algebra**: Many of the sections use a common math portfolio
  assessment; all do pre-/post-testing and tests of skills. A year-long NHED-wide
  [Collaborative Assessment of Mathematics Project](#) (CAMP) included common
  weekly quizzes to identify student competencies in Mathematical Reasoning.

- **Expository Writing and Fundamentals of Written English**: In the English
discipline, a “C” or better is needed to matriculate to the next level of writing.
  All sections revalidate placement and use a revalidation essay as a pre-test. All
  sections of Fundamentals of Written English use an essay test as an exit exam.
  Each instructor writes his/her own prompts and grades his/her own students on
  how well they meet Communication competencies.

- **Introduction to Computers**: The shared curriculum employs a test-out exam
  based on modules to assess Information Technology competencies.

**Institution-Level Indirect Measures of ICC Foundational Goals**

Itasca annually asks both incoming students and graduating students to rate their skill levels
and, for graduates, their learning in specific areas that correspond to ICC Foundational
Goals. To facilitate comparative analysis of students’ educational progress at Itasca, the
[ICC New Student Survey](#) and [ICC Graduate Survey](#) have a number of identical items
asking students to grade themselves in specified skill areas and rate the importance of
educational goals. The Graduate Survey report, completed annually, compares graduates’
responses to those of new students each year and longitudinally, as well as to those
of other students in the region. As such, it provides one indirect measure of students’
growth in several ICC Foundational Goal areas, as indicated in Table 18.
Table 18. Linking of Self-Graded Skill Areas to ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICC Foundational Goal</th>
<th>Goal Statement</th>
<th>Self-Graded Skill Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>To develop students’ skills in the use of written and oral language in the various contexts of personal and professional life.</td>
<td>Reading Skills, Writing Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical/Scientific Reasoning</td>
<td>To increase students’ skills in and knowledge of mathematical and logical modes of thinking.</td>
<td>Math Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical/Scientific Reasoning</td>
<td>To increase students’ skills in and knowledge of mathematical and logical modes of thinking.</td>
<td>Science Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>To develop students’ skills in and knowledge of computers and other technology.</td>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Office of Institutional Research also conducts a General Education Student Survey of graduating students, which is more closely tied to the outcomes specified in the ICC Foundational Goals. In this survey, students use a Likert scale to evaluate whether they have improved in a given goal area as a result of their education at Itasca. This survey, conducted annually, also provides longitudinal comparisons. Table 19 provides samples linking the items in the survey with ICC Foundational Outcomes. (See the General Education Survey in the Resource Room for complete results.)

Table 19. Samples Linking General Education Student Survey Items to ICC Foundational Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICC Foundational Goal</th>
<th>ICC Outcome</th>
<th>Survey Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Read, evaluate, synthesize and apply information from a variety of sources</td>
<td>Improved my ability to collect, analyze and apply information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Write and speak clearly, concisely, and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats.</td>
<td>Improved my ability to communicate in writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the 2007 General Education Student Survey indicate that, on average, recent Itasca Community College students believe that their classes and related experiences at ICC improved their knowledge or abilities in most general education Foundational Goal areas, with the exception of “understanding of political processes and how to participate in them.” In addition, the level of agreement for almost all the questions was higher than the prior year. Students were especially positive (average rating over 4 on a 5-point Likert
scale) about the College’s impact on the areas related to Communication and Critical Thinking skills.

In the 2008 Graduate Survey, self ranked means in areas such as critical thinking, math, writing and speaking skills, were between 3.0-3.46 with 4 being the highest score. Ninety-five percent of responding students indicated a high level of educational goal progress as well, with the highest ranked area being “acquired knowledge for further education.”

The College administers the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to gather data on student engagement that can be compared with comparison institutions nationally. The Foundations of Excellence process that the College undertook as part of our preparation for this self-study and evaluation visit also included a new student survey with questions addressing engagement and understanding of learning goals. As with CCSSE, the Foundations of Excellence results include national comparison data.

Program-Level Assessment

After the 2002 HLC focus visit, ICC concentrated more heavily on developing models of assessment of student learning at the program level. ICC offers a number of professional and transfer programs. Since 2002 the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs has been working with faculty program leaders on assessment strategies to measure students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities at the program level. The following are examples of the progress that has been made to date in selected program areas.

Associate in Science (AS) Transfer Programs: AS degrees include programs made up of 64 credits, 30 of which are in 6 of the 10 MnTC Goal areas and the rest of which are program requirements or electives. ICC offers the following AS transfer options:

- Engineering
- Geography/Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Early Childhood Education
- Applied Psychology
- Business Administration/Management
- Pulp and Paper Technology
- Accounting (pending)

Each AS degree program has transfer articulation agreements with at least one four-year university, providing a clear pathway to a chosen Bachelor of Science degree. ICC’s Engineering program has a well-developed assessment program, which includes: 1) an internally developed comprehensive exam modeled on the national four-year engineering exam but adjusted for the two-year level, and 2) a capstone portfolio project based on Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) national engineering standards. The portfolio is assembled during the course of study in the Engineering Professional Development class series as a demonstration of skill development. The program tracks student scores on the exam and on the subsequent four-year exam (voluntarily reported.
by alumni) and uses them, along with the portfolio assessment, to analyze student learning in the program and make recommendations for changes. An annual assessment report (available in the Resource Room) analyzes the results and develops an action plan to address them.

Other AS programs with emerging assessment programs include the AS in Applied Psychology and GIS. Both have modeled their approach after the Engineering program with modifications. The Applied Psychology program uses a pre-/post-test and a capstone portfolio assessment based on the American Psychological Association recommended student learning outcomes. Portfolios are assembled in the course of the program and completed in the final semester’s practicum class. The Applied Psychology program has been tracking student success using these assessments for four years. An annual assessment report (available in the Resource Room) provides an analysis of the results and recommendations for changes in response to them. The GIS program has identified specific skill-based outcomes expected of its students. The students’ abilities are assessed throughout the curriculum using specific assignments linked to program goals. These are evaluated and improvements made based on the feedback from assessments.

**Associate in Arts Transfer Program**: Associate in Arts (AA) is Itasca’s largest program, enrolling over 54% of the student body. The 64-credit program includes the 40 general education credits of the MnTC, a 3-credit Computer Science class, a 2-credit Wellness class, 1-credit Physical Education class, and elective credits. As discussed, Itasca assesses general education goals and has appointed an AA program coordinator with responsibilities to develop an assessment program.

Class Act provides an example of assessment in an AA emphasis program. The program has specific learning goals derived from the five National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). To measure attainment of those goals, students develop a portfolio in seminar courses during their program of study. The portfolio and a complementary eFolio (electronic portfolio) project demonstrate student achievement of the NBPTS.
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The College is working to improve the direct measure of student learning in general education. Through the Foundations of Excellence process the College underwent in the 2007-08 academic year, campus-wide committees identified significant needs in the AA program and institutional assessment. Three of the 10 priority action items resulting from the process relate to assessment and the AA program:

1. Develop a method for assigning personnel who will coordinate, promote, and assess the liberal arts curriculum; who will ensure that these foundational courses remain integral to the education of all students at Itasca; and who will explore and evaluate possible learning community models within the AA program.
2. Develop and communicate an explanation for students of the Associate in Arts program and general education/liberal arts, including a rationale for requirements.
3. Re-establish an institutionwide, integrated assessment framework for both academic (curricular and co-curricular student learning) and student services divisions.

These action items, along with the other seven recommendations, will be integrated into the College's new Strategic Plan, which is scheduled to be revised and updated prior to December 2009. Immediate action was taken on these three:

1. Release time for a faculty coordinator of the AA program was established for the first time for the 2008-09 academic year.
2. Responsibilities for that position include establishing an assessment program for general education and overseeing the development of written materials for the AA program, including a rationale for requirements.
3. The AA Coordinator will meet with other program coordinators on a campuswide assessment committee to establish an institutional assessment program. Other programs' assessment structures will provide models for assessment of the AA and general education.

In Fall 2008, the new AA Coordinator formed an AA Steering Committee with representatives from across the disciplines (History/Political Science, Sociology, English, Speech, Chemistry, Biology, Math, Music, and Reading/Freshman Year Experience). This group established general education assessment as its top priority for the year. Throughout the fall, they researched assessment models used on campus in program areas and other models, including the national standardized tests. The group applied for and received two grants to fund a pre-/post-test pilot of the general education goals Critical Thinking and Communication (written). The pilot is being conducted in Spring 2009 and will be evaluated as part of the process of recommending a model for general education assessment in the future.
Associate in Applied Science Degree Programs: ICC houses several options for these terminal degrees designed to prepare students for the workforce. The Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree programs offer specialized technical education rather than a broad general education for transfer. The AAS requires 16 credits of MnTC courses and specific career program requirements. Itasca offers the AAS in the following fields:

- Natural Resources/Forestry
- Natural Resources/GIS
- Natural Resources/Law Enforcement
- Natural Resources/Wildland Firefighting
- Pulp and Paper Technology

The Natural Resources program is one of the larger programs on campus, second to Engineering in terms of total students in a specified STEM field (science, technology, engineering and math). The Natural Resources program aligns its content and expected student outcomes with the Society of American Foresters (SAF), the national scientific and educational organization representing the forestry profession in the United States. In 2002-03 the program underwent a DACUM analysis and applied for recognition through SAF, which was granted. During the 2008-09 academic year, SAF elected to provide accreditation of two-year forestry programs. ICC’s program is preparing for this rigorous process, which will be completed in 2009; it will be one of the first two-year programs to go through this new accreditation process.

The Pulp and Paper program, the newest technical program at Itasca, was developed in collaboration with industry partners and the University of Minnesota. The program includes options at the diploma, AAS and AS levels. The program follows national standards established through the National Network for Pulp and Paper Training and Technology. ICC is the Midwest Node for this organization under the National Science Foundation’s designated National Center of Excellence for Pulp and Paper Science, which is located at Alabama Southern Community College.

Vocational Diploma Programs: Vocational diploma programs prepare students for work in specific fields and thus vary in length and credit requirements. Itasca has three vocational diploma programs:

- Practical Nursing
- Pulp and Paper Technology
- Wildland Firefighting

Because these programs are designed to educate students in technical areas, they have highly specialized and specific learning goals that meet industry and professional standards. Examinations provide strong internal and external assessment of student learning. The Practical Nursing program, for example, is approved by the Minnesota Board of Nursing. Graduates take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for Practical Nurses, endorsed by the Board, to become eligible to practice nursing. All instructors use the same curriculum and assessments. When students enter the program, they are given a
copy of progress standards by which they are evaluated throughout their coursework. Students must maintain a 3.0 to matriculate. The program tracks student scores on the NCLEX (see Table 20 below) and uses the results to improve student learning by examining curriculum and studying the correlation of results with grades and scores on a Practical Nursing predictor test, which the program administers to give students feedback on areas in which they need to improve prior to taking the NCLEX.

Table 20.
Minnesota Nursing Board Exam Pass Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Tested</th>
<th>Pass Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Minnesota Board of Nursing

The Wildland Firefighting program prepares students for wildland firefighting careers and provides some of the background necessary for other natural resources careers. Because most of the coursework is skills based, students must show proficiency in each skill area to continue and matriculate. The skills are established by a national organization, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

Professional Certificate Programs: Professional certificate programs prepare students for entry-level employment. Itasca’s professional certificate programs are:

- American Indian Studies
- Child Development
- Computer Proficiency
- GIS

Certificate programs have specific educational and vocational learning goals. The Child Development certificate program provides an example of program-level assessment in certificate programs. Designed to prepare students to be quality childcare providers, the program addresses the six national competency goals and standards required for the National Child Development Associate (CDA) certification. Students complete a 120-hour practicum and may become qualified for the National CDA certification with a 1-credit
360-hour experience (volunteer or paid), to which their previous practicum is applied. Their experience includes an observation book based on these standards. While the program coordinator is responsible for completing a checklist for the practicum experience, students’ proficiency is externally evaluated by the National Child Development Association.

**Certificate of Completion:** A certificate of completion is issued to a student who has satisfactorily completed certain skill development courses that do not qualify as approved Associate degree programs or vocational diplomas. Itasca has two certificate of completion programs, both of which are prerequisites for the Practical Nursing program:

- Nursing Assistant
- Home Health Aide/Homemaker

The Nursing Assistant course is designed to meet Minnesota Department of Health standards. Using the Minnesota State Board of Vocational Technical Education curriculum, students learn the basic patient-care skills and laws and regulations for the field and acquire clinical experience. Students are eligible to take the national competency exam required for employment in long-term care facilities upon satisfactory completion of the course. Home Health Aide/Homemaker students are also subject to external federal examination. Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students are eligible to take the federal Home Health Aide test, which is required by most home healthcare agencies to practice as a Home Health Aide.

**Sharing Assessment Results**

The Office of Institutional Research publishes reports of survey assessment results. Summaries are e-mailed to faculty and staff and printed in the ICC newsletter with information about how to find the full report online. Significant results are shared on duty days or sometimes in presentations to faculty under the auspices of the Center for Innovation. As noted, program coordinators write assessment reports, which are submitted to the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and program faculty.

On an annual basis, the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs compiles a program review report for the Office of the Chancellor. As part of that report, ICC’s MAP and assessment reports are posted to a website, along with institutional data (the Fact Book) regarding program enrollments, success rates, and demographic information.

Larger institutional self-studies, such as the Foundations of Excellence report and this self-study, are posted on the website.
Criterion Three: Core Component 3b

Itasca Community College values and supports effective teaching.

As an institution that embraces learning communities and believes in the empowerment of its learners, ICC values and supports effective teaching. Dr. Joe Sertich, Itasca’s former President and the former President of the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED), was fond of saying, “Faculty are the heart and lungs of the institution.” This statement captures Itasca’s campus culture, which is formed by highly qualified faculty who are committed to teaching excellence and student success.

Professional Development and Improvement in Teaching and Learning

Itasca supports a culture of learning, and as such embraces innovation that “fosters continuous development of its faculty and staff” (ICC Foundational Processes). The College considers professional development and continuous improvement in teaching and learning to be critical drivers in preparing for the future. Therefore, the College supports practices such as interdisciplinary collaboration, new initiatives, and faculty-led professional development opportunities.

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Center for Teaching and Learning

The system’s Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides faculty development for all of its member institutions through its network of CTL campus leaders and through an array of professional development materials and opportunities. CTL trains and provides budgetary support for campus leaders, offers online professional development courses and tutorials and a host of other resources through its website, and provides grant funding for campus initiatives. Most significantly, CTL is able to leverage the size of the system to provide professional development opportunities that individual colleges and universities would not have the resources to support. These include an annual conference (Realizing Student Potential/ITeach), multiple annual workshops led by national experts, and discipline-based workshops. All of these events are free for system faculty.

Center for Innovation and Center for Teaching and Learning

Itasca provides supportive structures that ensure ongoing faculty development opportunities. One of these is the Center for Innovation (CFI), established in the late 1990s through a grant-funded initiative to “provide interaction which initiates new program development.” Through the grant and thereafter, the College provided faculty release time to coordinate CFI activities. CFI served this mission for a number of years, but as program leadership was placed more directly in the hands of faculty program
coordinators, CFI has supported a broader mission of promoting innovation in teaching and learning. In fact, its tagline is “a place for new ideas.”

As the system CTL expanded, funding was made available to support a faculty member as CTL leader on each college campus (stipend and matching funds). The role of the CTL leaders is to plan and coordinate professional development opportunities at the campus. Over the past ten years, CFI and CTL faculty leaders have supported teaching improvement and innovation through the CFI and activities planned and arranged by the CFI coordinator and the CTL campus leader. In the past five years, these two roles became increasingly interrelated. Following the retirement of the most recent CFI coordinator, these positions were combined into one position, funded in part by system office funding and matched by the College.

The College has dedicated space for CFI, now centrally located in a room off the Library. CFI houses the Library’s professional development collection as well as CFI’s own professional development collection. In addition to these resources, the Library subscribes to two professional education databases and a range of professional journals.

CTL maintains a website on campus, set up as a class for faculty in Desire2Learn (D2L), ICC’s online learning platform, to announce upcoming campus, regional, and statewide events and to provide access to handouts and other materials from campus CTL and CFI activities.

CFI and CTL have supported a culture of professional development and research in teaching and learning at Itasca for the past 10 years through a range of initiatives and activities, including:

- Faculty book groups on teaching and pedagogy (e.g. Palmer’s *Courage to Teach*, Smilkstein’s *Born to Learn*, Walvoord’s *Effective Grading*, Bain’s *What the Best College Teachers Do*)
- Faculty book groups on interdisciplinary topics (e.g. Phillips’ *Six Questions of Socrates*, Lehrer’s *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*, Jacoby’s *The Age of American Unreason*)
- Brown bag sessions and presentations on teaching and learning “best practices” (e.g. student-driven teaching, active learning, cooperative learning models, learning communities, service learning, diversity)
- Brown bag sessions and presentations on teaching and learning issues (e.g. classroom management, civility, cheating and plagiarism, student study habits, reading skills, avoiding burnout)
- Brown bag sessions and presentations on programs and initiatives (e.g. Freshman Year Experience, community-based research in Applied Psychology, academic coaching, block scheduling)
- Brown bag sessions and presentations on assessment (e.g. program-level assessment presentations by Engineering, Class Act (pre-Education), Practical Nursing, Applied Psychology; assessment trends presentations by the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs; rubrics)
Brown bag sessions and presentations on classroom research projects and other course-, program-, and institution-level assessment results

Workshops given by statewide or national experts invited to the College (e.g. grant writing, brain-based learning, assessment). Presenters have included Barbara Walvoord, Cecilia Lopez, and Mark Taylor.


Professional Development for New Faculty

To ensure that newly hired instructors develop effective teaching practices and an understanding of the mission of community college education, in 2006, the system adopted a policy (Policy 3.32) requiring all new unlimited full-time (UFT) faculty to take three pedagogy courses as well as a course on the philosophy of community and technical college education during their three-year probationary period. The system offers these courses online at no cost. In addition to these courses, the College provides welcome packets with professional development materials for all new faculty through the system’s CTL.

One gap in professional development at Itasca identified by the Improvement Dimension Committee in the Foundations of Excellence process was the lack of a formal orientation program for new faculty and staff. In the early 2000s, the College had a grant-funded Mentor Program, which paired new faculty with senior faculty. That mentorship has continued on an informal basis, but the process of orienting new instructors to the College has been inconsistent. To address that need, in Fall 2008, the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and a senior faculty member, with the assistance of other faculty, conducted a formal orientation program for new faculty. NHED is also developing a new voluntary Teaching Academy for all faculty, focusing on topics such as teaching philosophy, understanding adult learners, learning styles, integrating technology into the classroom, and assessment.

Duty Day Professional Development

Duty days and the two NHED administrative-driven professional development days per year provide opportunities for training and professional development for all faculty. CTL campus leaders work with NHED administrators to organize the conference-type NHED professional development day sessions, at which system staff and NHED faculty present workshops and discipline groups meet to discuss trends and plan District-wide collaborations. The past few NHED shared professional development days have focused on online teaching issues, as all NHED institutions have developed online classes and programs in the last decade. Shared professional development days have featured nationally recognized keynote speakers, including Mark Taylor, an expert on first-year students, and Thomas Jones, author of *The Missing Professor*. 
Time is reserved on Itasca’s administrative duty days and faculty duty days for important faculty training, campuswide collaborative work and input, and program academic planning. For example, specific sessions related to course outline development, assessment of student learning, and program planning are incorporated each year at fall and spring duty days. In addition, faculty and staff committees meet to work on College initiatives such as the Foundations of Excellence and Higher Learning Commission self-studies. Duty days have also provided venues for discussion of our mission and of the significance of learning communities for our College and our students. Key student services leaders and counselors often present on such topics as Student Support Services, disability accommodations, and student mental health issues. With support from the CFI, faculty also present on teaching and learning issues. Recent discussions have included Ken Bain’s concept of “the Promising Syllabus” and how to create a welcoming environment for first-generation college students the first day of class.

Grant-Funded Professional Development

Grants awarded to program faculty have funded other professional development projects and opportunities, including:

- Engineering faculty book group read Ken Bain’s *What the Best College Teachers Do* and then, along with collaborating faculty in other disciplines, attended Bain’s training institute in Summer 2008.
- Applied Psychology faculty developed inquiry-based learning for introductory Psychology courses using psychophysiology measurement equipment with a National Science Foundation (NSF) STEM grant.
- Practical Nursing used a CLEAN grant to hire a consultant to help them develop active learning in online courses and in other Nursing courses.

Professional Development Plans

Faculty create their own three-year professional development plans in consultation with the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs as part of their regular evaluation process. Plans address faculty professional development goals over the three-year period and identify resources, such as conferences, workshops, courses, or readings, to help them meet those goals.

Participation in Professional Development Activities

Faculty participation rates in workshops, conferences, and other training is high, and administration supports participation through routinely approving requests to be off campus to attend events. Faculty and staff gave the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs high marks on her 2007 Administrator Assessment for working “effectively to help faculty/staff improve their skills by identifying appropriate resources and opportunities for staff development” (4.34 on a 5-point scale). In the Foundations of Excellence Faculty/
Staff Survey, faculty and staff reported their participation in workshops at Itasca that focus on the first year (almost 42 percent high/very high) and national and regional conferences that focus on the first year (almost 32 percent moderate and 26.4 percent high/very high). Participation in CTL and CFI activities on campus has been high. For example, there were 148 participants in CFI activities in 2007-08. A challenge for faculty is balancing the desire to attend conferences and workshops with the need to be in the classroom. As shown, there are many low-cost opportunities available in the state, but travel time from our rural location is significant to attend most of them.

Participation in Professional Organizations

Both faculty and administration value involvement in professional organizations, professional development, and ongoing training. According to an e-mail survey conducted by the Campus Culture Dimension Committee in the Foundations of Excellence process, faculty belong to at least 36 different professional organizations in their disciplines.

Funding for Professional Development

Faculty have allocated funds to use on a range of professional development activities or materials at their discretion. The annual amount allocated to faculty is contractual ($250 for UFT, $150 for part-time temporary), but the College has shown a strong commitment to meaningful professional development by allowing UFT faculty to accrue funds so that they may attend national or international conferences. The funds are overseen and disbursed by the elected union treasurer to help defray costs of professional development activities, including tuition, conference costs, and books.

Sabbaticals

The College has an annual allotment of sabbaticals based on the number of UFT faculty. Faculty sabbaticals provide an especially rich opportunity for professional development. Faculty are encouraged to develop sabbatical plans that meet specified instructional priorities, several of which address instructional methods or engaging students in learning, including the following:

- Learning Communities
- Serving Diverse Learners
- Technology
- Global Education
- Innovative Teaching/Engaged Learning
- Student Academic Achievement (Assessment)
- Student Retention

Faculty submit a sabbatical report after the end of their sabbatical semester or year. Examples of sabbatical plans that have impacted students include the development of project-
based curriculum in Engineering; a teaching-and-learning focus in Expository Writing; revamping Chemistry laboratory and course curriculum to “small-scale chemistry,” which is safer and more student friendly; completing advanced graduate training in Computer Science, which allowed C++ programming to be added to the curriculum, and mastery of eFolio (electronic portfolio) software for assessment purposes; and studying ways to serve undecided students.

Training in Technology

It is an ongoing challenge for all faculty to keep up to date with constantly changing technology. To support faculty, the College prioritizes professional development designed to facilitate teaching in varied learning environments and with different technologies. The College provides faculty training in utilizing interactive television. Information Technology Services staff provide computer lab assistance and orientation sessions, and one-on-one training is offered when new classroom technology is introduced.

The online learning platform D2L, which is used by most faculty on campus, is particularly well supported. A faculty member has release time to assist faculty in putting course content into online formats or using D2L to enhance classes. D2L trainings are scheduled on duty days, and individual consultation is provided as needed. The faculty member and Information Technology staff attend system D2L “train the trainers” sessions. The system’s CTL has prioritized technological training for faculty through its annual free ITeach Conference, which focuses on teaching with technology. A faculty Technology Subcommittee provides input on technology needs for teaching and learning purposes.

Qualified Faculty

To maintain this culture, hiring the right faculty is critical. As a longtime English instructor once told the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, “Hiring [the best and brightest faculty] is the most important thing we do as a College.” In the hiring process, the College makes every effort to attract and hire faculty who are committed to engaging students in learning through innovative teaching. Each posting includes the desired faculty attributes of being student centered, committed to the mission of a community college, and committed to the assessment of student academic achievement, as well as preferred methods of instruction, such as active and experiential learning and innovative use of technology in instruction. Search committees make these qualities a high priority in their recommendations for finalists.

Itasca’s faculty are among the most highly qualified and experienced community college faculty in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. The Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) contract sets salary by experience (step placement) and education (column placement). Because of their longevity, Itasca has the second-highest number of faculty in the system at the top of the salary schedule. With the exception of technical terminal degree program faculty, minimum qualifications for faculty are a Master’s degree
in the field or a Master’s degree plus 16 graduate credits in the field. Because faculty provide leadership in academic programs and in supporting student success, the College invests in full-time permanent faculty. The MSCF contract (Article 20, Section 7) requires that each college in the system have at least 60% full-time faculty. ICC had 74% full-time faculty in 2007-08. Itasca is also fortunate to have a committed, well-qualified, and reliable pool of part-time temporary faculty. New credentialing requirements in the system require that part-time faculty meet the same minimum qualifications as full-time faculty (Policy 3.32.1).

**Faculty Leadership**

Faculty provide academic leadership at Itasca through formally institutionalized structures, institutionalized responsibilities, and contractual protection of academic freedom.

Major academic issues are addressed by the faculty as a whole through the ICC Faculty Association (ICCFA). For example, in the late 1990s, faculty participated through course-review committees and campuswide discussions in the conversion from quarters to semesters and directed a contentious Associate in Arts degree review. More recently, faculty voted in 2005 to participate in two pilot concurrent enrollment classes with Grand Rapids High School. After evaluating those pilot classes and discussing the results, ICCFA voted—in a move that sets Itasca apart from statewide trends—not to participate in concurrent enrollment classes as a rule. In Spring 2009, the faculty-led Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC) will meet with the ICCFA to develop a plan to review the AA degree to achieve a state-mandated reduction from 64 credits to 60 credits. The same process will be implemented for AS degree programs and most AAS degree programs, to be completed in full by 2012 in compliance with Board of Trustees policy.

As discussed in component 3a, the AASC, which provides oversight and leadership for academic matters, is stipulated by MSCF contract to include two-thirds faculty members, one-third administrators and/or other staff, and be directed by a faculty chair. AASC ensures faculty leadership in academic matters, including course outlines, course offerings, curricula, programs, and degrees. When individual faculty and faculty program coordinators propose new courses or changes to courses or programs through AASC, proposals are disseminated to all faculty members via internal e-mail for comment prior to a decision; AASC meetings are publicly announced and open to all faculty.

Administration supports faculty academic leadership through providing release time or paying stipends for program coordination, assessment projects, online course development, CTL campus leader, institutional research, and new program development.

Faculty program coordinators provide program oversight and leadership. Although disciplines are not organized in a department structure as per contract, program coordination provides de facto department-level leadership. Faculty in discipline areas are encouraged to meet to address curricular issues, and faculty meet at the program level to evaluate and make changes to curriculum. Each year faculty create Master Academic
Plans (MAPs) for their programs, which are available in the Resource Room and uploaded annually onto the system website for reporting purposes. MAPs set goals for programs and establish timelines for completion, determine responsible parties, and include budget requests.

To foster discipline leadership across NHED, discipline groups meet at the biannual shared professional development days. In 2007-08, English faculty in NHED used this discipline session as a springboard for an additional day-long English discipline workshop, which focused on curricular consistency across NHED as well as classroom teaching strategies. They plan to continue meeting at least annually to promote shared curricular goals such as preserving literature offerings. This project is being held up as a model in NHED.

The MSCF contract protects academic freedom (Article 23, Section 3) and faculty ownership of intellectual property (Article 23, Section 4). All course materials and syllabi created by faculty are their intellectual property.

### Innovative Practices that Enhance Learning

One of Itasca’s strengths has been innovation in teaching and learning. The College embraces a culture of continuous improvement and encourages active learning, engagement, lab-centered instruction, and other methods. Administration has supported faculty research and development of a number of initiatives and program changes to enhance learning:

- Block scheduling in Engineering and other areas
- Project-based curriculum in Engineering
- Lab-centered instruction in Psychology courses
- Concept-mastery-based approach in math courses
- Online curriculum in Nursing and other selected courses
- Portfolio-based assessment in several programs
- Freshman Year Experience research
- Developmental Education research
- Development of learning communities in a number of programs

Several of these initiatives are discussed in component 3c.

### Faculty Evaluation and Recognition of Teaching Excellence

As discussed in component 1d, Itasca has a culture of mutual respect and collegiality among faculty and between faculty and administration. Faculty feel strongly that they contribute to the success of the institution, and administration recognizes that commitment by all faculty. Student responses in the Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and the Graduate Survey
all speak to the high quality of instruction and faculty support for students at Itasca. For example, Itasca’s overall mean for the set of questions about the quality of instruction in the Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey was 4.09, higher than that of any of the other cohort groups conducting the survey. As discussed in component 3c, Itasca’s CCSSE benchmarks for active and collaborative learning, academic challenge, and student-faculty interaction are all significantly above the 2007 national cohort. Itasca’s evaluation of faculty and recognition of teaching excellence start from a belief in the high quality and commitment to students of all faculty.

Faculty Evaluation

The Dean of Academic and Student Affairs approaches the faculty evaluation process as an opportunity to work with faculty to reflect on and improve teaching. UFT faculty appraisals are conducted on a rotational basis (approximately every three years) and involve three forms of assessment:

- student evaluations, which are compiled anonymously and include comparisons among classes and with past evaluations
- observation of teaching by the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs
- faculty-written professional development assessment and plan

The evaluation forms use a set of items with a Likert scale for easy comparison and open-ended questions inviting more thorough feedback. (The evaluation instrument has been reviewed and revised by a faculty committee.) The focus of both the student evaluation form and the Dean’s observation visit is on teaching methods and effectiveness in engaging students. The Dean consults with faculty about all three segments of the evaluation. As part of the evaluation process, the Dean encourages participation in activities that focus on improving student engagement through teaching and learning workshops, discussions, and courses of study. Part-time faculty participate in a full evaluation their first semester of teaching and student evaluations with longitudinal reporting annually thereafter. Full-time unlimited faculty participate in a full evaluation their first semester of teaching and then once every three years on a rotating basis.

Awards for Excellence

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system has been offering Awards for Excellence since 2005 to support special faculty projects. Faculty who have an idea for a project supporting student learning that is “above and beyond the normal requirements of the individual’s position” (MSCF 2007-09 Contract, Article 13, Section 4) may submit proposals for an Award for Excellence. Awards are up to $5,000 per project. Faculty received five Awards in FY 2006 totaling almost $19,000, eight in FY 2007 totaling almost $62,000, and nine in FY 2008 totaling over $46,500. At Itasca, a committee including two administrators and two rotating faculty representatives makes recommendations on which proposals to accept, using the following criteria:
1. Benefits students, program/department, and or college community
2. Contributes to the mission of the college
3. Details tangible results/end product that demonstrate an impact on the college
4. Has clear and specific methods for assessing expected outcomes
5. Has clear and reasonable timeline for completion
6. Has measurable objectives
7. Is creative and innovative in design
8. Is outside of the work assignment expectations outlined in Article 11 of the MSCF contract
9. Is fiscally sound

The Provost makes the final decisions on project funding. Recent projects have included creating a set of Frequently Asked Questions for online Chemistry students, renovating the College’s wildlife pond area, developing a student leadership program, piloting a GIS internship project with the City of Grand Rapids, digitizing art collections and natural resource slides for teaching and learning, and conducting an assessment of ICC Foundational Goals of Communication and Critical Thinking.

Recognition of Teaching Excellence

The collegial relationships and small campus atmosphere at Itasca lead to a preference for recognizing the efforts of all faculty. Faculty have been resistant to being singled out for special recognition and have generally rejected specific plans to do so. Still, faculty have been recognized by external organizations for excellence in their teaching and academic service. Teaching and service awards to ICC faculty in the past decade have included:

- Minnesota Psychological Association Award for Outstanding Two-Year College Faculty in Psychology
- Minnesota State Post-Secondary Counselor of the Year
- NHED nominee for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees Teacher of the Year Award
- Minnesota Affiliate Winner of the National Education Association’s Foundation of Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award
- I CAN Learn Award for Teaching Excellence
- Financial Aid Director Award (Financial Aid Director was a faculty position)
- Minnesota College Athletic Conference Coaching Awards (in baseball, basketball, and softball)
- Center for Teaching and Learning Program Innovation Award
Criterion Three: Core Component 3c

Itasca Community College creates effective learning environments.

During the Foundations of Excellence process that Itasca underwent in 2007-08, committees analyzed what the College does to support first-year students, the key group on which to focus to improve student success in college. Campuswide groups reviewed policies, procedures, and practices of the College; analyzed survey results; and had discussions pertaining to the first-year experience of all new students. What committees found largely confirmed that Itasca creates a friendly, welcoming, and safe environment and strives to identify and meet the needs of students and provide them opportunities to flourish academically and socially.

When asked about their experience at the College, Itasca’s students and graduates often comment, “Itasca Community College is the best place to start.” In fact, the College’s tagline, “Best place to start,” originated in the frequency of such remarks. Washington Monthly magazine, in its first ever ranking of community colleges in 2007, agreed that Itasca was one of the best places to start: Itasca Community College was ranked number 13 in the nation.

Washington Monthly’s rankings were based on results of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and graduation rates. CCSSE measures student engagement using five benchmarks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>ICC</th>
<th>2007 National Cohort</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active and collaborative learning</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student effort</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic challenge</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-faculty interaction</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for learners</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Achieving those benchmarks is central to creating effective learning environments throughout students’ educational experience at the College. The First-Year Student Philosophy that we articulated as a result of our study of the first-year experience provides a framework for what we mean by effective learning environments. The First-Year Student Philosophy pledges to create these learning environments and engage students intellectually:
Itasca Community College First-Year Student Philosophy

The Itasca Community College faculty and staff believe the first year is critical to the academic success and personal growth of our students. To best serve the unique needs of first-year students, we will:

- give students individual attention in a safe, supportive, and friendly environment
- provide high-quality instruction
- communicate and uphold high academic expectations
- establish positive advising relationships
- support an environment in which students experience and express diverse worldviews
- offer a comprehensive range of activities to enhance learning and personal growth
- encourage students to make connections with others on the campus and in the community
- evaluate the results of our efforts and use them for continuous improvement

Our commitment is to provide every first-year student with the **best place to start.**

When we provide this kind of support and environment for first-year students, we are providing them for all of our students, and the College’s small class sizes, learning community focus, and use of applied pedagogy and alternative learning environments give us the opportunity to guide our students through their transition to professional work or transfer. We collect satisfaction data and other feedback from student surveys about these processes. Ultimately, student retention, persistence, and success provide a measure of the effectiveness of our efforts.

**Entering Itasca**

The process of creating a safe, supportive, and friendly environment begins when students first register for classes and start to develop a concept of what college will be like for them. Students receive individual attention on campus throughout the application and registration process. When they are not on campus or a staff member is not immediately available, students can get quick answers to **Frequently Asked Questions** and to their individual questions using RightNow software through the College website.

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*“I really like that fact that everyone was so welcoming and helpful. It was nice to be able to find people who were willing to help you and take time to do so. The faculty and staff are wonderful people.”*  
--- Graduate Survey response

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

In the past, students were directed from one office to another to complete various aspects of their application and admissions process. Students applying to Itasca and seeking information about the application, registration, or financial aid process will soon experience a more streamlined and user-friendly approach. This year, staff serving in the offices involved in the admissions process will be cross-trained to provide a “one-stop” admissions experience. This training is part of a longer-term plan to renovate Backes Student Center to create an Admissions Office to welcome new students.
Registration and Orientation

New student registration sessions are limited to 25 students to foster interaction and allow for individual attention. The session covers the value of a college education for employment and self-enrichment, placement test results, tips for success, and global education opportunities at Itasca. Then an advisor or counselor meets with smaller groups of three to five students in the same program or major to go through the information in the registration booklet and help them register on paper for classes before going to a computer lab, where advisors teach them how to register for classes in eServices. Along with the three faculty counselors, registration assistance is provided by the Student Support Services (SSS) staff, Registrar, Director of Enrollment Services, and academic advisors.

The ICC New Student Registration Evaluation and the ICC New Student Survey indicate high levels of satisfaction with the registration and orientation process. In the 2007 New Student Survey, 72% rated the registration process good or excellent quality. In the 2007 New Student Registration Evaluation, which is collected during registration, between 95 and 97% of new students agreed that working in small groups with an advisor, the registration booklet, and the Records Office staff were helpful. The counselors, Registrar, advisors, and Director of Enrollment Services meet annually to discuss the registration process and the New Student Registration Evaluation results as they plan the next year’s registration session.

The half-day orientation for traditional-age students has included a potpourri of information about College policies, procedures, and program opportunities as well as inspirational speakers. Nontraditional students have a separate orientation session more focused on their needs. In Spring 2008, a New Student Orientation Committee (which included counselors, student services staff, and faculty) was formed to evaluate and plan the 2008 one-day orientation session. Several changes were implemented to make the traditional-age orientation more focused on making connections, to get students information when they need it, and to simplify the admissions process.

In Fall 2008, the new orientation model was piloted to modify the traditional half-day orientation program with the addition of faculty-led small-group sessions and computer lab-based technology training. After the students’ morning large-group meeting, which featured inspirational speakers about educational success and respect for others, faculty met with small groups of students who had enrolled in their program area, including the Associate in Arts program, our largest program. These “Let’s Chat” sessions started with an icebreaker to facilitate connections between faculty and students and among students, followed by a discussion of the First-Year Student Philosophy statement, academic expectations, and career and degree information. The “Let’s Chat” sessions were designed to help students meet faculty and each other, ease their transition to college, and make them feel more comfortable on campus. In 2008, 97% of the new students who completed the orientation evaluation form said they did feel more comfortable on the ICC campus after attending orientation, and 95% said we should continue this model of orientation. Students said that during the “Let’s Chat” sessions they were able to learn what to expect from classes, had their questions answered, and were able to get to know other students as well as faculty and staff. We plan to continue the “Let’s Chat” sessions...
next year along with a campuswide picnic lunch to which returning students are also invited.

**Supporting Students with Diverse Needs**

One of Itasca's longtime faculty members always said, “We meet students where they are.” The College identifies and supports students’ academic and social needs in many ways, including placement testing, appropriate coursework, academic support services, multicultural student services, small class sizes, learning communities, and curriculum designed to help students make the transition to college.

In any given classroom, faculty teach many underprepared students and first-generation students; they also encounter a broad age range among learners, from 16-year-old high school juniors to retired residents taking classes for personal enrichment. Nontraditional students (25 or older) make up about a quarter of our student body. High school students may enroll in a post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) program, which allows them to earn high school and college credits concurrently for courses they take at the College. In the past several years, about 10% of our head count have been PSEO students, although that has dropped off since 2007, when the University of Minnesota-Duluth began offering concurrent enrollment courses at Grand Rapids High School. PSEO students, who must test college ready and have a minimum high school grade point average (GPA) (3.2 for juniors, 3.0 for seniors) to enroll, range from competent to highly advanced.

It’s also important to note that many of our students—in all of the groups mentioned above—are low income. According to demographic information collected in the placement testing process, 38% self-identify as low income.

The Foundations of Excellence Faculty/Staff Survey indicated that over 86% of our faculty and staff feel that Itasca strongly supports students with academic deficiencies. Over 79% of our new students surveyed also felt their academic needs were being met to a high/very high degree at Itasca (Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey). Itasca earned an aggregate mean score of 3.87 from students in supporting them in their transition to college, compared to a mean of 3.57 for the Foundations of Excellence 2007 cohort.

**Placement and Academic Support Services**

Open-door institutions have a special responsibility to provide academic support to ensure that a college education is actually accessible to entering students. Upon applying for admission, all students must take placement tests in reading and math (or submit placement test results or transcripts showing college coursework in those areas from other institutions). Our current program, Placement for Success, identifies the academic needs of new students through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system-approved assessment instrument, **Accuplacer**. Accuplacer is an assessment of basic skills in the areas of reading, writing, and math. The system requires mandatory placement of students into
necessary developmental education coursework (Policy 3.3.1). Students whose Accuplacer scores suggest they do not have the ability to benefit from developmental classes are directed toward Adult Basic Education services, which are available on campus through an agreement with an area agency.

Cut scores for placement have been analyzed annually (or more frequently) by the Academic Resource Center (ARC) Director in meetings with teaching faculty. The ARC Director tracks students’ progress to help analyze and evaluate placement; as of Fall 2008, however, standard cut scores are mandated by system policy (Policy 3.3). English faculty have met with the ARC Director to discuss the potential impact of the new cut scores, which will place students in developmental or college-level writing as well as reading on the basis of reading test scores. An analysis of how the new cut scores would have impacted the Fall 2007 cohort of entering students showed little difference in placement. An evaluation of the impact of the new cut scores will be made after Fall 2008.

In the first week of classes, math, reading, and writing instructors generally give students a revalidation test or assignment. When a developmental student tests college ready in the revalidation, instructors may, depending on other indicators (e.g. high school grades, placement test score, other first-week assignments), invite the student to move into college-level coursework (or the next level in math). Instructors discuss concerns about readiness with students who test at a lower level in the revalidation but cannot require students to move into a lower-level course.

**Developmental Education**

Well over half of our incoming students test below college ready in at least one area. The College uses placement test results to determine the number of developmental sections needed, with the goal of having enough sections available that all students who need them may take developmental classes their first semester of enrollment. Placement test results over the last several years show between 20 and 30% testing into remedial reading, between one-quarter and one-third testing into remedial writing, and 90% or more testing into remedial math. Counselors and advisors assisting in the registration process make sure that students do enroll in these classes. Developmental classes have smaller maximum sizes than college-level classes to increase individual attention. The enrollment in developmental courses has trended up in recent years, going up by one-third between 2005-06 and 2007-08 even with a small overall enrollment decline.
Table 22. Developmental Education Course Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Developmental Education Courses Offered in Reading, Writing, and Math</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Developmental faculty members meet annually with the Director of the Academic Resource Center to discuss cut scores and placement, trends in curriculum, and the needs of their students.

The Office of Institutional Research conducted a study of the success of developmental students in 2008, examining retention, GPA, and three-year graduation rates of students taking one or more developmental classes compared to students taking no developmental coursework. For all students, including developmental students, higher GPAs are correlated with higher retention and graduation rates. Developmental students who earned a GPA of 3.5 or higher were retained at nearly the same rate (90% v. just over 92%) as students earning a 3.5 or higher GPA who took no developmental courses. With the exception of a higher retention rate among developmental students earning 2.5-2.9 GPA than general students in the same GPA range, however, developmental students are retained at significantly lower levels for all other earned GPAs than students with the same GPA who took no developmental courses. The same trend holds for three-year graduation rates, and even developmental students earning 3.5 or higher GPAs graduate at significantly lower rates (55% v. 76%) than students earning the same GPA who took no developmental courses.

Student Support Services

Students who are low income, disabled, or first-generation college students are eligible for TRiO-funded Student Support Services (SSS). On the basis of data collected during the placement testing process, eligible students are invited to apply for SSS support. During 2006-07, SSS served 219 students, 115 of whom were first-year participants. SSS supports students’ academic and social success in college through:

- academic success workshops
- free credit-bearing courses such as Transition to College and Job Readiness
- coordinating school visits and guiding students through transfer school admission and scholarship applications
- career exploration and job skills workshops
• peer and professional tutoring for all project participants
• social and cultural events

Throughout the 2006-07 grant year, SSS provided over 1287 hours of counseling and over 5000 contact hours of academic support as well as 364 contact hours in the area of cultural and enrichment activities. Itasca’s SSS program is one of the oldest and best established in the state.

Multicultural Student Services

Itasca supports minority students through the Office for Multicultural Student Affairs and has extended outreach with a newly hired Assistant Director for Multicultural Student Affairs. Native Americans, currently the largest minority on campus, may take advantage of the O-Gitch-I-Dah Club and the Anishinaabe Resource Center, a lounge and computer room dedicated to Native American students. Tutoring services are also offered through the Anishinaabe Resource Center. There is a new club for students of color called Many Faces One Goal (MF1G), which is intended to provide students of color a forum for discussion, peer support, and cultural sharing. The club has a student leader and is working to accommodate athletes’ schedules to build involvement.

Disability Services

Students who disclose and document a disability have the right to accommodations and services and are also eligible for SSS. The Director of Disability Services meets with self-identified students and examines their documentation as well as their Individualized Educational Program (IEP) from high school to plan accommodations and services. Instructors are notified about accommodations, such as longer test times or use of a note-taker. A total of 73 students accessed disability services in the 2007-08 academic year, up from 62 the previous year and 52 in 2004-05. The table below displays usage of disability services on campus in the past three academic years.

SSS Director Ann Vidovic has served TRIO for 19 years.
Table 23. Usage of Disability Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Spring 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Spring 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Spring 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Vision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard of Hearing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Disabilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psych Disability</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquired / Traumatic Brain Injury</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD / ADD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Dependency</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Requests-based diagnosed disabilities. (Students presenting more than one disability)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unduplicated number of students utilizing accommodations such as Notetakers, Interpreters-ASL &amp; Cued Speech Accommodated Testing</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Satisfaction with disability services was high, according to the 2007 Graduate Survey. Graduates rated disability services 3.45 on a 4-point Likert scale, a slight improvement (+0.09) over the previous year.

Counseling and Advising

The College has three faculty counselors as well as four staff who serve in an advising capacity full time or during registration. Counselors are the main point of individual contact to ensure that students are on track academically to graduate and/or successfully
transfer. All new students are assigned an academic advisor/counselor based on their major, program, PSEO status, or enrollment in SSS. All students register individually with a counselor or advisor their first semester and are mailed postcards to prompt them to meet with their counselor prior to registering for second-semester courses.

Although they are not required to do so after the first year, students are encouraged to meet with their counselors in preparation for their second year and beyond. (PSEO students are required to meet with their assigned counselor, who oversees their registration each semester to make sure they meet their college and high school academic requirements.) Counselors help students use the Degree Audit Review System (DARS) to check their progress toward their degrees and guide them in mapping out their academic plan. Students are advised to meet with their counselor prior to their last semester to do a graduation check.

Counselors help students understand the value of general education and importance of courses in their academic program. They also assist students in identifying possible majors and career paths through discussions and the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey (CISS). Counselors themselves and the Foundations of Excellence process identified the need to work more intensively with undecided students. This year, one of the counselors is doing a sabbatical project on strategies for assisting this group of students.

The College uses intrusive advising to support students whose academic standing is in peril. Faculty members refer students at risk in their courses to the counselors through an Early Warning System. Itasca also implements a Satisfactory Academic Progress policy, in which students whose GPA has fallen below a 2.0 or who have not completed at least 67% of the credits that they have attempted are placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation have increased contact with their counselor and other key support services on campus. If in a semester’s time they are not able to improve their academic situation, they will be placed on suspension status. All students are allowed the opportunity to appeal their suspension. Those granted appeals develop a contract with the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs in which they are required to meet biweekly with their counselor and report to their counselor their grades and attendance regularly throughout the semester. They may also be on a restricted course load and be required to register for Freshman Year Experience or Transition to College if the Dean or Suspension Appeals Committee believes this will support their academic success.

Students report fairly high levels of satisfaction with counseling and advising, with 75 percent of new students rating the quality of information from counselors as good or excellent, the balance being either fair or no opinion (ICC New Student Survey 2007). In the most recent Graduate Survey, graduates’ satisfaction with academic advising was a mean of 3.87 on a 5-point Likert scale (5 being the highest score), their satisfaction with counseling a mean of 3.85. Nearly 71% of the graduate respondents were satisfied with the academic advising services, and 67% were satisfied with the counseling services they received (ICC Graduate Survey 2007). The Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey asked a range of questions about advising; Itasca’s mean score for all academic advising
questions was 3.58, which was higher than the mean score of selected similar institutions (3.48).

The three faculty counselors work closely together and until recently met annually to discuss processes and ways to improve services through a process called Strategic Comprehensive Program Enhancement (SCOPE). Because counselors and advisors meet informally frequently and twice a month at Student Services Leadership Team meetings, the SCOPE process was cumbersome and slow. Counselors and advisors meet early in semester to assign advisees, midsemester to address early warnings, and twice monthly to discuss any needed/suggested changes and improvements in counseling and career services.

**First-Year Focus**

As we discussed in the Self-Study Process section, Itasca embarked on a project to study the first-year experience of students at Itasca in the 2007-08 academic year. The College has long focused on the success of entering students because the first year is a critical juncture for students nationally, the point at which they are most likely to drop out or be suspended for academic reasons. When students succeed in the first year and register for the second, they are likely to complete their academic programs. As a community college, about two-thirds of our students fit the definition of first-year students (having earned fewer than 30 credits).

The study, which used the Foundations of Excellence framework developed by the Policy Center on the First Year of College, yielded valuable insights about what Itasca does well. Students feel welcomed and feel a sense of belonging; they feel as if faculty and staff care about their success and are available to them; they are able to connect socially and access academic support. Our greatest strengths were in the areas this component addresses, creating the learning environments that help students make the transition to college (see the “Transitions” chapter in the Foundations of Excellence self-study in the Appendices section) and that provide students the academic and social support they need to succeed (see the “All Students” chapter in that report).

**Freshman Year Experience**

Itasca has a longstanding Freshman Year Experience (FYE) class. Developed by a faculty member in 1995 after studying best practices in and models for first-year courses, Itasca’s FYE is a three-credit college-level elective class that familiarizes students with campus resources and teaches study skills, information literacy, and career exploration. Students who are at risk or who are undecided about their educational goals are encouraged by counselors and advisors to take the course. National and local research indicates that students who take this type of course stay in college at higher rates and have higher GPAs than the general student population. Our local data indicate that students testing college
ready who take FYE in their first term are more likely to return the following fall and more likely to graduate within three years than the general student population.

Even though FYE is an elective course, about 25% of ICC’s first-year students take it. Still, committees examining the first-year experience in the Foundations of Excellence process recommended that a larger percentage of our new students take FYE, especially undecided students and students who are not taking similar courses in their academic programs.

**Transition to College**

SSS’s free Transition to College class is designed to help nontraditional students make the transition to being a college student. As in FYE, students learn how to be successful in college, including time management, study skills, notetaking, test-taking strategies, and Library navigation.

**Program-Based First-Year or Career Courses**

Because of the success of FYE for the general student population, other academic programs have developed program-specific courses or series of courses designed to help students make the transition to being a professional in their chosen field. Like FYE, they aid students in exploring career options. These courses include:

- Engineering Professional Development series
- Role Transition (final semester Nursing)
- Careers (Natural Resources)
- Class Act (pre-Education) Seminar series
- Applied Psychology practicum

**Engaging Students**

Itasca makes engaging students a priority because it is so crucial to their success. This priority can be seen in key staff positions (such as Director of Residential Living, Student Life Director, and Director and Assistant Director of Multicultural Services), Student Life and student organizations and their activities, other organized student activities on campus, the commitment to residential living on campus, and the Athletic program. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data shows that ICC spends considerably more per student than comparison institutions on student services, and we believe that this investment pays off in student engagement and ultimately in students’ retention and success. Student engagement and success is powerfully impacted by involvement in learning communities, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, interactions with faculty, and connecting with other students. Students responding to the Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey in 2007 gave fairly high mean scores for making connections with
other new (3.65) and continuing (3.38) students (on a 5-point scale, in which 5 is the highest score).

The College fosters connections among students through small classes, groupwork in classes, small group registration and orientation sessions, learning communities, and Student Life activities and organizations. Data from the 2007 CCSSE reflects these efforts. Responses to items asking whether students had worked with other students on projects during class and whether they had worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments were both significantly higher than the CCSSE cohort mean scores (2.73 v. 2.46 and 2.27 v. 1.84, respectively).

Student-Faculty Connections

Itasca's students enjoy low student-to-faculty/staff (8 to 1) and student-to-faculty ratios (20.7 to 1). In addition, the small class sizes at the College (average size is 24) and contractual office hours mean that all students can receive individual academic attention at Itasca. Many faculty members across the curriculum schedule student conferences beyond their office hours and have an open-door policy for students to allow for more individualized support and instruction. Many classes arrange study groups or hold review sessions. College lab assistants provide individualized attention in Nursing, Natural Resources, and Engineering.

Faculty and staff members in our Engineering program started a grant-funded academic coaching program with their student population in 2005-06 to ensure that all of their students get one-on-one attention from and interaction with faculty. This program includes not only academic mentoring, but also offers opportunities for interaction between students and faculty and learning community building through social events. Examples of the many social events include group dinners and barbecues, camping, trips to see the Minnesota Twins baseball games, an Engineering basketball league, chess club, open mike singing and poetry reciting events, cribbage tournament, and an annual Frisbee golf tournament.

Learning community activities in Class Act and Applied Psychology involve close working relationships with faculty supervising teaching, seminar work, and research projects. Other programs, such as Business, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Child Development, and Nursing include an internship, cooperative education project, clinical sequence, or practicum experience that involve individual supervision.

The ICC New Student Survey, ICC Graduate Survey, and items on the Assessment Test ask questions about student engagement—time spent studying, willingness to ask questions, importance of educational goals, and the like—allowing for analyses of improvement and longitudinal studies of student engagement. In addition, CCSSE and Foundations of Excellence survey results allow for regional and national comparisons of Itasca’s students’ engagement in learning.
The Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey asked questions about individual attention from instructors, instructor availability outside of class, encouragement of questions in class, and promptness of feedback and clarity of academic expectations. Aggregated as a measure of quality of instruction, student responses to these questions gave Itasca a mean score of 4.09, higher than the aggregated score of 3.95 for the 2007 cohort of institutions in the Foundations of Excellence process. Itasca’s aggregated rating for making connections (3.34) also far outpaces the rating (2.90) of the comparison institutions in the Foundations of Excellence cohort (Foundations of Excellence Cohort Comparison data).

Data from CCSSE echoes these results. CCSSE provides participating colleges with an Institutional Report of Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice. In student-faculty interaction, Itasca (53.8) rated significantly higher than the 2007 CCSSE cohort (average is set at 50.0). Students at Itasca experience more interaction with the faculty than do students at most other colleges in the nation. There is a strong culture on campus promoting student/faculty interactions and many initiatives aimed at improving and fostering student/faculty connections.

Learning Communities

Learning communities in Engineering, Class Act, Applied Psychology, Natural Resources, American Indian Studies, Business, GIS, and Nursing foster connections among new and continuing students. Lounge space has been set aside on campus for each of these communities, giving them a place to gather outside the classroom. These students are provided with a variety of out-of-class experiences to help them connect with each other and the program. For example, before school starts each fall, Class Act students spend two days in an outdoor experience program at the Laurentian Learning Center to better get to know each other, their counselor, program coordinator, and instructors.

Most of the College’s academic programs offer learning communities to support the academic success of their students. Students in the Class Act program for pre-Education majors take the majority of their courses as a cohort. Engineering students work intensively together on group projects through their Engineering Professional Development classes and block class structure. Co-curricular and extracurricular activities in Engineering, such as Science Café, book groups, and service projects, foster social cohesion and academic engagement. Students in Nursing, American Indian Studies, Natural Resources-Forestry, GIS, Business and Accounting, Applied Psychology and Early Childhood have opportunities to connect regularly with program faculty for work on research projects and community service activities.

Athletic programs are tight-knit and have been de facto learning communities; in Fall 2007 the Athletic program piloted an official Athletic Learning Community, a cohort of first-year student athletes who tested into developmental classes. These students took Analytical College Reading, Fundamentals of Written English, Wellness, and Interpersonal Communication as a cohort group. In addition, they enrolled with a larger group of
athletes in a seminar focusing on issues in athletics and on developing character as student
athletes. Of the 16 participants in the Athletic Learning Community, 50% returned to
Itasca for Fall 2008, while only 33% of a similar group of developmental student athletes
returned.

Currently, there are learning communities for AA students who are athletes or who are in
Class Act or American Indian Studies. The College plans to expand learning communities
within the AA program, especially for undecided students. This was identified as a priority
in the Foundations of Excellence process and is one of the goals of the newly appointed
AA Coordinator and the AA Steering Committee.

Student Life Activities/Student Organizations

For its size and budget, the College has a vibrant campus life that engages students and
helps them connect with each other. There are student organizations, intramural and
organized sports, and a range of special campus life activities. The Organization Fair held
the second week of classes each fall welcomes new students into student organizations.
There are clubs for most any student interest, including academic/professional clubs like
the Psychology Club and Philosophy Club; Student Government; service organizations
like Circle K; leadership groups like the Jen Guyer Leadership Club; groups promoting
diversity, like Gay Straight Alliance and O-Gitch-I-Dah; and Christian groups like Campus
Crusade for Christ (CRU). A complete list of active student organizations is available on
the website. In addition, Student Support Services, the academic programs’ learning
communities, and the residence halls offer many activities to give students a chance to
get to know each other, relax and have fun, and feel connected to the college. In the
Foundations of Excellence Student Survey, 66 percent of new students state that their
social needs have been met to a high or very high degree.

Since we have become a residential campus, with housing available for 110 students on
campus as well as an additional 100 in housing adjacent to the campus, the College has
devoted significant resources into campus life. The Student Life Director, a new position in
the last decade, and the Director of Residential Living, also a new position, are responsible
for overseeing, coordinating, and developing Student Life activities. The three intramural
sports (flag football, ultimate Frisbee, volleyball) in fall semester have averaged 170
participants over the past two years; Spring 2008 intramurals (basketball, softball) had
105. The table below shows participation in campus-sponsored Student Life activities:
Table 24. Student Life Activity Participation Fall 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movie nights</td>
<td>40-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonfire</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frisbee golf</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping Pong Tournament</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ski Trip</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root Beer Float Night</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haunted House</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock-n-Bowl</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dances</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie-Dyeing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current Student Life Director was hired in the summer of 2007 with a goal of having one activity a week. He met that goal in Fall 2007 and by Spring 2008 had doubled it. A typical week in the first half of Fall 2008 included Monday night flag football, Tuesday night soccer, Wednesday night flag football, and Thursday night ultimate Frisbee. In addition, there are two movie nights a month, and over 100 students participated in two different volleyball leagues. The College does week-long Welcome Week activities in the fall and Blizzard Week at the beginning of spring semester. Students are not charged to attend athletic events in football, volleyball, basketball, wrestling, baseball, and softball. The College has supported these efforts by keeping campus buildings open later at night for students.

Administration has shown a commitment to student engagement through the support of residential living, various positions, and co-curricular activities. In addition to the Director of Residential Living and the Student Life Director, the College has a Director of Multicultural Affairs and a new grant-funded Assistant Director of Multicultural Affairs. These two staff members coordinate campus events like the annual powwow (which drew over 700 people in Spring 2008) and Native American Indian Heritage Month activities. They also work with students to start student organizations like the O-Gitch-I-Dah Native American student club and Many Faces One Goal (MF1G), a new club for all students of color. Administration provides release time for faculty program coordinators, who are responsible in part for developing learning communities, often including recognized student organizations. Finally, administration plans and coordinates a number of annual campus events, including Global Education Week, a Turkey dinner near Thanksgiving, the campus picnic at the beginning of fall semester, and the Dean’s Dinner honoring...
academic achievement in the spring. Faculty and staff also show commitment to student engagement through volunteering to serve as advisors for student organizations.

Recreational Resources

Backes Student Center provides places for students to gather, with four pool tables, a ping pong table, a foosball table, cafeteria with big-screen TV, Student Veterans’ Assistance Center, and a large office and meeting space area for Student Government and recognized student organizations. Wenger Hall also has a lounge with big-screen TV and audio equipment as well as a recreation room with a pool table. Mullins Hall has a cardio room, which is being augmented as grant funds become available. Outdoor activities include a Frisbee golf circuit and access to walking/hiking and skiing trails on University of Minnesota forest lands adjacent to campus. A running club and an annual Pi Walk/Run, put on by the Engineering program, encourage usage of the trails.

Alternative Scheduling and Classroom Environments

The College is a leader in exploring innovative course structures to enhance engagement and learning. Itasca uses block class scheduling, paired-course offerings, paired-instructor offerings, project-based learning, program-specific curriculum, tweaked course curriculum for specific programs, and other innovative strategies that enhance learning.

Class Size and Pedagogies of Engagement

Although most courses at Itasca do take place in the traditional classroom, classes are small, and faculty use teaching methods that engage students, including active learning, groupwork, collaboration, and application of knowledge in real-world situations. Many classes use project-based learning, portfolio assessment, and other applied learning methods recognized to improve engagement. As discussed in component 3b, the College and faculty leaders have promoted active learning and pedagogies of engagement through workshops and presentations, Center for Teaching and Learning and Center for Innovation book groups and activities, and encouragement to attend state conferences. The College’s 2007 CCSSE results for the benchmark of active and collaborative learning were 59.2 (compared to the national cohort average, set at 50.0).

Block Classes

The Engineering program began to research block scheduling in the early part of this decade as a way to develop cohesion among students and foster in-depth learning through the sustained focus on one or two classes at a time. A speaker and consultant from Coe College in Iowa, an institution that uses the one-class-at-a-time model collegewide, came and worked with Engineering faculty to consider options and develop course structures.
He presented to all faculty in a CTL brown bag session. After implementing a four-week block course structure for Engineering courses and some affiliated sections of courses for Engineering students (like Technical Writing and Ethics) in 2002, results were evaluated through student surveys and instructor interviews. On the basis of those results, which showed some difficulty scheduling other classes and getting through all of the material in four-credit courses, faculty in Engineering created improvised block scheduling by switching from a four-week block with one course at a time to an eight-week block with two courses at a time. Block courses have been used in some sections of general education courses across campus as well to meet students’ and program schedules. For example, students who will study in Denmark during the second half of spring semester take eight-week block classes their first eight weeks of spring semester.

Another application of the block scheduling model is a spring semester stacked English composition series for developmental students. Designed for students who withdrew from or did not pass Fundamentals of Written English (the developmental English course) in the fall, the spring schedule offers Fundamentals of Written English the first eight weeks and Expository Writing the second eight weeks. This block sequence allows students at risk of dropping out of college the opportunity to catch up to where they would have been had they passed Fundamentals of Written English in the fall.

Out-of-Classroom Experience

Initiatives, programs, and classes that redefine the “classroom experience” include Spring Thaw, Itasca’s annual student-edited literary and arts publication, which holds a public reading most years; several experiential education classes (Boundary Waters Canoe Area Experience class in Natural Resources and Camping and other outdoor physical education classes); a shared-text project; the Ethics Conference; and annual interdisciplinary projects. Internships, cooperative education, and student-teaching opportunities get students in many programs active in their prospective careers in their first or second year of college, allowing them to get a firsthand sense of opportunities and of how well a given career path meets their interests.

Study-Abroad and Global Education

The College offers two study-abroad opportunities annually, the Denmark Exchange Program and the Spring Global Education Trip through Education First (EF) educational tours. In addition to these established programs, Itasca is exploring partnerships with other Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) institutions to offer an Ireland study abroad program focusing on international business and entrepreneurship. The Denmark Exchange Program is a cultural exchange between Itasca and Svendborg College, Denmark. During fall semester, a cohort of Danish students attend Itasca for two months, and in spring semester, a group ICC students study in Svendborg for two months and travel to other European cities during a 10-day class trip. The Spring Global Education Trip is a 10- to 13-day trip in May to a foreign country. Students may receive academic credit
for this experience, which is also open to students and the community as a co-curricular educational opportunity.

Field Trips
Faculty and programs routinely take students on field trips to take advantage of learning opportunities within driving distance. Some examples include:

- Engineering students tour area industries, including UPM Blandin Paper Company, the construction of a new hotel and conference center, Boston Scientific, Taconite Ridge (wind generation), and Clay Boswell Energy Center.
- The Class Act program goes on field trips to urban schools and alternative schools.
- Introduction to Criminal Justice classes observe court and visit Thistledew, a camp for juvenile offenders.
- The Philosophy Club tours Twin Cities museums and goes to ethnic restaurants.
- Mass Communication students and other students went to observe the Republican National Convention and related events in St. Paul.
- Natural Resources students visit Hawk Ridge in Duluth, a nationally famous bird migration viewing site.

Retention Initiatives
The Multicultural Student Affairs Office supports activities to improve the success and persistence of students of color and sustain a campus environment that promotes racial tolerance. The newly hired Assistant Director of Multicultural Student Affairs is charged with providing more outreach and support to African American students to improve retention and success. The Diversity Plan includes specific initiatives to improve the retention and success of underrepresented students through increasing their involvement on campus and their use of the Academic Resource Center, and through working with faculty on strategies to improve student success.

In addition to support services such as SSS and Talent Search, initiatives to improve the persistence and success of underrepresented students include:

- ICC Foundation issues five Leadership in Diversity scholarships each fiscal year to students who take on leadership roles on campus regarding diversity.
- ICC hosts the annual American Indian Student Academic Awards Dinner, recognizing those students who are making outstanding academic progress.
- ICC provides substantial staff support, dedicated lounge and computers, and leadership development for Native American students through the O-Gitch-I-Dah (American Indian student) club.
- ICC offers an AA degree with American Indian Studies Emphasis and articulation agreements with University of Minnesota-Duluth and the College of St. Scholastica.
• ICC has an American Indian Advisory Board that advises ICC administration on policy.
• Through the Perspectives in Engineering grant, the College will provide significant support for the African American Engineering students via scholarships and mentorships with working African American engineers.
• The Assistant Director of Multicultural Student Affairs started the Many Faces One Goal (MF1G) club for students of color.

The Athletic program has developed several initiatives aimed at increasing retention of athletes, who include a relatively high number of minorities even though the Athletic program does not specifically recruit minorities. The program inaugurated the Athletic Advisory Council in 2007 as a way to plan proactively for the success of our student athletes and the Athletic program. The Athletic program has long supported and monitored the success of student athletes through:

• required study tables (for several of the sports) one night or more per week, some of which are supervised by tutors
• required midsemester fall grade reporting for winter sports eligibility
• NCAA eligibility requirements for spring sports and for second-year fall sports
• regular communication with faculty about student performance, issues, and intervention with athletes as necessary
• scheduling to minimize missed classes due to athletic events

**Student Success and Retention**

A measure of how effective Itasca’s learning environments are for students is data on student retention and success, both of which exceed state and national averages for comparison institutions. Itasca’s overall retention rates fall to fall have hovered at approximately 54 percent for almost a decade, higher than national, Minnesota metropolitan, and regional rates (see Figure 17 below). In 2007, retention rates were 56% for full-time students (compared to 53% at comparison institutions nationally) and 55% for part-time students (compared to just 41% nationally) (IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2008).

Itasca’s three-year graduation rate is 37%, compared with 28% at comparison institutions nationally (IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2008). The College’s three-year transfer rate is 24%, compared to 14% nationally, and the combined graduation and transfer rate is 62% (Right to Know). Comparison institutions nationally have a combined graduation and transfer rate of just 41%. (See Figure 18 below.) These rates are difficult to interpret at Itasca (and at many transfer institutions) because many students enroll for a few classes or complete the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) and transfer without graduating. In both cases, students may be doing just what they planned to do, but that “success” is not indicated in graduation data.
Figure 17. Graduation, Transfer, and Retention Rates

Graduation rate cohort as a percent of all undergraduates (Fall 2007); graduation rate and transferout rate (2004 cohort); and retention rates (Fall 2007)

Graduation rate cohort as a percent of all undergraduates
- Itasca Community College: 26%
- Comparison group median (N=30): 57%

Graduation rate cohort as a percent of entering class
- Itasca Community College: 15%
- Comparison group median (N=30): 45%

Graduation rate, overall
- Itasca Community College: 37%
- Comparison group median (N=30): 37%

Transfer-out rate
- Itasca Community College: 24%
- Comparison group median (N=30): 14%

Full-time retention rate
- Itasca Community College: 55%
- Comparison group median (N=30): 66%

Part-time retention rate
- Itasca Community College: 41%
- Comparison group median (N=30): 55%


Figure 18. Three-Year Graduation/Transfer Rate

Itasca Community College 3-Year Graduate/Transferred Rate

Source: Office of the Chancellor Research and Planning, November 2008
Retention and success data from programs suggest that students enrolling in specific academic programs persist and graduate at higher rates than the general student population. This is particularly true in Engineering and Applied Psychology, programs which are fairly large and feature well-developed learning communities, as well as Nursing, which is also relatively large and includes intensive supervision in clinicals as well as a curriculum designed to guide students through their transition into professional nursing.

**ICC’s Engineering program** develops Engineering students who complete four-year Engineering degrees at a far higher rate than the national average. While 44% of first-year Engineering students nationally complete four-year Engineering degrees, 75% to 80% of ICC students who enroll in Engineering Physics (spring semester of the first year) go on to graduate from universities with Engineering degrees. These statistics are particularly impressive in the Engineering discipline, which typically uses the first two years to “weed out” students. Not only are Itasca’s Engineering students not “weeded out,” but they flourish at Itasca and at transfer institutions.

Program retention and graduation data, as well as other program indicators, are available for all programs on the ICC website.

Data from Itasca’s **SSS program** demonstrates that even high-risk students who access support services on campus persist and succeed at higher rates than the general student population. SSS-eligible students are either first-generation college students, low income, or have learning disabilities, all of which put them at higher risk of not completing their college education. However, SSS students at Itasca are successful. Academic success is defined as 2.0 or higher grade point average (GPA) and 67% completion rate. The academic success rate of the 2006-07 SSS cohort was 90%. Itasca’s SSS program has consistently reported a persistence rate of above 80%. (The persistence rate is calculated by the number of students who either graduate, transfer to a four-year college, or continue their education at Itasca.) In comparison with the other regional SSS programs, Itasca’s SSS students have a higher rate of persistence and academic success, and graduate or transfer at higher rates; these rates are also consistently between 10 and 15% higher than the target objectives set by the federal TRiO program. Itasca’s SSS program was the only such program in the regional grant to meet or exceed all program objectives in the last year.

Retention and success of minority students varies. The Fall 2004 entering student cohort (the most recent data available) provides an example of the persistence and success of American Indian and African American students—the largest minority groups at Itasca:
Table 25. Retention and Success Rates for Fall, Full-time Students (Fall 2004 Cohort)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>First Spring</th>
<th>First Spring</th>
<th>Second Fall</th>
<th>Second Fall</th>
<th>Second Spring Retention</th>
<th>Second Spring Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Persistence and Completion Rate Table

The data on minority enrollment and retention is inconclusive because it is based on such small numbers. American Indian student retention and success has improved with increasing involvement in O-Gitch-I-Dah and American Indian Studies classes. Participation in the Ojibwe language courses has increased from 6 to over 40 participants since 2000, and a record five enrolled tribal members graduated in spring 2008, four of whom received an AA degree with an American Indian Studies Emphasis.

The success of students involved in programs with learning communities or in SSS, as well as more recent and less definitive results from various retention initiatives, suggest that significant support and engagement of students has a positive impact on their retention, academic success, educational progress, and graduation or transfer. There are some students who could use additional services to improve their engagement and retention, especially undecided students within the AA degree program. The College plans to build on the success of developing learning communities in the AA program for students in American Indian Studies, Class Act, and the Athletic program.

Criterion Three: Core Component 3d

Itasca’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

Itasca has a beautiful campus featuring native plantings and the pine trees that inspired our logo. All but three of the campus buildings are connected by walkways, and most face the central green space on which campus picnics and other outdoor festivities are held. Classrooms are small—only two seat more than 40 students—and informal gathering
spaces abound. These features all foster a sense of connectedness and interactions among students, faculty, and staff.

Like most college campuses, Itasca has a mix of aging facilities and state-of-the-art structures built to accommodate innovative educational practices. Renovation projects have focused on creating more welcoming environments for students and facilitating the use of current technologies in teaching.

Library

The Library is an open welcoming space of 8,000 square feet that features an open study pit with current periodicals and reference resources, quiet study rooms, a lounge area, a small 10-computer lab, a bank of 15 computers ringing the pit area, and an additional 13 quiet study computer stations. There is wireless access in the Library, and students have access to printers and copy machines there as well as computers. The Academic Resource Center and Testing Center are located in the Library, as is the faculty Center for Innovation. The Testing Center provides quiet testing space and make-up test proctoring for all students.

The Library’s book collection (25,000) is supplemented by a large periodical collection (10,000 issues) (Library Survey), but the Library’s focus has been on developing online and database resources. Currently, the Library subscribes to over 25 book, magazine, journal, newspaper, current issues, and allied health databases. These online resources dramatically expand the scope of the Library collection and are available on campus or remotely to students through a secure proxy server. The Library’s annual budget for electronic sources equals its budget for physical books and periodicals (Library Survey).

Library usage has risen from approximately 6,000 visitors per month during the 2001-02 academic year, to a current average of 14,000 per month (per daily electronic gate count). Over 4,000 books and other materials were checked out in 2007 in addition to almost 1,300 that were browsed (Circulation Statistics). The Library’s most significant use is in databases such as EBSCO. Individuals at the College conducted 17,698 EBSCO searches in FY 2007, which was almost twice as many as the other four Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) institutions combined (EBSCO FY 2007 Searches). One reason for this high usage rate is that the Librarian conducts about 15 Library tours a semester for classes including Freshman Year Experience, Expository Writing, Research Writing, and Technical Writing, as well as more than 15 online resources presentations in classes in using Library databases for research.

In addition to a full-time Librarian, who is a faculty member, a Library technician and student workers serve student, staff, and community needs. Library staff provide considerable academic support to students in the area of research and investigative study for their courses. Cataloging is done by a Librarian shared among NHED institutions. Due to the high volume of computer use in the Library, Information Technology Services now locates one staff member in the Library to assist students. The Library is open 8am to
8pm Monday through Thursday, 8am to 4:30pm Friday, and 10am to 3pm Saturday. This service point is staffed for more hours than any other on campus and is open more hours per week than any other library (college or public) in our region.

The 2007 Graduate Survey report notes that “in non-instructional services, for the third year in a row, the library had the highest level of satisfaction and was rated significantly higher than other colleges of the region.”

The College has received a gift of $100,000. This money will be utilized along with institutional dollars (bonding request) to renovate and expand the Library into the old television studio space. The vision is to create a new “information commons” area, as well as adding additional quiet study space, additional study space, and a 50-station multimedia lab for classroom and general use.

**Academic Resource Center**

The Academic Resource Center (ARC), centrally located in the Library, is the home of support services such as peer and professional tutoring; learning skills labs in study skills, notetaking, test taking, reading improvement, entry-level computer skills, and pre-developmental reading/writing/math skills; and Adult Basic Education. All services are offered free of charge. ARC is staffed with two full-time employees who are funded by a combination of Student Support Services (SSS), Carl Perkins grant, and ICC general budget funding. One is the SSS Director as well as ARC Director, responsible for disability services, developmental education coordination, Accuplacer assessment coordination, and learning skills coordination. The other serves as the Testing Center coordinator, professional tutor, and academic advisor. ARC also has support for our pre-developmental education students through the local Adult Basic Education Office, which provides a staff member on campus two days a week. This individual supports our current students as well as potential college students.

ARC also houses Disability Services and the Testing Center, which offers test proctoring for:

- placement testing
- students enrolled in distance-learning courses at other institutions
- extended time testing for students with disabilities
- make-up exams
- retake exams
- GED, PPST, ACT, and ParaPro (paraprofessional) Tests

Testing services were widely used internally in 2007-08:

- 650 prospective students completed the placement test with a total of 2047 individual tests administered.
- 59 instructors requested that the Testing Center proctor exams.
Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

- 550 students utilized the Testing Center for ICC make-up and retake exams compared to 355 in 2002 (when the Testing Center opened).

Numbers of students taking placement tests, instructors requesting Testing Center proctoring, and student use of the Testing Center for make-up exams all exceeded the previous year’s use by 12 to 27%.

The most visible role of ARC for students is free peer tutoring in most classes. Peer tutor availability is posted early in the semester, and students may make appointments or drop in. Free professional tutoring is available by appointment. The ARC also provides supplemental instruction, a facilitated guided study program led by a peer or professional tutor, as well as study skills workshops. The study skills workshops and tutoring are offered in the residence halls as well as in the ARC.

Ten individuals served as peer tutors in 2007-08. These tutors logged over 3,000 hours tutoring individuals, small groups, and structured study groups (especially in mathematics). In Fall 2008 ARC began asking all students requesting a tutor to sign in. The current sign-in log (as of December 11, 2008) shows 300+ student visits to tutors. Tutors and ARC staff estimate that between one-third and one-half of the students seeking assistance are signing in, so the number of actual visits to tutors is likely between 600 and 900. Just under 75% of students completing the 2006 Student Opinion Survey agreed or strongly agreed that tutoring services were readily available. As a result of student surveys, ARC added a tutor training for our peer tutoring program and completed certification through the College Reading and Learning Association for the tutoring program.

Typically, ARC provides supplemental instruction for two courses per semester, targeting courses students need for graduation that have a high DFWI rate. ARC currently offers supplemental instruction in College Algebra and Contemporary Math. A lead tutor attends the course throughout the semester and leads weekly study sessions, which allow students to discuss and ask questions about their reading, notes, and assignments, and improve their study techniques. This model has been successfully delivered in our Human Biology, Psychology, and developmental math courses. As it is not required, attendance for supplemental instruction varies but tends to increase around test time.

Graduates rating their satisfaction with services on the 2007 Graduate Survey gave the ARC (referred to as the Learning Center in the survey) fairly high marks: 3.72 on a 5-point Likert scale (with 5 being the highest level of satisfaction).

Information Technology Services

The College has two open computer labs, three teaching computer labs that are available when classes are not scheduled, and over 100 computers dispersed in the Library, in hallway clusters, and in student organization and learning community lounges. The student computer labs generally have the most up-to-date computers and printers on the campus. Computer labs were given solid ratings on the 2007 Graduate Survey: 3.65 on a
5-point Likert scale (with 5 being the highest score), a modest improvement (+0.08) over the previous year.

There is wireless access at key points on the campus, providing coverage for most of the campus. The Library circulates laptop computers, digital cameras, camcorders, and GPS units to students. Each semester, every student is allotted $10 for printing and copying. The student tech ID codes used for printing and copying thus indicate student use of computer and technology services. Usage data from our printing/copy tracking system shows that 890 students used our technology to print. The allotment also appears to be adequate, as only 6% of students exceeded their allotment in Spring 2008, and 77% used half of their allotment or less.

Itasca Community College implemented the Desire2Learn (D2L) instructional management system platform at the beginning of the 2004-05 academic year. All courses taught at ICC are D2L enabled. The College has made a commitment to continuing the use of online learning tools to facilitate and supplement the delivery of course content and course management.

Training in new technology and ongoing training in D2L is provided on a regular basis on duty days and at scheduled times throughout the semester for faculty and staff. A faculty member has release time specifically to support faculty use of D2L. Information Technology Services staff also provide one-on-one training and consultation on an as-needed basis for staff and faculty.

All new faculty and staff go through a mandatory orientation to campus technology policies and procedures and technology training at the beginning of the semester. The orientation specifically addresses the usage policy; data security; information about available multimedia equipment, laptop computers, LCD projectors, and other related equipment; and training in the use of the computer network, GroupWise mail/calendar/reservation system, and other technologies.

All new students have an opportunity to learn about technology services at the student orientation sessions at the beginning of each semester. The technology component of the orientation session addresses:

- Acceptable Use of Computers Policy and information technology resources
- Computer login instructions and login security
- Information about network storage and other network services (e.g. data backup, printing)
- Introduction to remote access to network services (file storage)
- Information about the availability of multimedia equipment, laptop computers, LCD projectors, and other related equipment
- Introduction to D2L
- Introduction to e-mail
- Description of helpdesk support services
- Listing of the software applications provided to students by the College
The College offers helpdesk support for students via a computer lab attendant in the main computer lab in the Library. Support hours are posted in the computer labs. Faculty and staff may request help either in person, by phone, or via an online trouble ticket form.

**Classrooms and Classroom Technology**

Classroom facilities at the College have a seating capacity of 1,011 at any one time, and the weekly seat usage for classrooms is 54%, and the weekly room usage is 76% (Northeast Higher Education District Five College Master Plan). Although some classrooms at the College are dated, on the 2007 Graduate Survey, students rated classroom facilities a strong 3.9 on a 5-point scale. Just under 75% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that classroom facilities are conducive to learning (2008 College Climate Survey). The College capitalizes on its large number of relatively small classrooms to promote a learning community atmosphere, and classes are scheduled in rooms with appropriate technology and furnishings for instructors’ preferred pedagogies. Classroom upgrades, renovations, and new construction provide opportunities to design classrooms for specific learning environments.

The campus has two large lecture facilities that incorporate multimedia capabilities. Wilson 120 has a ceiling-mounted projector connected to a computer, VCR/DVD, cable television, and audio speakers. Davies Theater, which accommodates audiences as large as 280 persons, has a large-screen high quality LCD projector, DVD/VCR playback device, and a podium wired for sound/data and video.

Twelve classrooms on campus are considered to be “Smart” classrooms. These rooms feature a dedicated computer and an LCD projector for making presentations. Also included are DVD/VCR units connected to the LCD projector, and some have sound systems or interactive display screens. Psychology students are able to use psychophysiology measurement technology in Wilson 128 due to National Science Foundation grant-purchased equipment. All classrooms on campus have network access and modern multimedia capabilities, including the following equipment:

- Ceiling-mounted LCD projector with integrated audio
- DVD/VCR
- Network / video connections

Faculty and students may check out laptops to connect to projectors for delivering presentations in classrooms that do not have dedicated computer equipment.

Classes that require the technology of a computer lab (e.g. Introduction to Computers, GIS, Digital Multimedia) are scheduled in one of three computer labs designed for teaching and demonstrating computer-based skills. Faculty may reserve computer labs on an as-needed basis or for proctored exam time. The teaching labs generally feature the newest computers on campus and are loaded with the software necessary to support the courses.
held in the labs. All teaching labs contain an instructor's computer connected to a ceiling-mounted LCD projector. Teaching labs are:

- **Davies 231 (T231):** This lab features 25 student workstations and various GIS lab equipment, such as a large format scanner, digitizing equipment, and a large plotter. Printing needs are met by a high-speed workgroup printer.
- **Davies 233 (T233):** This lab features 25 student workstations and is frequently used to teach Engineering graphics courses. Printing needs are met by a high-speed workgroup printer.
- **Donovan 115 (D115):** This lab is used for introductory computer classes and Computer Science courses. It contains a lecture/demonstration area and 40 student workstations. Its printing needs are served by a high-speed workgroup printer.

In addition to these labs on campus, the Continued Learning Center has a 25-computer lab for Customized Training and Community Education computer classes.

Classes and academic programs requiring specific technology or computer software have access to that technology and software. For example, Engineering courses use AutoCAD, ProEngineer, Catalyst, Status, Altium, Labview, Labpro, Robopro, pspice, Quartus II, Flowol 3, and Inventor, and also have other equipment in classrooms and the concept lab for faculty and student use. GIS students use ESRI's ArcGIS suite of products, BEHAVE (fire prediction model), Pathfinder Office, and Landview, as well as scanning, digitizing, and plotting equipment. Mass Communication students use GIMP, paint.net, Audacity, MS MovieMaker, Google Earth, Blender, and Impression, as well as digital cameras and video and audio recording equipment. The College also supports Microsoft Visual Studio, Adobe Creative Studio, and Quickbooks Premier, among other software products and equipment. Almost 78% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that the College provides appropriate technological resources for faculty to enhance student learning (2008 College Climate Survey).

The existing computer labs are currently sized adequately for their instructional purposes. At times during the academic year (predominantly at the beginning of fall semester) there is a shortage of instructional lab space due to the fact that many faculty like an opportunity to introduce their students to technology resources. Once the first few weeks of the semester are over, there is an abundance of open time in the instructional labs. This is evidenced by the computer lab schedules maintained in the GroupWise calendar system. A copy of these lab schedules is available for review in Information Technology Services Office.
Distance Learning

The College has targeted online courses for students who may be interested in our “degree in three” (earning an AA degree through night and online classes in three years), as well as potential students entering the Nursing program. Currently, three courses have been identified as needing online course development: Expository Writing, General Psychology, and Human Growth and Development.

The College has been cautious about initiating and expanding online course offerings for two reasons. One is that we have made a commitment to be a learning community college, and we want students to be on campus and engaged in campus life. The other reason is national, state, and local data showing decreased student success in online classes.

Instructors of online courses at Itasca have tracked success in their courses. Two outcomes of a Chemistry instructor’s analysis were to develop a bank of Frequently Asked Questions for his online students and to block post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) students from registering for General Chemistry online. All online students are invited to complete an orientation to the online learning platforms and online classes prior to the start of the term; online tutorials are also available. Counselors recommend online classes based on their assessment of a student’s ability to succeed in an online learning environment. Support for off-campus e-learners occurs primarily via e-mail and telephone support, and may also include interactive television where practical. The College uses the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system D2L helpdesk line for D2L-related issues.

In addition to online courses, the College receives and transmits courses through interactive television services. Interactive television services are provided to the College by the Northeast Alliance for Telecommunications (NEAT). NEAT schedules interactive television sessions and provides and maintains interactive television equipment in Library 131 and Davies 132. The College has maintained another interactive television facility in the Continued Learning Center in Grand Rapids.
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The College is seeking bonding funding for a new classroom and student support building. When funded, this important project will provide a student-focused curricular and co-curricular environment. The demolition of Donovan Hall (built in 1926) and the Administration Building (built in 1967) will provide the footprint for a new classroom building and welcome center for our students and community.

The planned classroom and student support building embraces ICC’s learning community philosophy. It will provide a seamless and comfortable entry point with an information and admissions center, student gathering and service spots (such as dining areas, student clubs and recreation spaces), as well as TRiO programs and services. The building will also host efficient, state-of-the-art teaching and learning spaces and computer labs. The new space will afford flexible teaching spaces and advanced access to teaching technology for online/distance teaching.

Part of the same bonding request includes funding for a state-of-the-art multimedia lab to serve Mass Communications, Computer Science, and writing classes. This lab will be located in the Media Center as part of the Library expansion.

**Wenger Hall**

In Fall 2002, Itasca completed Wenger Hall, a $4.6 million 25,000-square foot facility. Wenger was built to create an optimal learning environment for Engineering students. Housing five classrooms, a concept lab for student design projects, and an integrated 36-bed student dormitory on the third floor, Wenger is designed to support student learning. Students have access to classroom space, computers, and the concept lab 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The first floor of Wenger features a lounge area with a fireplace and a pool table room to promote student socializing and cement learning communities. Classrooms and concept labs in Wenger Hall are equipped with smartboards, computers and projectors, and Engineering-specific equipment.

**Laboratories**

Although Wenger Hall has shop and laboratory space tailored for modern instructional needs and some labs have been improved in the past decade, some of the laboratory facilities on campus are dated. Barely more than half of employees (50.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that laboratory or shop facilities are conducive to learning (2008 College Climate Survey). As discussed below, the College is seeking to renovate the science lab in Wilson Hall.
Wenger Hall includes a unique chemistry “studio”—a combined lecture and laboratory space—designed to facilitate a lab-centered instruction model. The Chemistry lab curriculum is based on a “small-scale” approach that makes it possible to do both lecture and lab in the same room. The lab also has traditional glassware, gas, and other hardware that allow for traditional laboratory activities. All Chemistry labs are taught in this studio. The studio was designed with only two fume hoods because Organic Chemistry classes have historically been small.

A new water quality lab is being developed in the old Biology preparation room in Wilson Hall. Faculty have been given release time to help set up the new lab, which is funded with a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) grant and $100,000 from Itasca County to facilitate a collaborative effort to test water quality in Itasca County lakes.

Over the last decade, the Practical Nursing program has added a birthing mannequin to the skills lab and developed a mobile lab simulating an emergency room bay station for second-semester students. First-semester students practice their skills with mannequins in nursing home bedroom-like units. Facilities also include the only board-certified nursing assistant testing center in the service area. Nursing program faculty would like to add more equipment for additional clinical simulation opportunities for students prior to their clinical experience at area medical and care facilities.

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

Between 2004 and 2008, the science lab in Wilson Hall, which is used for Biology, Microbiology, Earth Science, and Anatomy and Physiology labs, experienced a 51% increase in utilization. The lab has not been upgraded since 1971. In addition to the students who take science classes to fulfill general education requirements and prerequisites for transfer programs, the College is developing an Environmental Water Quality Technician certificate program (lake/stream/river water quality testing) and an Associate in Science in Environmental Science/Environmental Engineering with a focus on water quality. With 1,000 of Minnesota’s 10,000 lakes and the Mississippi River, Itasca County and the state are in need of water quality testers. The STEM and healthcare fields that use the lab are also growth areas in the state. State bonding funds have been requested to renovate the lab, a $500,000 project. The lab design includes new efficient and adaptable instructional technology with Internet access for online course and content delivery, flexible lab design, projectors, and smartboards. The water quality lab described above will also be housed in this space when the renovation is completed.

**Performing Arts Studios and Art Resources**

The art studio is dated, though equipment has been replaced as needed. The College has a significant art collection, including a number of major pieces and a collection of Works Progress Administration (WPA) paintings that are historically important. Also displayed are
collections of Native American beadwork and pottery, taxidermy exhibits of Minnesota mammals and birds, and an entomology collection. The artwork on campus is a resource for both Art Appreciation and Drawing classes. Faculty use the major pieces to study concepts such as process, medium, subject matter, and primary visual elements. WPA paintings in the Library and Administration Conference Room inform discussions about the different values of art, and a Gendron Jensen drawing in the Viking Room is a good example of graphite technique. Art faculty refer to major pieces in a discussion of public art and government support of the arts.

The College’s most recent art acquisitions are outdoor sculptures by noted Japanese-American sculptor Kinji Akagawa funded through Minnesota’s statutory requirements that 1% of all new state-funded public buildings’ costs are devoted to the arts. The sculptures were commissioned as part of the Wenger Hall project. Engineering faculty opted for geometrically designed outdoor sculptures that would serve as educational models and outdoor seating areas as well as art.

The Music Room is a tiered room that allows for not only class instruction, but also rehearsal of large ensembles, such as chorus, band, or orchestra. It is equipped for music and art classes with a sound system, computer and DVD/VCR projector, piano, and other instruments.

Davies Theater, which seats 280, is equipped with the necessary equipment, lights, and sound system needed for a small production, speaking events, film showings, or large-class instruction. It also houses a grand piano for concert and recital events and a backstage piano for rehearsals and/or small shows.

**Outdoor Educational Facilities**

The Natural Resources Program has access to an outdoor forest laboratory: the 200-acre University of Minnesota (UM) North Central Experiment Station woodlot, which lies directly adjacent to the ICC campus. The woodlot has been the site of many UM research projects and demonstrations of forestry practices, and contains the oldest red pine plantation in the state of Minnesota. It is the primary outdoor laboratory utilized by the Natural Resources program due to its on-campus location. This forest laboratory contains a number of northern Minnesota’s forested systems, including red pine, white pine, aspen, northern hardwood, and lowland conifer. The woodlot is also home to most of northern Minnesota’s principal tree, shrub, and herbaceous plants and features a bogwalk through an additional northern Minnesota habitat. The forest is utilized for a wide range of program learning outcomes for courses including Plant Taxonomy, Forest Inventory, Forest Ecology, Silviculture, Land Surveying, Timber Harvesting, and Forest Products. Nestled in the interior is an outdoor educational space with benches and a podium.

To facilitate the woodlot’s utility as a learning resource, many of the more important plants are identified and labeled along numerous trails crisscrossing the woodlot. Additionally, examples of most woody plants native to Minnesota have been planted in proximity to
campus buildings and in the central courtyard. Signage explains the native plantings and the value of planting to create wildlife habitats. Another habitat available for educational purposes on campus is the pond with native plantings between Dailey and Wilson Halls. The pond was refurbished in the summer of 2008 by faculty and students to enhance its value as a wildlife habitat and learning resource.

The Natural Resources program also uses forested lands within Itasca County or Aitkin County that are managed by local industries such as Blandin Paper Company or Rajala Timber, and public lands administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Aitkin County, or Itasca County. These lands are in close proximity to the ICC campus and, because they are managed by a variety of organizations and agencies, demonstrate a wide array of management objectives. The availability of these lands and the close working relationships that the Natural Resources faculty have developed with the managers of these lands provide incomparable outdoor laboratory opportunities.

**Athletic/Wellness Facilities**

The College has a longstanding sports tradition, with football, volleyball, men's and women's basketball, wrestling, baseball, and softball teams. Some of the athletic facilities are in poor condition—notably the locker rooms, weight room, and football field, but the gymnasium, baseball and softball fields, wrestling room, and cardio room are in good condition. Physical Education faculty also have equipment for camping, skiing, and other Physical Education classes. The College has a Frisbee Golf circuit on campus—built by two Engineering students as a community service project.

To augment the wellness facilities on campus, the College offers reduced-rate semester-length YMCA memberships for students, funded with Student Life fees, and pays the city of Grand Rapids for the use of Legion Baseball Field. The College shares facilities with the high school, using their football field while they use our baseball practice field. Greenway High School also donates the use of its football field one time a year.

**Cooperative Education and Internships**

Technical programs and some other programs encourage or require cooperative education, internship, clinical, or practicum experience as part of students’ education. These experiential learning opportunities are vital learning resources for the College because they provide real-world applications of skills and concepts learned in the classroom. Students gain invaluable experience while receiving performance-based feedback. Examples are described below.
Practical Nursing

Practical Nursing students complete clinicals at many regional longterm care facilities, hospitals, and outreach clinics. Clinical experience is included in all three semesters of the Practical Nursing program: a 5-credit Clinical I, 5-credit Clinical II, and then a capstone 2-credit Integrated Practicum. Through clinical experience, students work with medical technology and professional healthcare staff in real clinical environments, enhancing the laboratory experience they have on campus and providing solid preparation for transitioning into the workforce.

Nursing Assistant

Nursing assistant students complete a required clinical experience at Grand Village and Evergreen Terrace Nursing Homes. They are assessed by performance of nursing assistant skills, which they have learned and practiced in the lab setting, as well as employment skills such as dependability, dress code, ability to work as a team.

Child Development

Early Childhood students have the opportunity to apply their theory work through a required 4-credit preschool internship, which involves 192 hours in a licensed preschool as an assistant with opportunities for curriculum development and lead teaching. Internships are assessed by the program coordinator, who conducts observations and evaluates student portfolios.

Child Development certificate students acquire professional experience working with children by completing a required 120-hour practicum in an early childhood site. Sites include private childcare, YMCA, Invest Early, Head Start, Rockin’ ‘Round the Clock, and Little School House Preschool. Practica are assessed by the supervising teachers using a checklist; the program coordinator also observes students each semester and writes observation notes. Checklists and notes are kept in the students’ files. Many students are hired as a result of their practicum experience.

Applied Psychology

Applied Psychology students complete a practicum, generally in their final semester. The practicum provides an opportunity for students to apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they have developed through completing Psychology coursework in a human service setting. Completion of the practicum will enhance students’ knowledge and skills through “hands-on” experience, provide exposure to human service agencies and career opportunities, and promote interaction and networking with providers. Students can register for three to five practicum credits and will need to complete 40 agency contact hours per credit.
Examples of sites for Applied Psychology practica include Itasca County Health and Human Services Child Protection, Minnesota Department of Corrections, Northland Counseling Center, Northland Recovery Center, Children’s Mental Health, Advocates for Family Peace, Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault, Second Harvest Food Shelf, Little Sand Group Home, North Homes Adoption, Itaskin Juvenile Center, University Medical Center-Mesabi Psychiatric Unit, St. Cloud Neurobehavioral Associates, and Hope House. At these sites, students’ experiences include observing individual therapy and psychological testing; observing and co-facilitating therapeutic groups; reviewing agency policy and procedures; conducting various types of intake interviews; attending multidisciplinary/multiagency meetings; observing and participating in court proceedings; preparing various court documents (e.g. Orders for Protection); developing databases (e.g. list of human service resources available in our community); developing and implementing outcomes assessments/client satisfaction surveys; providing supportive counseling and advocacy services; developing and implementing behavior modification plans; and participating in trainings/professional workshops.

**Business**

Cooperative Education is not required for Business students, but it is available as an elective. To earn cooperative education credits, students need to put in 45 hours of work for each credit earned, and students may complete up to eight credits of cooperative education. Students meet with the instructor to find a suitable placement site and agree on goals. While the Business instructor oversees students, they are evaluated by their supervisor. Students also write a report about the experience. Cooperative education gives Business students practical or real-world experience that they cannot receive in the classroom, especially about the demands and limitations of the workplace. Sites include Itasca Economic Development Corporation, Department of Natural Resources Assessment, L & M Supply, Itasca County, Dairy Queen, KAXE Radio, Jaques Art Center, many area schools, and the Cities of Grand Rapids, Coleraine, Aitkin, Deer River, and Big Fork.

**Engineering**

The program faculty strongly recommend internships, in which one faculty member and three to five students perform engineering work for a client. Six to twelve of these group internships are conducted each semester for organizations and businesses such as Itasca County, Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital, Detroit Diesel, Cirrus Design, Schwartz Redi-mix, University of Minnesota-Duluth (UMD) Medical School, and the Department of Natural Resources. Projects include development of a digital diagnostic stethoscope (UMD Medical School), a pilot test study of new technology for treatment of wastewater (Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission), and applied research for use of woody biomass products in ICC’s boiler. Because these internships are project-based, assessment of the students is based on the project. The program has hired an evaluator from the University of Minnesota who will be finalizing an assessment plan of the internship program.
Class Act

Class Act “labs” are internships in Deer River, Grand Rapids, Nashwauk, Hill City and Greenway schools. Students complete 50 hours each year for a total of 100 hours in the Class Act program. Mentor teachers and the ICC instructor who teaches the Class Act Seminar assess the students’ experience. These labs expose students to teachers’ daily lesson planning, instruction, and classroom management, and give them the opportunity to observe different grade levels, subject areas, and specializations.

Natural Resources

Each of the core areas in the Natural Resources AAS curriculum—Forestry, Law Enforcement, GIS, Wildland Firefighting—requires students to complete a 3-credit internship. Students must be sophomores and maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) in their Natural Resources courses to enroll in the internship course. These internships are intended to provide the student with hands-on work experience to prepare for the kinds of work they will likely perform upon graduation. Internship sites include federal, state, and county governments, and local private and industrial organizations. Examples include the City of Grand Rapids, Itasca County, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, UPM Blandin Paper Company, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the USDA Forest Service, and University of Minnesota North Central Research and Outreach Center. Employers are asked to rate students’ job performance, job preparation and capabilities, and communication and work relations. Additionally, students are required to provide reflective feedback to the College on their preparedness and the role of their position in meeting the overall goals of the agency that has employed them.

Another unique learning resource for Wildland Firefighting students is the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center, which is located in Grand Rapids. Some of the program’s classes are held there, agency personnel serve as instructors, and the program uses Interagency Fire Center equipment and gear.

CRITERION THREE SUMMARY

Itasca Community College provides a high quality learning experience for our students. The College has made great strides in establishing a faculty-driven culture of assessment focused on student learning. Considerable progress has been made in establishing program-level assessment with clearly stated student learning outcomes, and in directly measuring the ICC Foundational Goal areas of general education. In addition to assessment, student learning and teaching effectiveness have been enhanced through program review, faculty leadership, faculty development opportunities, and innovative practices that promote learning. College faculty and staff welcome new students and guide them through their transition to college, providing support and opportunities for engagement that have led to significant success in retention, persistence, and graduation/transfer rates with a relatively high-risk student population. Learning environments and resources further contribute to student learning and effective teaching at Itasca.
Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Itasca Community College provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates we are fulfilling our educational mission.

Summary of Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- Itasca supports program-level assessment focused on the improvement of teaching and learning, and has had an assessment program in place for more than a decade.
- Itasca’s student learning outcomes and classroom assessment strategies are clearly documented.
- The College fosters innovation in teaching and learning, as well as continuous improvement.
- The College embraces and supports a learning community philosophy.
- The College demonstrates a strong commitment to the academic success of its students as demonstrated through its First-Year Student Philosophy statement.
- Itasca adheres to a General Education Philosophy and has academic general education goals and outcomes that are embedded in all courses.
- The College supports and values effective teaching as evidenced through the support offered for professional development and lifelong learning.
- The College prides itself on engagement with students; ICC was ranked thirteenth in the nation in Washington Monthly magazine in 2007.
- Itasca is committed to providing effective learning environments supported by active learning pedagogies.
- Itasca provides supportive and accessible learning resources for all students.
- The system has a strong professional development support network in place (Center for Teaching and Learning).

Challenges

- Itasca continues to grapple with effective models for assessing general education outcomes.
- Financial constraints make full funding of assessment/institutional effectiveness a challenge.
- Not all programs have fully developed assessment of student learning programs.
- Limited funding has prevented a full-fledged faculty mentoring program.
- The cost of professional development opportunities is often prohibitive due to travel costs.
- Itasca’s aging facilities deter from the learning environment and co-curricular activities.
- Budget constraints limit optimal high-tech learning resources.
- Itasca is in need of additional computer lab space.
- Unlimited full-time faculty are not evaluated often enough due to a “stretched” administration.
Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Itasca Community College promotes a life of learning for our faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with our mission.
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Itasca Community College promotes a life of learning for our faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with our mission.

The value of a life of learning is evident in Itasca’s vibrant campus culture, community connections, and the multitude of varied learning initiatives led by faculty, staff, and students each year. The College commits funding to ongoing programs, professional development, and student organizations that promote learning. Faculty, staff, and students engage in projects and activities that support inquiry, creativity, application of knowledge, and social responsibility. In ICC’s mission and Strategic Goals, the emphasis on civic and global engagement and serving the community demonstrates the importance our College places on a life of learning.

Survey data collected from graduating students shows that students believe they have grown intellectually during their time at Itasca, gaining both knowledge they need for their further education and knowledge for their personal development (2008 Graduate Survey).

Criterion Four: Core Component 4a

Itasca Community College demonstrates, through the actions of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees and Itasca’s administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that we value a life of learning.

Itasca's support for a life of learning can be seen in the commitment of resources to learning; in the support for student organizations and for initiatives supporting a life of learning; in the involvement of faculty, staff, and students in a wide array of professional
and academic activities; and in the College’s recognition of the achievement of our faculty, staff, and students.

Financial and Organizational Support for Learning

The College budget demonstrates ICC’s commitment to supporting students. As discussed in component 3c, Itasca spends considerably more than comparison institutions nationally on student services ($2,634/full-time equivalent (FTE) v. $971/FTE) and academic support ($1,274/FTE v. $881/FTE) (IPEDS Data Feedback Report). The College also maintains small class sizes to ensure individual attention. To serve our mission of fostering global and civic engagement and ethical development, the College supports curricular and co-curricular activities. These programs and activities include the Denmark Exchange Program, Spring Global Education Trip, annual Global Education Week activities, Ethics Conference, and other interdisciplinary efforts.

The College demonstrates its commitment to a life of learning for its employees through encouraging them to pursue further education, use professional development funds for learning, and attend professional development activities offered by NHED and the system. Employees take advantage of the opportunity to pursue additional education through college coursework and through Customized Training offerings. The College also shows its commitment to faculty through its support for wide-ranging sabbatical projects, professional development funds, and grant projects for a variety of teaching and learning activities.

Tuition Waivers

Faculty and staff may use tuition benefits from their union bargaining agreements to take classes at any Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system institution for professional development, to earn an advanced degree, or to pursue other interests. In the past three years, the College has paid over $31,000 in faculty tuition.

Professional Development

Professional development is discussed in component 2b in terms of developing human resources and in component 3b in terms of improving teaching and learning, but faculty and some staff bargaining units may also use contractual professional development funds to advance their knowledge in their fields. Employees develop their own professional development plans. Through contractual agreements, the College provides about $12,000 annually to faculty, supports about five sabbatical leaves, and provides tuition reimbursement.

The College has institutionalized professional development at all levels through division professional development budgets, regularly scheduled duty days, trainings, workshops,
professional development plans, and professional development funds. ICC administration generally plans four administrative-driven duty days on campus each year. These days allow for College-wide presentations on important trends in higher education, system-mandated trainings, technology training, discipline meetings, and faculty workshops on teaching and learning issues. These sessions are valued by most employees: Over 66% state that staff in-service workshops are helpful to them (2008 College Climate Survey).

NHED’s True North leadership program, which five ICC staff and faculty have completed, develops effective leadership skills and includes ongoing projects and contact. NHED also organizes annual retreats for staff, Really Important People (RIP), which include information sharing and dialogues on best practices in student services and other areas. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system’s Luoma Leadership Program is a graduate-level leadership program offered in collaboration with the Academy for Leadership and Development in Mesa, Arizona. ICC’s Director of Institutional Research recently completed that program.

While most of the activities of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Center for Innovation (CFI) focus on improving teaching and learning (as discussed in component 3b), some are specifically geared to foster the intellectual life of faculty. For example, faculty book groups coordinated and funded by CFI read Christopher Phillips’ *Six Questions of Socrates*, Jonas Lehrer’s *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*, and Susan Jacoby’s *The Age of American Unreason*. The Ethics Conference in Spring 2006 drew on the expertise of faculty, with 20 faculty presenting or moderating panels on topics ranging from the ethics of developing weapons of mass destruction to Native American ethics.

Faculty and staff responses to administrator assessments and the 2008 College Climate Survey demonstrate satisfaction with professional development support and opportunities. Eighty-eight percent of employees report that they “have grown professionally over the last year” (2008 College Climate Survey), and nearly 83% state that the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs “often” or “consistently” works effectively to help faculty/staff improve their skills by identifying appropriate resources and opportunities for staff development (Administrator Assessment, Dr. Barbara McDonald, Spring 2007).

**Sabbaticals**

By contract, all full-time unlimited and part-time unlimited faculty are eligible for sabbaticals after six full years of continuous service. Sabbatical projects support learning and a life of inquiry by providing faculty the time to advance knowledge in their discipline with continued coursework, to engage in a substantial research or writing project, to develop new curriculum, or to pursue other relevant endeavors. At the end of their sabbatical, faculty members submit a report to the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs on their project. Representative sabbatical projects include:
- Writing a nature-writing based composition textbook for Natural Resources students
- Reviewing the Human Services program, which led to revamping the program as the Applied Psychology program to better meet student and employer needs
- Going to Tanzania with a volunteer organization to observe a pre-industrial culture transitioning to modernity, with the goal of incorporating the learning into Sociology classes
- Completing an Engineering project for Itasca County involving the identification of aggregate resources in the county
- Researching various Freshman Year Experience delivery models

Awards for Excellence

As discussed in component 3b, Awards for Excellence provide funding for faculty projects to support student learning that go “above and beyond the normal requirements of the individual’s position” (MSCF 2007-09 Contract, Article 13, Section 4). Many of these projects support a broader life of learning for students or augment curriculum in classes. Faculty receiving Awards for Excellence have completed projects such as:

- Incorporating psychophysiology into General Psychology courses
- Renovating the pond on campus with native plantings for teaching and learning purposes
- Developing a “Science Café” co-curricular series, in which faculty members present and lead discussions on scientific topics such as “Thinking Critically about the Paranormal” and “The Chemistry of Alcohol and Intoxication”

ICC Foundation Minigrants

Each year the ICC Foundation offers minigrants up to $2,500 to enhance a program, activity, the campus environment, or anything that helps the College fulfill its mission. The total amount funded varies based on investment returns, but total awards approved annually have ranged from $16,000 to $27,000 in the past four years. Recent projects that promoted a life of learning have included:

- Conducting a summer computer programming “camp” to introduce middle-school students to the fun of programming with Alice software
- Exposing Class Act (pre-Education) students to diverse Twin Cities schools to help prepare them for teaching in a multicultural environment
- Developing and implementing a pilot general education assessment project
- Purchasing multimedia production equipment for Mass Communication courses
- Hosting a national workshop to teach lab-based psychophysiology in introductory Psychology classes
- Hosting a campuswide Ethics Conference
- Adding educational/cultural opportunities for students during Denmark Exchange Program and Spring Global Education Trip
- Updating equipment for Nursing lab simulation projects
**Freedom of Inquiry**

Academic freedom is guaranteed for faculty in the MSCF contract (MSCF 2007-2009 Contract Article 23, Section 3) and for students by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board policy (Chapter 3 Educational Policies, 3.1 Student Rights and Responsibilities).

The College is vigilant in its adherence to these policies. The Library is committed to free speech as part of the American Library Association Library Bill of Rights, which guarantees free and open access to all resources, including online resources. The only limitation on free speech are occasional time, place, and manner restrictions, which are addressed on a case-by-case basis by the Provost, who seeks advice as warranted from the system’s Vice-Chancellor for Student Services. The following two examples illustrate how reasonable limitations have been imposed while still protecting free speech and expression:

1. When the Democratic Senate Forum was held in Davies Theater, each candidate was allowed two six-foot tables in the lobby and was instructed not to post campaign signs or materials elsewhere.

2. The annual Living Nativity Display sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU), a Christian student organization, is now in front of the Media Center hall windows instead of at the intersection between the Donovan and Media Center sidewalks so that it is still visible but does not obstruct traffic flow between buildings.

MSCF approved these reasonable limitations on free speech.

Bulletin boards are considered free speech zones; groups and individuals may post materials so long as they are signed and do not violate harassment policies. Similarly, student groups are instructed to indicate sponsorship on all posters and flyers. There have been complaints by student groups—particularly by CRU and by Gay Straight Alliance—that their flyers are being removed from bulletin boards; Student Life has addressed this concern and reiterated to student groups that bulletin boards are free speech zones and that removing flyers interferes with free speech rights.

The College prides itself in providing an open forum for civil debate and controversial issues. Speakers are invited to campus by faculty, staff, the Global Education Committee, and student groups. Speaking events are generally open to everyone on campus, and events sponsored by the College are also advertised publicly. Free inquiry is also developed in the context of extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities such as the Philosophy Club and the Science Café.

A recurring issue for the campus community is the line between Constitutional protection of freedom of religious expression and the Constitutional mandate to separate church and state. For example, the College or student organizations have hosted potentially controversial speakers, such as a proponent of intelligent design and an advocate for atheism. Minneapolis Community and Technical College’s Legal Affairs Director and Constitutional lawyer Dianna Cusick spoke at a duty day in Fall 2005 to help to clarify the balance between free speech/religious freedom and the separation of church and state.
Creative and Scholarly Work

The College community supports the value of intellectual inquiry through discipline-based research and research in teaching and learning, publications, professional presentations, and the promotion of student research, presentation, and publication.

Professional Service

Itasca faculty belong to at least 36 different professional organizations. A number have served in professional capacities in these organizations. For example, the Practical Nursing program coordinator is past President of the Minnesota Practical Nursing Directors Association. Many faculty stay current in their disciplines or provide service to the community by continuing their professional work on a part-time or full-time basis while teaching. Examples include:

- Psychology faculty planned and hosted national workshops on using a psychophysics approach to psychology instruction at ICC and St. Olaf College.
- Natural Resources faculty planned and hosted a national conference for two-year Forestry programs.
- Faculty nurses continue to work professionally in positions ranging from home care house supervisor to clinical nurse specialist in a weight loss program.
- Counselors provide grief counseling in area school districts and the Itaskin Juvenile Center after tragedies.
- Some English instructors are also freelance editors and writers.
- The Director of Information Technology Services is a regular host of a radio program, “IT Connections,” on KAXE, the local public radio station.
- A Natural Resources instructor is regular host of a radio program, “Walk on the Wild Side,” on KAXE.

Publications

Faculty have published creative and scholarly works, especially in the area of local history and nature writing. Examples include Timber Connections: The Joyce Lumber Story, Hunting with Amazing Grace, and Cyrus King: The Sage of Deer River; regular local history, political, and nature columns in the Grand Rapids Herald-Review, Scenic Range News, and the Cook County News-Herald; and a textbook, Northern Exposition: An Expository Writing Text for Natural Resource Students and Those in Love with the Outdoors. In addition, a few faculty have published scholarly works in their fields, including “The Problem of Evil and the Poverty of the Free-Will Theodicy,” forthcoming in Think: Philosophy for Everyone, and “The Synthesis of Enantiomerically Pure, Highly Functionalized Heterocycles: The Products of Amino Acid Based AcylNitroso Hetero Diels Alder Reactions,” in Enantiomer.
Presentations

Faculty and staff give presentations on campus, in the community, and at professional conferences as part of their professional service. Faculty routinely give presentations on campus through CTL and CFI (see CTL and CFI reports in the Resource Room for listings) and many have at NHED shared professional development days. Other examples include:

- Faculty have given presentations at Realizing Student Potential (statewide CTL conference) on a number of topics, including the Engineering portfolio process, Mesabi Trail Service-Learning Project, and community-based research in Applied Psychology.
- English instructors gave a presentation at the Higher Learning Commission Conference on a written communication assessment project.
- Dean of Academic and Student Affairs presented on developmental education at Everett Community College in the state of Washington.
- Twenty faculty members presented or moderated at the 2006 Ethics Conference.
- Eleven faculty and the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs have given Grand Rapids Area Public Library presentations.
- The Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and two faculty members have presented to the local chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) on topics ranging from women's history to Middle Eastern politics.
- Applied Psychology faculty presented at Association of Psychological Science and National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology Conferences on using psychophysiology to teach scientific thinking in introductory Psychology classes.
- A GIS instructor presented “GIS Technology for Instruction: Barriers and Opportunities” at the iTeach Best Practices in Teaching with Technology.
- A Nursing instructor presented “Online Practical Nursing Education” at the Minnesota Rural Health Care Conference.
- A Chemistry instructor presented “Testing the Waters of Cooperative Learning” as a Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Center for Teaching and Learning traveling workshop.
- A Chemistry instructor presented “Chemistry All Day, Every Day” at St. Cloud State University.
- The Director of Information Technology presented on technology (FreeNX and RSYNC) at the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Information Technology Conference

Student Research, Presentations, and Publication

Students in several disciplines are actively engaged in research under the guidance of faculty members. Students also plan conferences, give conference presentations, and publish their creative work. Examples include:

- Applied Psychology community-based research in several areas, including community attitudes about mental illness and sexual violence, law enforcement attitudes about sexual violence, and ICC staff and student attitudes about
sexual violence and stalking. Most of these of these projects included a pre-/post-test model and an outcomes assessment. Several have culminated in poster presentations at the Midwest American Psychological Association Conference.

- Applied Psychology students presented on the pedagogical value of community-based research projects at a campus CTL Brown Bag and at the state-wide Realizing Student Potential Conference.
- Natural Resources students collected water samples for a county-wide water-quality testing project.
- Thirty-three students presented and 226 students gave poster presentations at the 2006 Ethics Conference.
- A student copresented with faculty on the pedagogical value of the Ethics Conference at a NHED Shared Professional Development Day Workshop.
- Student Government planned and organized a Civil Liberties Conference in 2007 and 2008.
- Student Government plans and directs Constitution Day activities.
- Student participants in the Denmark Exchange Program have presented in a number of venues on campus about their experience.
- Nursing students have given poster presentations on campus on medical ethics topics and mental health issues.
- Spring Thaw, an arts and literary publication of mostly student creative work, is published annually. A public reading is generally held to celebrate the publication.
- Expository Writing students are published in National Public Radio’s “This, I Believe” database.
- Students have given poster presentations on land classification systems and wetland mapping at the Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium annual meetings.
- One instructor has had his Technical Writing classes, over a two-year period, draft a technical writing textbook, with student samples, which is now used as a course textbook in his classes.

**Recognition of Achievement**

**Student Recognition**

Itasca recognizes students who have earned academic honors in several ways. The Dean’s List is published in the Grand Rapids Herald-Review and in honored students’ hometown newspapers each semester. Students who make the Dean’s List are invited to the Dean’s Dinner, an annual celebration for students and their families with a motivational speaker to honor their academic achievement. Students who graduate with honors (3.5+ GPA), highest honors (4.0 GPA), or are members of Phi Theta Kappa receive special recognition in the graduation ceremony.

The ICC Foundation promotes and rewards student accomplishments through dozens of merit-based scholarships. In addition, faculty and staff nominate students for Leadership
Recognition Stipends and the Outstanding Student of the Year Award. The Outstanding Student of the Year is specially recognized at graduation. Other honorary scholarships are awarded on Scholarship Awards Night. The Foundation awards five Leadership in Diversity scholarships each fiscal year to students who take on leadership roles on campus regarding diversity. ICC also hosts the annual American Indian Student Academic Awards Dinner, recognizing those students who are making outstanding academic progress.

While Itasca does not have a specific honors program or honors sections of classes, the College has a newly chartered Beta Xi Lambda chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. This international honors society for two-year colleges carries many benefits for students, including scholarships and opportunities for leadership, academic challenge, service, and fellowship. Students meeting the minimum standards for membership (at least 12 credit hours completed and a grade point average of 3.5) are invited to accept the chapter's invitation to membership.

Students are also recognized through ICC's Student of the Week ad campaign, a series of television advertisements featuring Itasca students. Alumni are profiled in a regular column on the ICC page, printed monthly in the Grand Rapids Herald-Review. Golden Graduates—alumni who graduated fifty years ago—are honored at graduation every year, as is an Outstanding Alumnus of the Year.

Many programs hold end-of-the-year celebrations to honor all of their students’ achievements. The Practical Nursing Program holds a Pinning Ceremony and awards nursing scholarships, and Class Act, Engineering, and Applied Psychology programs, as well as the Office of Multicultural Affairs, all hold banquets for their students.

Finally, a number of our student athletes in the past decade have been named All-American athletes, and one wrestler won the national championship in his division. Our sports teams are often recognized statewide or are nationally competitive. The Athletic program and administration have honored these students and teams publicly through events, articles, and on the website.

Staff and Faculty Recognition

A party was held to celebrate the College’s number-13 ranking in the first-ever community college rankings by Washington Monthly magazine. The College was recognized nationally by that magazine because of the engagement of our students in learning (as evidenced by the 2007 Community College Survey of Student Engagement) and our students’ impressive graduation and transfer rates. The Nursing program also held a campuswide celebration of their accreditation by the Minnesota Board of Nursing with a video presentation and reception for faculty, staff, students, and the community.

Retiring faculty and staff are honored with a party at which administrators and often faculty, staff, and students thank them for their long service and commitment to the College.
Faculty and staff awards and accomplishments are recognized publicly on professional development days, in the newsletter, on the ICC website, and in articles published on the ICC Page in the local newspaper, the Grand Rapids Herald-Review. A longstanding weekly television program hosted by the Provost, Campus Connections, featured faculty and initiatives at the College. Since the producer’s retirement, a videographer and Mass Communications instructor and his students have produced videos for the College.

Teaching and service awards to ICC faculty in the past decade have included:

- Minnesota Psychological Association Award for Outstanding Two-Year College Faculty in Psychology
- Minnesota State Post-Secondary Counselor of the Year
- NHED nominee for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees Teacher of the Year Award
- Minnesota Affiliate Winner of the National Education Association’s Foundation of Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award
- I CAN Learn Award for Teaching Excellence
- Financial Aid Director Award
- Center for Teaching and Learning Program Innovation Award
- Minnesota College Athletic Conference Coaching Awards (in baseball, basketball, and softball)

Administrators have been honored in the past decade with:

- Outstanding Service Award from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
- Excellence in Financial Management from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (three times in the past decade)
- Women as Agents of Change Award from the American Association of University Women-Minnesota
- Outstanding Academic and Student Affairs Administrator from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
- David Martin Entrepreneurial Award from the University of Minnesota-Duluth’s Center for Economic Development for public-sector entrepreneurship

**Criterion Four: Core Component 4b**

Itasca Community College demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to our educational programs.

Itasca’s mission explicitly addresses several of its core general education goals when it states that the College “fosters critical thinking and civic and global engagement.” Critical thinking is embedded in every course at the College. The language of “civic and global engagement” speaks to the College’s Foundational Goals of Citizenship and Ethics and
Diversity and to the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum’s (MnTC’s) general education goals of Global Perspective and Human Diversity. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board policy requires that all two-year degrees include a specified number of general education credits (Policy 3.36). A general education is central to the development of social responsibility in our students and fundamental to a value system that promotes a spirit of inquiry and lifelong learning. These values are inculcated in students through curricular offerings and through co-curricular opportunities during their time at Itasca.

Curricular Support of the Value of a General Education

ICC’s general education learning goals, called ICC Foundational Goals, are aligned with the College’s General Education Philosophy, which expresses a “commitment to a broad and coherent foundation of general education fundamental to educational opportunity, individual enrichment and citizenship.” ICC’s Foundational Goals were developed by faculty in 1997-98 to articulate the foundational knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of all students who complete at least one year of coursework for a certificate or degree. Through the ICC Foundational Goals and Outcomes, the College articulates its commitment to a broad, coherent foundation of general education. All students who undertake a course of study at ICC for an academic year will receive a general education, which emphasizes the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society (Communication, Critical Thinking, Information Technology, Mathematics/Scientific Reasoning, Citizenship and Ethics, and Diversity). In addition, any student who is awarded an Associate in Arts (AA) degree completes 40 credits of coursework within the ten MnTC Goal areas (Communication, Critical Thinking, Natural Sciences, Mathematics/Logical Reasoning, History and Social/Behavioral Sciences, Humanities and the Fine Arts, Human Diversity, Global Perspective, Ethical and Civic Responsibility, and People and the Environment). Those completing an Associate in Science (AS) transfer degree meet a minimum of six of these ten areas.

Table 26. General Education (MnTC) Requirements in Academic and Career Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree or Program</th>
<th>Required General Education Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate in Arts</td>
<td>40 (completion of MnTC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate in Science</td>
<td>30 in at least 6 of the 10 goal areas; Applied Psychology, Business Management, and GIS require completion of the MnTC.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate in Applied Science</td>
<td>16-19 and completion of at least 1 MnTC goal area; Pulp and Paper Technology requires 33.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulp and Paper Technology Diploma</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Nursing Diploma</td>
<td>18+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These requirements exceed the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policy requirement of 30 general education credits for an AS and 15 general education credits for an AAS.
Every ICC course must meet one or more of ICC’s Foundational Goal areas. These goal areas are applicable to all programs at ICC, including one-year certificates and diplomas. Courses in the MnTC must meet specified general education goal areas. The Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC) oversees the documentation process that ensures that course outcomes and assessments meet specified general education outcomes. The goal areas, outcomes, and assessments are documented on each course outline. Any new course or curriculum proposal goes through a standard process with AASC that includes documentation of learning outcomes and assessment practices. In 2007-08, in response to a mandate at the system level, all course outlines were reviewed and updated by faculty and evaluated by AASC.

On a curricular level, the College’s commitment to general education goals can be seen in a number of examples:

- Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Business Management, and Applied Psychology students complete the MnTC.
- Engineering, Nursing, Natural Resources, and Class Act programs have initiatives to expose students to diversity in their curricula (discussed in component 4c).
- All programs and many courses require or encourage service to the community and engagement in community issues (discussed in component 4c).
- Between 2006 and 2008, the College developed two new courses, World Religions and Women's Studies, to afford students in a rural, largely homogeneous area an opportunity to learn about other perspectives.
- The College offers paired or interdisciplinary classes like Ethics/Expository Writing and Mythology/Expository Writing, and an interdisciplinary Humanities class, to be team taught, which is currently under development.
- The College has two established study-abroad opportunities.

The goal of pairing courses is to give students a more in-depth appreciation of both the subject matter and the interconnectedness of academic disciplines. The instructors teaching the paired Ethics/Expository Writing course collected survey data on the educational value of pairing the courses. Of the 16 students who handed in reflective essay responses, 14 were positive about the pairing of Expository Writing and Ethics. Two of the responses were mixed, citing the benefits of each course but not sure about the value of the pairing. Students’ comments included:

“I believe that I have changed since the first time I walked into the classroom. . . . My writing for Expository Writing was backed up from the teachings of Ethics. I had evidence and theories to back up my thought process. . . . I believe I have grown as a writer and as a person.”

“Expository Writing and Ethics as a paired course was genius. Ethics posed wars inside me that I never knew existed. And Expository Writing started letting me organize my little wars.”
Anecdotal and survey feedback from ICC students show that students learn more deeply in more sustained formats like block classes or paired courses.

The College commitment to the general education goal of Global Perspective leads to our longstanding support of global education opportunities. These include an exchange program with Svendborg College in Svendborg, Denmark, and College-sponsored spring trips to such destinations as China, Greece, Ireland, and Egypt. Students may receive academic credit for the spring trip experience if they take the International Study Experience class in conjunction with the trip. The excursion is also open to students and the community as a co-curricular educational opportunity.

The Denmark Exchange Program is a cultural exchange. During fall semester, a cohort of Danish students attend Itasca for two months, and in spring semester, between 16 and 20 ICC students—escorted by an instructor—study in Svendborg for two months and travel to other European cities during a 10-day class trip. The Danish and American students live with host families for a portion of their stays, and both institutions sponsor activities to encourage social interactions between Danish and American students and families. The curriculum for the Denmark Exchange includes 15 credits of general education courses that promote global awareness, including International Study Experience, Masterpieces of World Literature, European History and Culture, Introduction to Art and Design, and Danish Language and Culture.

The Denmark Exchange program impacts students’ understanding of the world and global perspective. Evaluation data collected in 2005 and 2007 document students’ high rating of their learning and life experience, as well as their academic instruction about Denmark and Europe in the program. Figures are means on a 5-point scale, with 5 representing “excellent”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denmark Exchange Program</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life experience</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning experience</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic learning</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students participating in the program in 2008 wrote essays reflecting on their experience. The group had adopted the motto “Seeing with new eyes” before they left. One wrote, “At the start, seeing with new eyes just felt like a motto to me, but looking back, I can see just how true of a statement it is; I look at the world differently now.” Another commented, “I have definitely changed as a person since this trip.” A third wrote, “At first, I thought the motto for this trip was a little cheesy. Even if it was, I am glad we picked it. I was able to look at the experiences I had in a different way. . . . I purposely
thought about my perspective and feelings in each new experience.” Students who have participated in the program have presented at CTL and on panels during Global Education Week and after they return in May about the value of the program in broadening their perspectives.

Faculty members have also developed course-based initiatives to promote appreciation of general education goals. For example, Psychology instructors felt that students in General Psychology would benefit from greater understanding of scientific reasoning. With a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, they acquired Biopac MP40 equipment used to measure psychophysiology. Administration supported the project by providing computers and other equipment that would enable faculty to use Biopac equipment in classroom teaching and demonstrations. Faculty designed curriculum incorporating psychophysiology as a tool to teach scientific reasoning in the context of Psychology, developing an inquiry-based curriculum that embeds experiential learning opportunities. Psychology students learn to conduct research and apply scientific methodology in introductory Psychology classes as they measure psychophysiological changes related to student-developed experimental conditions.

ICC Psychology faculty also planned and hosted national workshops with St. Olaf College faculty to introduce this psychophysiology approach to a wider audience. Held at ICC in May 2007 and at St. Olaf College in July 2008, the workshop, “Tried and True: Investigative Psychophysiology Activities for your Introductory Psychology Course,” provided community college teachers from across the country with new methods to educate their students about the scientific foundations of Psychology and to foster scientific reasoning. Studies conducted with “Tried and True” workshop participants showed that Psychology students demonstrated positive attitude changes regarding thinking about science.

In another example, two English faculty members redesigned their curriculum for Expository Writing in an effort to improve student engagement in learning and appreciation of a liberal arts education. Their new curriculum orients all writing assignments around the subjects of teaching and learning. Student writing assignments begin with “Inquiries” and go through an epistemic writing sequence, in which the assignments get more challenging and are recursive, reinforcing the value of inquiry-based learning. One assignment requires students to interview faculty members about their education and views of liberal arts education. The two English instructors, who have used this curriculum for three years, have qualitative documentation of significant gains in students’ critical thinking, writing skills, and appreciation of the goals of general education.

Many courses, including Technical Writing, GIS courses, and Sociology, engage students in research and service projects to serve the greater college community and local area. Several of these research projects have resulted in significant changes in policies and improvement on campus. Examples include research that supported ICC’s ban on tobacco, projects that resulted in sustainability measures, and a project that led to ICC’s new Frisbee golf course, which was researched, designed and built by students.
Co-curricular Activities Supporting a Life of Learning

In addition to coursework and curricular requirements, co-curricular activities provide students with exposure to the attitudes and skills necessary for a life of learning in a diverse society. To foster an intellectual atmosphere on campus and show students the links among academic disciplines, faculty across the campus have participated in interdisciplinary collaborations. These collaborations support creative approaches to and new perspectives on material and showcase the value of living the life of the mind.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Itasca held a series of one-day symposia on current events, including diversity, the environment, and psychoactive drugs. This tradition was restarted with the Ethics Conference in 2005-06. Following the Ethics Conference, in the past two academic years, the College has continued with symposia on an abbreviated scale, featuring faculty and guest speakers. In 2006-07, the College featured a Global Warming series, and in 2007-08, The Color Red series explored the color red as viewed from various academic disciplines, such as Physics, Literature, Earth Science, Sociology, History, American Indian Studies, Biology, Wellness, and Business. Such conferences and symposia increase student and community awareness of the fundamental skills of intellectual inquiry essential to independent, creative, and lifelong learning.

The Ethics Conference merits further discussion because it was organized in part as a response to an assessment of ethical reasoning skills in Itasca students in 2005. The assessment project, which examined ethical reasoning in a pre-/post-test format, found deficiencies in ICC students’ ability to engage in ethical reasoning. The conference, with 50 concurrent sessions as well as 70 poster presentations, showcased ethical reasoning in broad terms (the keynote speaker was Christopher Phillips, author of *Socrates Café* and *Six Questions of Socrates*); in a range of social and political issues such as gay rights, the Iraq War, and poverty; and from the vantage point of virtually every discipline and program on campus. For this major event, many of the disciplines and programs integrated special projects into their coursework or arranged for experts about ethical issues in their fields to speak. Examples include:

- University of Minnesota Nursing professor on death and dying issues (arranged by Nursing faculty)
- Panel of statewide experts on the ethics of land management and use and speakers on the ethics of fisheries management and hunting and fishing ethics (arranged by Natural Resources faculty)
• Student poster presentations on ethical issues in Nursing and Psychology
• A Dean Emeritus of North Dakota State University's Engineering program and the chair of Minnesota's Board of Engineering speaking about ethical issues in Engineering (arranged by Engineering faculty)
• A St. Scholastica Management professor and the President of the Blandin Foundation on business ethics, and a showing and discussion of *The Smartest Guys in the Room* (a documentary about Enron) (arranged by Business faculty)
• An English instructor presenting on Dante's *Inferno* and the Vietnam War
• An ecumenical panel of regional religious leaders discussing religion and ethics

In addition, students presented on software pirating, a mission trip to New Orleans, the ethics of their generation, and the post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) program, among other issues.

Feedback was impressive: 92.34% of attendees were either “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with conference sessions, and almost 99% said we should hold a similar conference in the future. Despite this positive feedback and campus-wide involvement, 2006 graduates as a whole did not self-report significant growth in ethical reasoning. To create a culture of discussion of ethics, an ICC Philosophy instructor developed a Socrates Café, a moderated discussion of philosophical issues, modeled on the concept developed by the keynote speaker. The Philosophy instructor has continued Socrates Cafés on campus and in the community since then.

Lack of self-reported growth in ethical reasoning may have been due to not providing enough curricular integration or reinforcement. The Engineering program, which required attendance at the Engineering ethics discussions and reinforced this teaching, found growth in professional ethics in Engineering student portfolios that year and the next year. The average rating for this section of student portfolios prior to conference was 5.31 out of 10; the rating in 2006 was 6.13, and in 2007 was 8.5. In 2008, students who had not been exposed to those discussions demonstrated poorer understanding of professional ethics in Engineering: The rating in 2008 was 2.75, below pre-conference levels. To address this decline, the Engineering program is planning an Engineering Ethics Conference this spring with guest speakers and student projects and discussions. They plan to repeat this event every other year so that all of their students may experience it.

Other co-curricular experiential opportunities provided by the College that promote social responsibility, civic engagement, and lifelong learning—the crosswalk between general education expectations and the larger educational experience—include:

• September 11 Response: Faculty in Psychology, History/Political Science, English, and Engineering, and a former Middle East Bureau Chief for Reuters addressed the crisis from the perspectives of their disciplinary expertise or personal experience. (One of the instructors was a Vietnam veteran, and another was a member of the National Guard.)
• Global Education Week, an annual event featuring speakers who are either from or are experts in different countries. Faculty are encouraged to bring their
classes and integrate the talks into coursework.

- **Constitution Day**, an annual event featuring Constitution activities and talks by faculty about Constitutional topics
- **Native American Indian Heritage Month** events all November, including speakers like Winona LaDuke and performers like Mitch Walking Elk and Keith Secola, as well as student panels, faculty and staff speakers, and regional experts
- Philosophy Club weekly meetings, sometimes with guest speakers, addressing such topics as artificial intelligence, a philosophical assessment of intelligent design, social and political philosophy, and various philosophers. In Spring 2009, the club collaborated with Hibbing Community College Philosophy faculty to hear, via interactive television, a prominent Oxford philosopher address information philosophy and the philosophy of technology.
- Science Café, a monthly co-curricular opportunity organized by Engineering faculty addresses such topics as “The State of Science in America,” “Why People Believe Weird Things,” and “The Value of a Liberal Arts Education.”

The Science Café illustrates the use of a co-curricular activity to address concerns about student appreciation of a liberal arts education. Engineering students have a rigorous curriculum. While they understand the importance of their math and science courses, Engineering faculty observed that students did not necessarily appreciate the value of the liberal arts courses in their curriculum. To address that view, Engineering faculty held a Science Café on the value of liberal arts. Instead of inviting liberal arts faculty to explain the importance of their disciplines, which the Engineering faculty felt the students might not find compelling, Engineering instructors discussed the importance of liberal arts to their own education and view of the world. Forty students and eight faculty attended this event, and later discussions showed that students gained a new appreciation of liberal arts.

The ICC Library also fosters political and civic engagement in a number of ways. For example, Library staff provide voter-registration materials and postings from nonpartisan fact-checking organizations and play CNN in the front lounge area. The Philosophy Club hosted a viewing of the vice presidential debate in Fall 2008. Student Government launched a voter-registration drive, a program of voter education about education issues, and a get-out-the-vote effort in Fall 2008 including free shuttles to the polls. Student Government exceeded its voter-registration goal, registering close to 250 new voters.

**Student Leadership in Developing a Life of Inquiry**

A number of student organizations at Itasca support a life of learning and an appreciation of a liberal education by providing students opportunities to continue exploration of their chosen field, a discipline or area of knowledge, or academic excellence outside of the classroom structure. Examples include program-based student clubs such as the Psychology Club, Nursing Club, and Natural Resources Club, whose members conduct research, host expert speakers, and apply their learning in service projects; Gay-Straight Alliance, whose students organize educational and cultural events and speak in classrooms about issues
like AIDS awareness; and the Philosophy Club, which conducts inquiry-based discussions and hosts educational events. O-Gitch-I-Dah members organize events to commemorate Native American Indian Heritage Month.

Student Government has taken a leading role as well for the past three years. Student Government leaders have collaborated with the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission to organize Civil Liberties Conferences. These conferences feature expert speakers from around the state addressing civil rights and civil liberties issues in concurrent sessions. Student Government also works with faculty and administrators to promote a better understanding of the United States government and political processes on the annual Constitution Day.

**Student Appreciation of General Education**

As discussed in component 3a, the ICC Faculty Association (ICCFA) voted in 2002 to develop a cyclical assessment of ICC Foundational Goals. The College has designed and conducted several pre-/post-test studies that assess student learning within specific ICC Foundational Goal areas, such as Communication, Technology, Critical Thinking, Diversity, Ethical Reasoning, and Mathematical Reasoning. The appointment of an AA coordinator for the first time in Fall 2008 is intended to lead to coordination and oversight of the general education assessment process and improvement of the feedback loop so that the College more intentionally uses results to initiate changes.

While most students initially come to Itasca with a pragmatic view of higher education as preparation for the workplace, survey results indicate that they eventually grow in their appreciation of larger goals related to intellectual growth and personal enrichment. Students responding to the 2008 Graduate Survey reported that they believed they had made high levels of progress during their education at Itasca in acquiring “knowledge for further education” and “knowledge for personal development” (3.5 and 3.42 means on a 4-point scale, in which 4 represents “strongly agree”), giving themselves ratings slightly higher than both the previous year’s graduates and graduates of other colleges in the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) the same year. Over 95% of students responding to the 2006 Student Opinion Survey agreed or strongly agreed (64.6% strongly agreed) that they had experienced intellectual growth while at Itasca.
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Foundations of Excellence self-study process led the College to examine student understanding of a liberal education. While the College’s core academic program is the AA program, AA students don’t necessarily see themselves as being enrolled in a program of study. Faculty and staff concluded that the AA program needs to educate students about the goals and value of general education. One goal of the newly appointed AA coordinator is to develop written materials explaining the philosophy of a liberal arts education, providing rationales for general education requirements, and showcasing the liberal arts education offered by the AA program.

Criterion Four: Core Component 4c

Itasca Community College assesses the usefulness of our curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

A key measure of the College’s success lies in our ability to provide academic and career-related education that prepares students for a successful future as they transfer to complete their degrees or enter the workforce. To ensure that students are prepared, the College maintains strong relations through transfer agreements with public and private four-year colleges and universities in Minnesota and in bordering states. Transfer and placement data attest to the success of our educational programs. Likewise, those programs preparing students for the workforce benefit from feedback and evaluation from area employers. Program reviews and input from advisory committees and external accreditors provide important feedback on program effectiveness.

The College encourages students to consider career and educational options through career counseling services and courses such as the three-credit Freshman Year Experience (which includes a career exploration component), the free Student Support Services (SSS) class Job Readiness, and Technical Writing. Students in Natural Resources, Engineering, and Practical Nursing take career-preparation classes within their programs, and, as discussed in component 3d, most programs encourage or require internship, cooperative education, clinical, or practicum experience to prepare students for the workplace.

Programs are designed to expose students—most of whom have grown up in rural, homogeneous areas—to diversity and to the value of social responsibility. We also foster in our students the values of tolerance and civic engagement.
Program Evaluation and Review

In compliance with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policy 3.36, the College performs annual program review for the purpose of academic planning and improvement. Itasca’s academic programs are reviewed using standard program criteria such as enrollment, retention, cost, teacher/student ratio, and placement. In addition to this data, program faculty confer with advisory committees to review program-level outcomes and assure adherence to external industry expectations. Programs with external licensure exams incorporate those results into the review process.

The usefulness of programs is also evaluated through the College’s Master Academic Planning (MAP) process. On an annual basis program coordinators and faculty develop objectives under each MAP design goal area, one of which emphasizes ongoing program improvement. For example, the Practical Nursing program recently reviewed and updated its curriculum to require Anatomy and Physiology I and II in place of Integrated Science to better prepare students for the workplace and to align their curriculum with Registered Nurse (RN) program laddering tracks. This change was in response to advisory council input and advice from area RN Nursing programs. (Approximately 50% of ICC’s Nursing students go on to complete an RN program.)

Any curriculum changes are approved through the Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC), which requires submission of rationales and course outlines in support of any proposed alterations.

Most of the College’s technical programs refer to state or national standards for student learning outcomes. These include:

- Engineering—Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET)
- Natural Resources—Society of American Foresters (SAF)
- Applied Psychology—American Psychological Association (APA)
- Early Childhood Education—national Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate requirements, Minnesota Board of Teaching Standards for Elementary Education, and Minnesota Board of Teaching Standards for Early Childhood Education
- Class Act (pre-Education)—National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- Wildland Firefighting—National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)—The Strawman Body of Knowledge
- Practical Nursing—Minnesota Board of Nursing.

External Accreditation

Two of ICC’s programs are evaluated by external accrediting bodies. The Practical Nursing program is externally accredited by the Minnesota Board of Nursing, which evaluates the program on a 10-year cycle. The Minnesota Board of Nursing verifies that nursing programs meet the conditions for program approval under Minnesota Board of Nursing Rules 6301.0500.
Itasca’s Natural Resources program has been formally recognized by the Society of American Foresters (SAF) since 2002, at which time the program underwent a Developing a Curriculum (DACUM) analysis to ensure its curriculum was up to date. DACUM is a process that evaluates curriculum against what workers actually do in the workplace—the skills and knowledge they need, the traits they must have, and the tools they use in order to perform the tasks and responsibilities of the position. To recognize a program, SAF examines 1) program objectives, 2) curriculum, 3) faculty, 4) students, 5) program, 6) support, and 7) facilities.

In 2009, the Natural Resources program will be one of the first two-year Natural Resources programs in the country to undergo consideration of accreditation through SAF, which has historically only accredited four-year degree programs. The SAF accreditation process involves a writing a self-study analyzing the program in terms of the SAF criteria listed above, collecting data on the program, and hosting a site visit by the accreditors.

**Input from Advisory Committees and Industry Partners**

Advisory groups, industry partners, agencies, and others meet with program coordinators, faculty, and administration for curricular development and review. Every career and technical program, as well as Class Act (pre-Education) within the Associate in Arts (AA) program, has an advisory group that provides regular input and evaluation on curriculum and skills needed for a changing workplace. Advisory groups include industry professionals and representatives of other institutions or agencies and often program students or alumni.

Results of advisory committee input include:

- A diverse group of professionals from state and federal agencies guided the development of the Wildland Firefighting program.
- An advisory council of experts, formed during a 15-month interviewing process involving every sector of Minnesota Power’s business, convened to assist in curriculum development for the joint Power Generation program.
- UPM Blandin Paper Company jointly developed the Pulp and Paper Technology programs.
- Under a federal CLEAN grant, ICC and partnering institutions worked with a northeastern Minnesota healthcare professionals advisory group, Area Health Education Consortium (AHEC), and ICC’s Allied Health Advisory Council. Their input resulted in new online and distance program options and a preceptor program for distance students in area clinical facilities.
- The Practical Nursing program developed Health Unit Coordinator training online in partnership with area medical facilities.
- The Class Act program modified the Educational Computing course in 2007-08, added the Bemidji State University Foundations of Education course to its offerings, and significantly modified the cohort model.

“During the interview he was asked to state the four pine species found in Minnesota. Without really thinking the student replied, ‘Pinus resinosa, Pinus strobus, Pinus banksiana, Pinus sylvestris’ (red pine, white pine, jack pine, Scotch pine). The employer was so impressed – commented that he would require this knowledge of higher-level positions – not the one the student was applying for – and hired him on the spot.”

--Testimonial about a Forestry graduate
Preparing Students for the Skills and Knowledge Necessary for a Changing Workplace

In recognition of the need for computer skills in both academic work and the workforce, ICC’s AA degree requires that students demonstrate computer proficiency or take a Computer Science course, and they are advised to complete this requirement during their first semester. Graduates also self-report gains in basic skills critical to academic and workplace success using a 4-point scale, in which 4 represents “substantial progress” and 3 represents “some progress”:

Table 28. Gains in Basic Skills
Comparison of the New Student Survey to the Graduate Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Note-taking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Students Fall 2007</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduating Students Spring 2008</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In ICC’s technical programs, teaching goals for skills and competencies are regularly updated to meet the evolving needs of the workplace. For example, in response to changing field requirements, the Natural Resources program dropped classes in chainsaw proficiency and logging and replaced them with timber harvesting. Program faculty also revamped safety and first aid requirements to meet current workplace expectations. Geography/GIS faculty updated software, redesigned course offerings, and infused new skill expectations into the curriculum. Learning outcomes document that graduates have the skills and abilities to function in the workplace. For example, Nursing students must demonstrate the attainment of skill areas identified by the program, which are aligned with the Minnesota Board of Nursing’s Nursing Abilities. Wildland Firefighting students must demonstrate that they can perform all the skills established nationally by the NWCG.

Faculty expect students to master knowledge and skills for independent learning in applied programs. Skills outcomes are embedded at the course level with expectations listed in the course outline documents. Most applied programs include skills assessment, demonstration, and internships in which students apply knowledge on the job. In all skill-based programs, students participate in fieldwork to test their skills. For example, in Wildland Firefighting students do field exercises to demonstrate their ability to use tools and perform tasks under real-life conditions. The Nursing Assistant course requires a clinical experience, and the Practical Nursing program includes a clinical sequence with a capstone practicum. A number of programs require an internship or practicum experience, including all Natural Resources emphases, GIS, Applied Psychology, Early Childhood options, and Class Act. Student performance and readiness for employment are evaluated by placement partners, often in collaboration with coordinating faculty.
Careers courses in programs—Engineering Professional Development, Natural Resources Careers, Role Transition (Nursing)—prepare students for exploring career possibilities, job searching, and the expectations of the profession.

Preparing Students to Work in a Diverse Environment

It is clear that technical skills are necessary, but not sufficient, for work in a rapidly changing and increasingly global society. The College’s mission and goals speak directly to educating students as civically active and globally engaged citizens. The College’s general education requirements and specific learning goals address the need to develop workers who have the ability to think critically, solve problems, and interact with and respect people from diverse backgrounds. As noted in component 4b, transfer students are expected to meet a significant number of MnTC general education goal areas through their coursework in addition to ICC Foundational Goal areas, which span all technical and transfer programs. MnTC Goal areas and ICC Foundational Goals that prepare students specifically for working in diverse environments include Human Diversity, Global Perspective, Ethical and Civic Responsibility, and People and the Environment. As discussed in component 3c and elsewhere in this self-study, the College has a number of student organizations that promote understanding and respect of diversity (Gay Straight Alliance, O-Gitch-I-Dah, Many Faces One Goal—MF1G) and co-curricular events fostering global awareness, such as the annual Global Education Week.

Programs address diversity in the context of their coursework and/or co-curricular activities. For example, Engineering Professional Development and Wildland Firefighting courses address the expectation to respect diversity and work well with diverse groups of people. A major learning outcome of the Relations and Management course in Early Childhood as well as the program as a whole is respect for and understanding of diversity so that students can work well with families with diverse cultural dynamics and special needs.

Co-curricular program activities augment students’ exposure to diverse issues. As a co-curricular activity, the Engineering program has hired Engineering mentors of color to work with students to gain understanding of differences of perspective. These mentors come to campus once per semester for presentations to students. Class Act students take at least one field trip to the Twin Cities to tour and observe inner-city and alternative schools so that they are more prepared to work with a diverse array of students in a range of school systems.

Curricular and Co-curricular Activities Promoting Social Responsibility

The values of social responsibility and citizenship are embedded in program coursework and in co-curricular activities and internships and other applied learning activities. The College promotes social responsibility and citizenship for all students through courses meeting the MnTC Goal or ICC Foundational Goal areas of Ethical and Civic Responsibility/
Citizenship and Ethics. All students earning an AA or an Associate in Science (AS) in Applied Psychology, Business, or GIS fulfill the MnTC requirements for Ethical and Civic Responsibility.

Technical programs require courses that address issues of social responsibility. The Nursing Skills I and Role Transition courses in Nursing, the Natural Resources Careers course, the Engineering Professional Development series, and practicum classes in Class Act, Nursing, Child Development, and Applied Psychology all specifically address ethics and social responsibility in their respective fields. Early Childhood classes discuss the Code of Ethics for the Early Childhood Professional throughout program coursework. Many Engineering students also take Ethics at ICC, as it is a requirement for a number of transfer institutions. Objective 6 of the ICC Engineering Program is “Graduates of the ICC Engineering Program will demonstrate the ability to understand and appreciate professional and ethical responsibilities.” When sophomores prepare their Engineering portfolios, they must show that they have met this objective.

Both Nursing’s Role Transition course and the Engineering Professional Development series address the need for professionals to give back to their communities. To inculcate that value and expectation in students, each semester Engineering students are required to perform an increasing number of community service hours. Nursing students are required to perform 10 hours of community service in Role Transition. Nursing service work includes volunteering at the Food Shelf, Community Café, and Special Olympics, doing blood pressure checks at the Women’s Expo and the Children’s Fair, and making lap blankets.

Academic classes in the programs also teach social responsibility and civic engagement through projects that serve the community. Examples include:

- Engineering students built bridges on a mountain-biking trail system and through the wetlands near campus.
- GIS students mapped the Mesabi Trail and updated bicycle route maps for the City of Grand Rapids.
- American Indian Studies students provide outreach to K-12 schools by teaching what they are learning in Ojibwe language classes.
- Business and Accounting majors perform community survey work for area businesses (e.g. mystery shopper reports and marketing studies).

Co-curricular community-based research projects are strongly encouraged for majors in Applied Psychology. Students have participated in several community-research projects involving the area Food Shelf and Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault (IAASA). For example, students developed, distributed, and analyzed surveys of attitudes toward sexual assault among law enforcement, the community at large, and the ICC community (students, staff, and faculty). The results revealed a need for greater awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault, especially among college-age students, and for services convenient to victims. Students have presented the results of their research at national conferences. As a result of this series of community-based research projects, a Support Within Reach office was established on campus to provide victim-advocacy and awareness...
services for sexual assault. This office is a collaboration between IAASA and the Applied Psychology program, and it is staffed mostly by Applied Psychology students who have completed IAASA training.

Programs also require co-curricular experiences designed to inculcate social responsibility and other broad goals like leadership, community-building, and problem solving. Class Act students participate in an experiential leadership training retreat prior to the start of their first semester, and Wildland Firefighting students take a one-credit Leadership class, which is conducted at the same retreat center.

Finally, many of the programs have associated clubs, which are recognized student organizations. As noted in component 4b, these clubs—Psychology Club, Mass Communication Club, Natural Resources Club, Nursing Club, O-Gitch-I-Dah, Engineering Club—plan projects, events, and activities that benefit the whole campus or community. Some recent examples include:

- The Natural Resources Club banded ducks at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge and rehabilitated sharp-tailed grouse habitat for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- The Engineering Club hosts an annual volunteer day in which students participate in activities like filling holiday boxes for the Food Shelf and helping with Engineering and science projects at local elementary schools.
- The Nursing Club has conducted blood pressure checks on campus.
- Early Childhood Education students volunteer as a program (not as a club) for the Children’s Fair every April. Students have a booth and activities for children.

**Assessment of Student Preparedness for the Workforce**

Student preparedness for the workforce is assessed in several direct and indirect ways in terminal programs and transfer programs at Itasca, including student surveys, external licensure exams; skills assessments; evaluations of internships, cooperative education, practica, and clinicals; and job placement rates.

The 2008 Graduate Survey results show that students believe that they have made progress while at Itasca toward preparing for a career or good job (3.39 mean on a 4-point scale, in which 4 represents “substantial progress” and 3 represents “some progress), acquiring a technical skill (3.10), exploring career options (3.26), and acquiring knowledge for further education (3.50). The strongest rating—for acquiring knowledge for further education—is not surprising, for most of our students transfer to continue their education.

Students in a number of the College’s programs take external licensure exams, which provide evidence of how the programs have prepared them for the workforce. These include Home Health Aide, Nursing Assistant, and Practical Nursing. Students completing the Early Childhood Education program may also take the National Child Development Associate (CDA) exam. Our students have been successful on external licensure exams. All students who have applied for the National CDA have passed the exam, and pass rates are high.

“I absolutely loved the nursing program, the nursing instructors and everything that goes along with it.” – Graduate Survey response
for Nursing Assistants and Home Health Aides on the National Nursing Assistant/Home Health Aide Assessment exam are in the upper 90% range. The Minnesota Nursing Board pass rates since 2001 for Practical Nursing students are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Tested</th>
<th>Pass Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Minnesota Board of Nursing

Although there is no two-year engineering exam, the Engineering program has developed a two-year version of the four-year Fundamentals of Engineering Examination to assess student achievement of two-year objectives in Engineering. Results reported by former students on a voluntary basis suggest that the ICC Engineering Comprehensive Exam is a reliable indicator of a student’s ultimate performance on the Fundamentals of Engineering Examination. Using that indicator, ICC students can anticipate an average pass rate of 80%, compared to a national average of 70%.

Skills testing, internships, and similar experience-based courses and placements also directly measure students’ achievements of learning objectives and their application of their skills and knowledge in real-life environments. As discussed in component 3d, a number of programs require internships, clinicals, cooperative education, or practica. As noted, Practical Nursing and Wildland Firefighting have required skills testing based on external standards.

An indirect measure of student preparedness for the workforce is transfer success (for transfer programs) and job placement rates for terminal programs. Engineering students have transferred and continued their education at a 94 to 97% rate between 2003 and 2007. Since 2005, 91% of students completing the AS in Engineering degree with the intent of earning a four-year STEM degree have completed a four-year degree in a STEM field. Graduate Follow-up Survey data suggests that more than 90% of our Engineering students who have completed four-year degrees are employed in Engineering-related fields.
In **Applied Psychology**, student preparedness can be seen in the combined average transfer rate for the five graduating classes to date (83%). Per comments from students and faculty from transfer institutions, graduates of our program have felt well-prepared academically for transfer, have earned good grades, and have been successful in pursuing research and internship experiences of interest. Transfer institution faculty have commented that students from ICC are “much more advanced” and “overprepared” compared to other students. Students have also reported feeling well-prepared in completing their practicum experience. Human Services-related employment rates range from a low of 31% (for 2007 graduates) to a high of 80% (for 2006 graduates).

**Nursing assistant** graduates in 2006 and 2007 are employed in their fields at rates of 79% and 88% respectively. Many also continue their education: For example, 55% of 2007 nursing assistant graduates are continuing their education. Employment rates for **Practical Nursing** graduates are also high, ranging from 67% to 92% since 2004. Many licensed practical nurses also continue their education. A high of 65% of 2007 graduates continued their education; the range was 31% to 42% in the previous three years.

Wildland Firefighting students had a virtually 100% placement rate in the past three years. A significant percentage of students in this terminal program also continue their education. Between 2003 and 2006, a low of 20% and a high of 50% of Wildland Firefighting graduates continued their education. Forestry students have had placement rates ranging from a low of 33% in 2003 to a high of 100% in 2004. The other years on record have a 60% to 75% placement rate. While the Forestry Associate in Applied Science (AAS) is a terminal degree, over 50% of students graduating between 2003 and 2006 continued their education.

Other programs’ placement and transfer rates may be found in Program Indicator reports on the ICC website.

The **Associate in Arts** program is at the core of the College’s educational offerings, with over half of our graduates earning an AA degree. Between 2002 and 2006, a range of 46% (2002) to 59% (2004) had related employment. The bulk of AA graduates transfer, with a range of 57% (2005) to 71% (2006) of graduates between 2002 and 2006 continuing their education.

The table below shows the placement rate and continuing education rate for all ICC graduates between 1999 and 2007 (the most recent year available).
Table 30. Status of Graduates Summary  
Itasca Community College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Graduates</th>
<th>Related Employment Rate</th>
<th>Continuing Education %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Graduate Follow-up Survey Results

In addition, a strong indication of graduates’ capacities, knowledge, skills, and preparation for further learning is their level of achievement after they transfer to another institution. In FY 2004 and 2005, students previously enrolled at the College earned GPAs at transfer institutions within Minnesota that were close to the GPAs they earned at ICC, according to a transfer study conducted by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Office of Research and Planning (Transfer Student Profile 2007). In information obtained about 198 ICC students who transferred (FY 2004) to another institution, including both two- and four-year colleges and universities, the average sending GPA was 2.92; at the transfer institutions, the average final GPA was 3.05. In FY 2005, the 185 students who transferred had an average GPA of 3.03 and a final GPA at the transfer institution of 2.94. A similar pattern can be observed if the prior and receiving GPAs are considered only for four-year universities. In FY 2004, 87 students transferred from ICC to a four-year institution. Their average prior GPA was 2.99, and the final GPA at the receiving university was 3.08. In FY 2005, the average GPA of the 90 transfer students from ICC was 3.16, and the final GPA at the four-year institution was 2.94. Another perspective can be obtained based on a comparison between students who transferred from ICC to another institution and full-time direct-entry students at that college or university. In 2004, the graduating GPA of transfer students from ICC was higher than that of the full-time direct-entry students (3.59 versus 3.13).
Criterion Four: Core Component 4d

Itasca Community College provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

Itasca Community College takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that faculty, staff, and students acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly. For the College, this means institutionalizing ethical practices regarding the acquisition and use of knowledge, including academic integrity, respect for intellectual property, and copyright protection. It also means disseminating policies clearly and effectively. For faculty, supporting responsible use of knowledge means teaching and modeling academic integrity and respect for copyright and intellectual property to students. For staff in the Academic Resource Center and Testing Center, this means employing procedures to prevent breaches of academic integrity and training tutors in responsible tutoring. For students, this means learning and practicing the responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge.

Policies related to the responsible use of knowledge are published in the Student Handbook, ICC Catalog, Employee Guidebook, and the ICC website. Copyright protection policies are posted next to copiers on campus. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system Employee Code of Conduct further specifies policies related to textbook sales and use and conflicts of interest in employment.

Intellectual Property and Copyright Laws

The College adheres to the system policy on intellectual property as outlined in Policy 3.26. The system endeavors to develop and maintain a post-secondary educational system marked by academic excellence. Research and development of original works and inventions that require intellectual property protection are a vital part of the academic community. Librarian Steve Bean and Dean of Academic and Student Affairs Barbara McDonald share the responsibility of ensuring that information about intellectual property is disseminated. The Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) contract protects academic freedom and intellectual property (Article 23, Sections 3 and 4). Syllabi and course assignments belong to faculty, and this right is respected by administration. When intellectual property rights are complex, as in the development of an online class, the College and faculty, with assistance from Office of the Chancellor, specify compensation and rights under written agreements.

All faculty, staff, and students are expected to respect copyright and intellectual property laws. As noted, copyright laws are posted next to every copy machine. In an age of music file sharing, photo file sharing, and easily duplicable computer programs, it is especially important to alert faculty, staff, and students about intellectual property rights and acceptable use. College employees receive updates and training at duty days and through e-mail alerts. To use computers on campus, students must read and accept the Acceptable
Use of Computers Policy, which includes information about what they are allowed to download and use.

**Academic Integrity**

The College supports academic integrity through policy statements in the Student Handbook, on the website, in course syllabi, and in some program handbooks (e.g. Class Act, Applied Psychology, and Practical Nursing). Academic integrity is specifically addressed at orientation. The policy details possible repercussions of violating academic integrity through cheating or plagiarism, and the College has a strong record of taking action on violations.

The College has long encouraged teaching strategies to improve rates of academic integrity. The Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, for example, has presented on trends in cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty at a Center for Teaching and Learning Brown Bag. In the same context, faculty have shared ideas for generating “plagiarism-proof” assignments, using the writing process to reduce plagiarism, and warding off cheating. The Testing Center assists in preventing cheating on make-up exams by proctoring exams and following faculty directions for test taking.

The College provides support of academic integrity through Disability Services, tutoring in the Academic Resource Center (ARC), and the Testing Center. Peer Tutors are trained in tutoring, and the program is certified by the College Reading and Learning Association. Tutors are encouraged to report suspected cheating to ARC staff. To maintain academic integrity in the Testing Center, students utilizing the Testing Center must sign in and show identification. Test-takers are required to keep all materials off their desks and are not allowed to use cell phones or to leave the room during their test. The Testing Center may also access video equipment to record test-taking if needed. If any cheating occurs, the student is stopped, materials are collected, and the event is reported to the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and the instructor.

Accommodations for students with disabilities are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Because of a disability, students may need to demonstrate their knowledge in an alternate form, such as an oral exam or use of a scribe. They may also need extended time on an exam as long as it does not alter the technical standards or essential components of the exam. Academic integrity is maintained through ensuring that curriculum does not get modified because a student has a disability. Individuals with disabilities are held accountable for the same information and requirements as all other individuals.

Specific classes address academic responsibility for first-year students. Freshman Year Experience, which is recommended for undecided Associate in Arts (AA) students and for high-risk students, teaches academic responsibility. Approximately one-quarter of ICC students take Freshman Year Experience. Student Support Services (SSS) Transition to College course for nontraditional students also teaches academic integrity. Writing classes
such as Expository Writing, Research Writing, and Technical Writing teach academic integrity and research skills. The faculty librarian provides one-on-one assistance and class instruction in responsible research.

Student responses to the Foundations of Excellence New Student Survey in Fall 2007 suggest the success of these efforts. Just over 70% give the College high/very high ratings for communicating the importance of standards of behavior in an academic community. The College rankings of high/very high for communicating the importance of various standards are 70% for acknowledging the source of ideas not your own, 80.6% for academic honesty, and 73.9% for ethical conduct.

Ethical Application of Knowledge

As discussed in component 4c, particularly in career and technical programs, students learn to apply knowledge responsibly through coursework that directly addresses ethical practices and through internship, clinical, and practicum experiences.

CRITERION FOUR SUMMARY

Itasca promotes a life of learning for our faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, application of knowledge, and social responsibility in ways consistent with our mission to provide academic and career-related education. Through requirements and curricular offerings, the College ensures that all students receive a general education. Program curricula and co-curricular activities emphasize the importance of learning to live and work with diverse people and of applying one’s knowledge and training with a sense of responsibility to society. Program reviews and other data show that the College’s programs prepare students for future learning when they transfer or enter the workforce. Both Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and ICC commitments to uphold academic integrity and use knowledge responsibly are stated in policies, which are disseminated, taught, and enforced. The policies undergird the College’s integrity.
Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Itasca Community College promotes a life of learning for our faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility.

Summary of Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system Center for Teaching and Learning and Itasca’s Center for Innovation offer extensive professional development opportunities (both on and off campus) and teaching and learning resources for the faculty.
- Itasca supports a culture of innovation and discovery, with a focus on research, applied learning at the classroom level, and interdisciplinary collaboration among disciplines.
- Itasca’s faculty and staff are engaged in research to improve teaching and learning and scholarly work through sabbaticals, discipline-based projects, grants, and individual projects.
- The College’s faculty and staff promote social and civic responsibility and global engagement within the curriculum and through co-curricular activities.
- The College’s academic programs and co-curricular experiences provide opportunity for student inquiry, engagement, and leadership.
- The College’s general education philosophy and learning outcomes guide the curriculum.
- Itasca’s administration fosters a proactive and innovative campus culture.
- Itasca’s faculty and staff have been recognized for exceptional service.

Challenges

- The College needs to improve its “feedback loop” in disseminating and using assessment results for improving teaching and learning in general education.
- It’s challenging to engage nontraditional students in leadership opportunities.
- General education offerings are limited due to budget constraints.
- Communicating the value of general education and lifelong learning for community college students is challenging.
Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

As called for by our mission, Itasca Community College identifies constituencies and serves them in ways we both value.
Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

As called for by our mission, Itasca Community College identifies constituencies and serves them in ways we both value.

Itasca Community College will be a vital resource and community partner providing accessible, responsive, and innovative opportunities that empower all learners to realize their full potential and enhance the viability of the region. (ICC Vision)

Responsiveness - Itasca Community College values accessibility, flexibility, and the agility to anticipate and respond to learner and community needs. (ICC Values)

Strategic Goals
Goal 3. Serve Diverse Learners
Itasca Community College will reach out to people from diverse backgrounds and provide them with learning opportunities and services that respect and draw upon the strengths of their cultural backgrounds and empower them to achieve their educational goals.

Goal 5. Community Partnerships
Itasca Community College will enhance existing partnerships and engage in collaborative efforts to maintain and build the vitality of the college, community, and region.

Itasca’s mission states the College’s intent to provide “accessible academic and career-related education which contributes to the social and economic health of the region.” To fulfill this mission, the College strives to provide top-notch community programming, liberal arts education, and career programs that meet the needs of our students and our community. Two of Itasca’s six Strategic Goals in our 2003-2008 Strategic Plan involve addressing needs of diverse learners (Goal 3) and community partners (Goal 5).

As a comprehensive community college, Itasca’s primary constituency is the local community, defined as a six-county region, with approximately half of the students coming from Itasca County. Thus, primary constituents include traditional-age students graduating from area high schools, nontraditional students seeking educational advancement or career retraining, major local employers needing employees with a specific knowledge base and skill set, and community members desiring to take classes for personal interest or enrichment. The latter group includes large numbers of retirees—the fastest growing segment of Itasca County’s population.
The College is also committed to encouraging people in the region who have been reluctant to pursue higher education. As discussed in Criterion 2, the region has high levels of poverty (12%, according to a recent community assessment by United Way of 1,000 Lakes). The most recent unemployment figures from the state show joblessness in Itasca County nearing 9%. Residents of the country also have comparatively low levels of college attainment. According to the US Census 2000, 17.6% of the population in Itasca County holds a Bachelor’s degree compared to 27.4% statewide. Slightly more than half of Itasca’s students are first-generation college students, and over the past decade about one-third have identified themselves as low income on data collected during the placement testing process. In addition, the College's six-county region is home to four American Indian reservations. While a number of American Indian students opt to attend one of northeastern Minnesota’s two tribal colleges, Itasca has invested considerable resources to ensure that American Indian students in the region have access to a higher education, and many choose Itasca. The College also strives to create a welcoming environment for other students of color and values a diverse campus and student body.

The College is intimately connected to the community and, in the words of our value statement on responsiveness, “values accessibility, flexibility, and the agility to anticipate and respond to learner and community needs.”

**Criterion Five: Core Component 5a**

Itasca Community College learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

Itasca relies on constituents for input to inform the College’s efforts to serve the educational and training needs of the area. Formal collaborations and the structure and processes of program and general advisory committees ensure that the College learns of community needs and opportunities. In response, the College provides services and capitalizes on opportunities to share resources and enter into partnerships for educational opportunities for Itasca’s students. Uncomplicated changes that align with the College mission may be immediately implemented by relevant staff, while expensive and complex proposals go through exhaustive planning and budgeting processes, which may take years to come to fruition.

Because the College does not have the resources to fulfill all requests for classes, programs, training, and special events and programming, Itasca carefully studies the needs of constituents and proposals to meet them in light of the ICC mission and Strategic Plan.
Environmental Scanning

As discussed in Criterion 2, ICC identifies regional workforce needs and the needs of subgroups of students through internal and external environmental scanning. For example, data collected by the Regional Workforce Development Coordinator forecasts tremendous growth in quality jobs in the region in the next decade due to planned mining and energy projects and retirements in many industry sectors. As a result, Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) colleges are planning for program growth and new program development to meet the needs of high-technology jobs such as power generation, renewable energy, construction, mining, and steel-making.

Data on high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty in the region correlate with low rates of college attainment. Due to the projected growth in quality jobs requiring specific certificate and degree programs, the region’s colleges and Itasca in particular are positioning themselves as resources for educational attainment and economic development. Itasca is currently in the process of developing a Power Generation program and a Water Quality Technician certificate program, has recently developed a Pulp and Paper Technology program, and has a vibrant Engineering program.

The annually produced Student Profile collects a range of internal studies and provides a summation of who our students are, why they chose Itasca, how well prepared they are for college, what their rate of persistence and success is, and what they do after they graduate, among other topics. On the basis of this annual data, the College makes plans to improve recruitment and marketing and meet student needs, such as Student Support Services-funded Transition to College classes for nontraditional students.

Surveys of students as well as faculty and staff also help the College gather information about such issues as whether College services and academic offerings are meeting student needs, whether the College is providing a welcoming climate for underrepresented students, and whether graduates are finding work in their fields of study.

Community Engagement

The Customized Training (CT) division is actively engaged in determining the training needs of the area. Representatives determine community needs by attending Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce functions and by contacting clients through phone calls and visits to area businesses and industries. CT is involved in a Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce committee called Workforce Exchange for Learning and Development (WELD), which was formed in the past couple years to address workforce training needs. ICC is collaborating with the business community to help provide this training. A CT representative is on the committee and CT staff teach some classes within the WELD collaborative. (See component 5b for a full discussion of CT services.)

Administrative and staff leaders and faculty maintain ties with business and community constituents and are active in a range of community organizations. These relationships
provide a heightened awareness of community needs through frequent informal and formal contact. Most significant is the Provost’s service to vital community resources. The Provost served as chair of the board of the Itasca Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) for three years and is now on its Itasca Economic Development Advisory Council. IEDC, along with Iron Range Resources, for which Dr. Johnson serves on a partner advisory committee, is the primary business resource, economic research, and economic development organization for Itasca County; Iron Range Resources serves the whole Iron Range, of which Grand Rapids is the western edge. Dr. Johnson is also vice chair of the Blandin Foundation Board, on which he has served for the past five years. The Blandin Foundation is the single largest grantor to the College and has been a long supporter of College initiatives, capital development projects, and programming. In addition to the Provost’s community involvement, the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs also serves on two community boards, as chair of the Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital Board of Directors and as past chair of the Itasca Community Television station.

Faculty and staff also are closely connected with the community and engaged in community concerns. Many serve on boards of area agencies and organizations, including Action through Churches Together, Grand Rapids Area Library Program Committee, Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission, North Homes, Inc., United Way of 1,000 Lakes, and Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation. (See responses in Resource Room.) Others volunteer at schools or as coaches or are involved in churches or community organizations, including the Community Café, GRACE House (homeless shelter), Kiwanis Club, the International Rotary Club, the Itasca Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Alliance, the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, and KAXE radio.

In addition to this community involvement, faculty have professional connections with agencies and organizations that help them understand needs related to their fields. For example, Psychology faculty provide child protection and custody and chemical dependency evaluations for the district court, and Nursing faculty work shifts at area hospitals, clinics, and homecare services.

The continued involvement of retired faculty in the life of the College provides another valuable community linkage. Some of these faculty members serve on advisory committees, some continue as advisors for student organizations, and others come as visiting lecturers to classes, among other types of involvement.

Community members’ desires for Community Education offerings are gleaned mostly by enrollment and evaluations in which participants are asked to make suggestions for future classes. The Special Projects Coordinator also follows trends and tries out classes in newly popular areas, such as knitting or GPS.

**Advisory Groups**

The ICC General Advisory Committee has for many years been an important asset that has helped the College stay connected to the greater community. The group meets about
three times per year or as needed. The three administrators and the administrative secretary attend each meeting and report on the progress of the College. Each meeting features a campus update; the ICC Faculty Association President is often invited as well as faculty or staff to present on new initiatives. The group is asked to provide general feedback on classes, pertinent issues, Strategic Plan, and future directions, as well as conveying "the word on the street" regarding ICC both at and between meetings. Importantly, committee members also serve as the conduit to many private and public organizations in our service area. Feedback from this group has led to customized training programs like webpage development as well as re-evaluation of policies. For example, parents in the community had requested that the College reduce the grade point average (GPA) requirement from 3.2 to 3.0 for juniors wishing to enroll through the post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) program. As part of the process of considering this request, administrators brought the issue to the General Advisory Committee. Their input, and the College’s concern about student success, led ICC to maintain the higher requirement.

Each career program on campus, as well as the Class Act (pre-Education) and American Indian Studies programs, confers with a program advisory committee, which is generally composed of professionals and, when possible, students or recent graduates. These committees meet regularly with program faculty and ICC administration to provide input on student preparedness for the workforce, changing technology and training needs, and program success. Advisory committees have helped with curriculum updates, internship development, and overall program improvements. Examples of changes as a result of advisory committee input include:

- GPS training was added to the Wildland Firefighting program.
- Patient care changes and medication administration changes were incorporated into nursing skills classes.
- Practicum experiences replaced internships in the Applied Psychology program.

In addition to the program advisory groups, two advisory groups have formed to address specific student and community relationships. The American Indian Advisory Board provides input from the predominant underrepresented population in our service area about the American Indian Studies program and about how the College can serve the American Indian community. An Athletic Advisory Council was formed in Fall 2007 by the Men’s Athletic Director to proactively address student athlete issues and make recommendations to improve student success. Members include student athletes, faculty, a counselor, coaches, the Provost, and community representatives.

**K-12 Engagement**

The College ensures mutually beneficial relationships with regional schools through the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative (IASC). IASC started four years ago to build upon the Quad County Cooperative, which began with the school districts and the College sharing interactive television services. IASC facilitates cost savings to districts through sharing
services such as a curriculum director and business services and through programming initiatives such as the development of online curriculum. ICC hosts the schools’ monthly meetings, and the Provost is a member of IASC. IASC has been a fruitful structure. For example, under the auspices of IASC, all individuals in these institutions involved in American Indian education meet and collaborate to make grant proposals, plan Native American Language and Culture Quiz Bowls, and identify ways that ICC can provide assistance. IASC also led to the formation of the Applied Learning Institute, a major project creating pathways to higher education for students ninth grade and up in the region (described further in component 5c).

Each fall, the College also hosts a Counselors/Principals Breakfast to provide opportunities for ICC administrators, counselors, and invited faculty to share current concerns and new programs and initiatives with K-12 academic leaders. Itasca also hosts an annual Career Fair for high school students. The College provides a full day of activities, a motivational speaker, and sessions about a variety of careers and programs hosted by area professionals. Each year over 600 students attend this event. Several program areas have also hosted technology career days, including Natural Resources, Nursing, and Engineering (Women in Technology Day).

**NHED and Engaging with Sister Institutions**

The NHED structure and mission fosters collaboration and alignment so that each of the member colleges avoid competition, share resources, and offer programs tailored to their local community needs and to regional needs. (This structure and resulting collaborations are discussed in component 1d.)

**Criterion Five: Core Component 5b**

Itasca Community College has the capacity and the commitment to engage with our identified constituencies and communities.

Itasca strives to create an open campus environment and position the College as a community resource while intensively developing partnerships and relationships to share resources and provide educational, social, and cultural opportunities for students and community members. These opportunities and practices enhance the College mission by fostering global education and civic engagement, supporting community partnerships (Strategic Goal 5), and enhancing resources (Strategic Goal 6).
Itasca contributes to the community with facilities and public programming. A wide range of Community Education classes and free speaking engagements offer educational enrichment to the community. The College is a community resource, providing Customized Training (CT) services to area businesses and Continuing Education courses, including computer education, SeniorNet, and enrollment audit options for seniors. Special community programs like College for Kids and the Dialogue North workshop series, which brings in experts to address business and economic topics, are also offered. All College speaking events are also advertised and open to community members.

College space is used by outside groups through lease and collaborative agreements. For example, there is a new Student Veterans’ Assistance Center on campus, and the Grand Rapids Area Learning Center and Head Start have facilities at the College as well. Itasca also makes space available for little or no cost to the community for workshops, speakers, forums, and meetings.

**Continued Learning Center**

As a “community” college, it is part of our mission to offer noncredit classes to community members of all ages and backgrounds. The Continued Learning Center is the College’s outreach arm for credit and noncredit education and training. The Continued Learning Center’s mission states, “The Continued Learning Center will facilitate quality training, educational services for promoting workforce development, and life-long learning.”

The Continued Learning Center is coordinated with administrative and clerical support from campus with class offerings on campus, at the Continued Learning Center facility in Grand Rapids, and onsite at area businesses. The Provost supervises and meets monthly with the Continuing Education and Customized Training (CT) staff, which include a Special Projects Coordinator (Community Education, Motorcycle Safety, SeniorNet, and College for Kids), five CT representatives (offering consulting and training in Lean Health, Lean Manufacturing, Workforce Development, Leadership, and Computer Education), a Management Analyst, and a part-time administrative assistant.

The Continued Learning Center’s in-town presence has brought CT and computer education to the community, especially to businesses. Until about 2001, this center was housed at the UPM Blandin Paper Company and offered only computer classes. When it moved to a more central and visible space as part of the Itasca Technology Exchange (ITEX) in Central Square Mall, the College built a tiered classroom with 25 computer workstations and additional classroom space. For most of the past decade, this location has served the public and business clients. In December 2008, the Continued Learning Center moved to the Independent School District (ISD) 318 Administration Building. The new space allows for more flexibility in computer class offerings and offers substantial savings to the College.
Customized Training

CT offers targeted skills-based classes and training for the region’s businesses and workforce on a fee basis. Serving Itasca County, ICC’s CT is part of the northeast CT region with the other NHED colleges, Fond du Lac Community and Tribal College, and Lake Superior College. The regional group meets monthly to coordinate training and ensure seamless service to the region’s business and industry.

CT representatives have Lean certifications in healthcare and manufacturing. Instructors also have certification in Developmental Dimensions Incorporated (DDI) training, leadership development, team-building, coaching, and customer service. CT workshops, seminars, or courses are designed specifically for a business or organization’s needs for content, format, and delivery. CT representatives help assess an organization’s training needs, and through pooling resources within the system, CT at Itasca can provide training for soft skills, technical skills, computer skills, and other skills. Programs can be designed for college credit, certification, or continuing education. Training topics include:

- Professional and Personal Growth
- Management and Leadership Development
- Quality and Continuous Improvement
- Customer Service
- Health and Safety
- Information Technology
- Lean Manufacturing
- Lean Healthcare

CT clients include Potlatch/Ainsworth; Grand Rapids State Bank; Arrowhead Promotions; Minnesota Power and Light; Blandin Foundation; UPM Blandin Paper Company; area healthcare providers Grand Itasca, St. Mary’s, Riverwood, Falls Memorial Hospital, St. Luke’s; and Minnesota Diversified Industries (MDI).

The College receives a special appropriation from the state legislature for CT and Continuing Education. Itasca has also been able to provide CT services to some businesses more cost-effectively through grant funding from the Minnesota Jobs Skills Partnership (MJSP) program. MJSP strategically helps Minnesota businesses and schools competitively train the workforce by awarding grants to educational institutions that partner with businesses to develop new job training or retraining for existing employees. All training projects pair at least one accredited Minnesota educational institution and one business. Funds, which are matched by the business partner, are used for training-related costs or educational infrastructure improvements necessary to support businesses located or intending to locate in Minnesota. One example of the use of an MJSP grant is to train incumbent healthcare workers under the Lean Healthcare program. This program is modeled after concepts and practices of the Toyota Motor Company and is focused on improving efficiencies and reducing waste in work processes. The CT staff is working with Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital (Grand Rapids) and hospitals in Duluth and International Falls.
Community Education

Under continuing education options, the College offers classes that are short, affordable, and available at convenient times. These classes give people an opportunity to explore an interest, develop or upgrade a skill, start a hobby, or just come to the ICC campus and enjoy the fun of learning. Offerings on campus and at the Continued Learning Center in town include workshops, classes, and special events. A catalog of Community Education offerings is mailed each season to community members, distributed to all campus employees, and posted online. Since 1998, the College has been offering three seasons of classes—fall, winter, spring—a total of 30 to 40 classes a year. Participants, who range in age from 30 to 60, come mostly from Grand Rapids (80%) and from as far as Hill City and Deer River (about 20 miles away).

College for Kids

Started in 1977, Itasca's College for Kids program is the oldest in the state. When the program was started, there were few to no summer activities for kids in the area. There are other summer community activities for kids now in Grand Rapids, but many children travel 40 to 60 miles to participate in College for Kids because they are from smaller communities without other community programming. The program serves a pressing need for rural children ages 3 to 12 years old. Because of the demographic served, the main goal of College for Kids is to be affordable, and it is inexpensive compared to similar programs. Offerings are determined by class enrollment in previous years, pop culture trends (e.g. hip hop class), and instructor availability. Approximately 30 classes are offered each summer in sciences, arts, creativity, and activities to address the whole child.

SeniorNet

A national organization of seniors teaching seniors computer skills, SeniorNet offers a range of computer and technology classes on the Itasca campus. SeniorNet got its origin because the organization had identified a need nationally for computer education for seniors. Because senior citizens are the fastest-growing segment of the county's population, these classes clearly meet a local need as well. ICC provides space and computers and collects a minimal payment, 40% of which goes to the national organization. SeniorNet now plans to charge a much more expensive flat fee. Steady enrollment testifies to community interest in the classes, and ICC is committed to serving seniors in Itasca County. If the program is cancelled due to cost, ICC will attempt to fill the need by offering computer classes to seniors in other ways.

Motorcycle Safety

The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center (MMSC) Rider Training Division offers three to five weekend classes a summer at Itasca through an agreement with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. According to data from MMSC, there are over 1,600
motorcycles in Itasca County. Since training began, motorcycle crashes in Minnesota have been reduced by 50%.

**Shared Facilities and Summer Use of Space**

As both a public service and means of increasing revenue, the College leases or provides space free of charge to other organizations. Component 5d discusses facilities usage.

**Adult Basic Education**

Through an agreement with an area agency, a professional Adult Basic Education (ABE) instructor tutors students on campus two days a week. In recent years, a small but significant number of incoming students have tested below the ability to benefit in English or math (1-2%, 5-11% respectively, according to placement testing data). The location of ABE services on campus allows for immediate and effective referral as well as increased likelihood of eventual enrollment in college coursework. The ABE tutor also provides tutoring for ICC students testing above ABE level, augmenting the existing tutoring services.

**Grand Rapids Area Learning Center**

The Grand Rapids Area Learning Center (ALC), an alternative educational facility for Grand Rapids High School, leases space in Dailey Hall. The ALC offers two alternative programs for at-risk high school students who have fallen behind on credits for graduation, a tenth-grade sit-down program with classes held in the ALC and independent-study programs. Both programs hold classes and meetings in the ALC suite. Housing the program on the ICC campus allows for a separate venue from the high school while remaining in an educational setting.

**Infinity**

The College provides space for Infinity, an online program offering a broad selection of high quality online courses designed to meet a variety of student needs. Infinity offers courses for high school students looking for flexible course scheduling, advanced placement options, credit recovery, or an alternative learning environment. It is a state-certified online program for students in grades 9 to 12 throughout Minnesota. The College leases office space for the program coordinator, including computer access, Internet access, and other amenities.

**Student Veterans’ Assistance Center**

The Higher Education Veterans Program within the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has opened Student Veterans’ Assistance Centers on college campuses across the
Support Within Reach

Support Within Reach is a collaborative effort between ICC and Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault (IAASA). Its mission is to enhance the campus community’s awareness, understanding, safety, and accountability regarding sexual violence, sexual harassment, and stalking. Program goals include providing onsite services, including a 24-hour crisis-line, one-to-one support, medical and legal advocacy, and referral. Support Within Reach goals also include increasing awareness and education related to issues surrounding sexual violence for students and student groups, faculty, and staff. The office, staffed primarily with Applied Psychology students who have completed advocacy training, is currently open two days a week and has an after-hours phone for free and confidential services.

Head Start

Head Start, the federally funded pre-school program for disadvantaged children, which is regionally directed by KOOTASCA Community Action, leases space on campus that formerly housed a daycare center. The location is convenient for students with children in Head Start. Head Start is a practicum site for the Early Childhood program.

Athletic Facilities

Community sports leagues, kids’ sports leagues, and the school districts use the College’s athletic fields. The College also has collaborative agreements with local school districts to use their football field facilities.
Looking to the Future

Plans for a new classroom building for which the College submitted a capital bonding request in Fall 2008 include space to house Itasca County’s Workforce Development Center on campus. Locating the Workforce Development Center at the College would facilitate outreach to unemployed and underemployed residents, and the College is developing several initiatives to address this population (see component 5c).

Summer Use of Space

Itasca does not shut down for the summer, and students attending any of the condensed summer sessions (May block or the other summer session) will find themselves rubbing elbows with different students than during the regular academic year.

The College offers residential camps, including several week-long Engineering Camps for middle school and high school students, a six-week Upward Bound residential summer program for high school students, Youth Leadership for Vital Communities (YLVC) week-long training, and National Rifle Association Camp. Attendees of all of these camps and programs stay in the residence halls to enhance the college experience.

Every June, the campus fills up with over 500 children attending the two-week College for Kids program. Kids choose classes from about 30 different offerings.

The College also hosts regional trainings and national and regional workshops and conferences during the summer. Close to 500 firefighters from across the country attend a week-long Fire Academy on campus each summer. Other recent events include the Council of Forest Technician Schools national forestry conference for community college instructors, and a national psychology workshop called “Tried and True: Investigative Psychophysiology Activities for your Introductory Psychology Course.”

External Use of College Resources

Itasca’s tutoring program in the Academic Resource Center provides academic tutoring services to several students from area middle and high schools. The Academic Resource Center also continues to provide ongoing tutorial services to our area communities in the form of the America Reads program, which assists young children (pre-kindergarten through third grade). This program hopes to influence the literacy rates of our young children by providing tutors and mentors in the academic settings of libraries, preschools and elementary schools.
The Testing Center has for many years provided test proctoring for GED, ACT, and other testing needs for the community. In 2007-08 it also began offering ETS Para-Pro testing for students and community members interested in paraprofessional positions in the area school districts. Usage for 2007-08:

- 42 students are registered in our center as external studies students, who need proctoring services.
- 87 people have passed their GED exam.
- 86 Praxis Series Exams have been proctored at ICC with over 76 individuals taking their Pre-Professional Skills Test.
- 448 individuals have completed their ACT tests at ICC, compared to 330 in 2004.
- 19 individuals have completed the Praxis Para-Pro Exam.

Physical, Cultural, Educational, and Social Resources

The College fosters intellectual culture in the community with speakers and events that are free and open to the public.

Educational Events

In the 1980s and 1990s, the College offered annual “symposia” on critical issues ranging from diversity to psychoactive drugs. National experts came to campus to address these issues, and all events were open to the public. In 2006, Itasca restarted this tradition with an Ethics Conference featuring local, state, and several national speakers, as well as a range of student panels and poster presentations. According to the Provost, this event attracted more community members than any other event in his 30 years on this campus. Students picked up the torch and organized Civil Liberties Conferences in 2007 and 2008. In addition, Native American Indian Heritage Month and Global Education Week events are held annually.

The ICC Foundation hosts the Dialogue North series, which addresses business and economic topics. The College also hosts candidate debates and forums both for local candidates and statewide Senate candidates. Faculty, administration, and student organizations arrange other speaking events. Recent topics include the Iraq War, the former Soviet state of Georgia, the impact of climate change on the boreal forest, mental illness, alcohol, domestic violence, and Socrates. Student groups also host film events that are open to the public. One example in the last year was the presentation of For the Bible Tells Me So, a documentary film about how people of faith handle having a gay child. This showing was a joint effort by the ICC’s Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), Itasca Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Alliance (GLBTA), the Human Rights Commission of Grand Rapids, and OutFront Minnesota.
Art and Cultural Events and Resources

Itasca has historically and artistically significant visual art and sculpture collections, most by Minnesota artists, including a collection of Works Progress Administration (WPA) oil paintings housed in the Library and the Administration Conference Room, three outdoor sculptures by noted Japanese-American sculptor Kinji Akagawa, and works by such nationally known artists as Gendron Jensen (a native of Grand Rapids), Eugene Larkin, Cheng-Khee-Chee, and Katherine Nash. Several works reflecting the College’s Northwoods identity were commissioned in 1990 in conjunction with building projects. These include a ceramic wall sculpture, “Forest III,” by Mark Marino, which spans a wall in Backes Student Center; a free-standing sculpture by Wayne E. Potratz, “In Honor of Turtle Island,” which draws upon Native American creation myths; and Marce Wood’s “Itasca,” a mural representing the mix of cultures and natural habitats of the Grand Rapids area. In 1986 Art instructor Tyne Mike published a booklet about the collection at that time; this work is available in the Resource Room. Brass plates provide information about other pieces.

In addition to these treasures, display cases feature a timber wolf, great blue heron, and a bobcat in Natural Resources; exquisite Anishinaabe beadwork, oil prints, and replica Blackduck pottery in American Indian Studies; and an entomology collection in Biology. The Rolling Plains Art Museum, a traveling museum of American Indian art, came to the College in 2005. The College partners with the Itasca County Historical Society to feature items in its collection on campus. The College also supports the arts in Grand Rapids as a Reif Center Artist Series sponsor.

Each year the College publishes Spring Thaw, an arts and literary publication. A student editorial board selects pieces and produces the publication. A public reading is held annually and selections have been featured on the literary program RealGoodWords, produced by KAXE, a local public radio station.

Music performances in Fall 2008 have included a four-hand piano duo from Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and a musical play called Stage Left, put on by actors and singers from Riverland Community College (in Austin, Minnesota) and ICC. The latter event was sponsored by GSA and Itasca GLBTA. Both events were free and open to the public.

O-Gitch-I-Dah, the American Indian student organization, organizes a powwow each spring, drawing hundreds of area residents, K-12 students, and tribal members. In 2008, over 700 people attended the powwow. Activities planned by O-Gitch-I-Dah for Native American Indian Heritage Month in November include performances of Native American music and dance and workshops on Native American art.
Athletics

All athletic events are open to the public for a nominal fee. The College has football, volleyball, men’s and women’s basketball, wrestling, softball, and baseball programs, and hosts about 40 home events each academic year.

Linking the College and Students with the Community

As discussed in component 5a, administration, faculty, and staff are involved in service to the community through volunteering their time and expertise to schools, churches, and community organizations. Collaborations emerge out of this service. For example, the involvement of faculty on the Grand Rapids Area Library Program Committee has led to sharing expenses for speakers to address audiences in both venues, such as a mountain climber discussing his experience climbing Mount Everest, an expert on human population growth, and the keynote speaker of the Ethics Conference.

The employees of the College also give back to the community through raising money for events such as the Cancer Auction, Relay for Life, and United Way Combined Charities Campaign. This same generosity and community spirit provided financial support with a community walk/run and other fundraising events for a faculty member who lost his young son.

Faculty provide services to the community in their areas of expertise as well. For example, an English faculty member taught a workshop on *The Maltese Falcon* in support of the Big Read at the Grand Rapids Area Library. A Natural Resources faculty member, the Director of Information Technology Services, and a Mass Communications faculty member all do regular programs on KAXE radio. Natural Resources faculty also provide consultation on “Firewise” planning, planting for wildlife, and trees for the community.

Faculty counselors have provided leadership and training to regional college crisis teams in northern Minnesota. In addition, they have created and organized a regional “flight team” concept, which draws upon the strengths of faculty counselors across our District to provide mutual aid and support on campuses when unforeseen tragedies arise. They provide grief counseling in area schools when needed as well.

Student organizations are active on campus and in the community and foster engagement and awareness of local and global issues. Christian group Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU) (formerly Panorama) has held 30-hour famines to raise awareness of hunger issues, helped Student Support Services stock a campus food shelf, serves free meals on Friday nights, and has taken a groups of students to help rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Gay Straight Alliance participated in the “Night Outside” to draw attention to homelessness in our region. Circle K sponsors an annual blood drive. These examples are representative of the active involvement of students on campus and in the community. Student groups also collaborate with community groups to plan events. For example, Circle K works with the Key Club at the high school, Gay Straight Alliance collaborates
with Itasca GLBTA, and O-Gitch-I-Dah assists Native American Language and Culture Quiz Bowl organizers.

Such an ethic of service is fostered by all academic programs on campus. Student internships, practica, clinicals, and cooperative education not only give students firsthand experience in their chosen fields, but they also often help cash-strapped agencies fulfill their missions. In the course of completing their practica, Applied Psychology students, for example, have conducted various projects (e.g. development of resource lists and data banks, development and implementation of outcomes assessment measures) that have had a meaningful impact on the agencies and have helped addressed shortage of staff for necessary tasks. Recent Geographic Information Systems (GIS) internships at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Resource Assessment Office involve detailed map analysis for delineation of wetlands and other sensitive ecosystems. Three Engineering students this year are involved in an internship project that could have a major impact on medical care. They are working with the University of Minnesota-Duluth (UMD) Medical School, UMD Engineering, and Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital to develop a stethoscope that provides visual images of sound waves—an improvement that could increase the detection of heart irregularities at a much lower cost than echocardiograms.

A major service project involves a partnership among Iowa State University, the University of Missouri, UMD Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI), Itasca County, and ICC to assess the water quality in our county, which is home to 1,000 of the state’s 10,000 lakes. The project, funded by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency through the Itasca Water Legacy Partnership, involves sampling and assessing water quality on 147 lakes across the county. Eight Natural Resources students spent the summer of 2008 collecting water samples. Most of those were sent to NRRI for testing, but a grant from Itasca County is helping ICC create a laboratory and training facility that will allow for analysis on campus by next summer. The College intends to start a Water Quality Technician program to train students for careers in this field.

Itasca has a strong commitment to community and campus involvement and global and civic engagement. As discussed in component 4c, several academic programs require or strongly encourage service learning projects, ranging from cutting wood for an anti-poverty program (Engineering) and making lap blankets for nursing home residents (Nursing) to an educational project landscaping with native plants (Environmental Science and Natural Resources) and the Applied Psychology program’s community collaborations and research projects. The American Indian Studies program fosters leadership on campus and outreach to the Native communities through offering Ojibwe language instruction in area high schools and student-organized annual powwows, speakers, and other events. Classes such as Social Problems require service-learning projects that teach students about local hunger and poverty issues through volunteering at the Community Café (which offers free meals twice weekly), Food Bank, or GRACE House (a homeless shelter).

Many classes and programs require community-based research projects. In the 2007 CCSSE, ICC ranked above the cohort mean (1.47 v. 1.29) in response to a prompt stating

“Those are the guys who are really doing the work. The design of the stethoscope device was done by the ICC students.”
–Ron Ulseth, Engineering Instructor
that the student had participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course. The Applied Psychology program activities provide an example of community partnerships that benefit community organizations while providing unique educational opportunities for students. In the past six years, students have conducted major community-based research projects in collaboration with Itasca County Mental Health Advisory Board, Advocates for Family Peace, Second Harvest Food Bank, and Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault. For example, the students studying community attitudes toward mental illness created and implemented a pre-/post-test survey instrument to assess the effectiveness of activities aimed at increasing awareness and reducing the stigma of mental illness. Applied Psychology students have continued their efforts to impact attitudes toward mental illness by hosting speakers on campus. Other examples include GIS students mapping recreational opportunities and proposals for a community-wide health and fitness collaboration called GetFit Itasca. Also, Business students have developed surveys and marketing plans for the Itasca County Fairgrounds, the Viking Grill and Eatery on campus, and other organizations.

**Marketing and Public Relations**

ICC’s marketing plan emphasizes outreach to our primary constituents: graduates of area high schools, the business community, and adults seeking to upgrade skills or change careers. Produced by the Enrollment Services Office in consultation with the Marketing Committee, the plan is part of the College effort to foster college attainment for area residents. To attract applicants and ensure that they get needed information, the Enrollment Services Office produces brochures about academic programs, postcard mailings, advertising, and a Student-of-the-Week television ad campaign on WDIO TV channels 10 and 13. Each semester, the College’s schedule is inserted into the Grand Rapids Herald-Review, a local newspaper with a circulation of 8,500. We also place classified ads for the Alliss grant, through which nontraditional students may take a college class for free.

The College communicates with the public through the Herald-Review. Once a month, ICC has a page in the paper highlighting news at the College, including a calendar of upcoming events, articles about College programs or other news, and the feature “Alumni Profile.” The Director of Public Information also sends out press releases about speaking events and other news, and the newspaper runs its own stories on the College.

ICC representatives visit at least 100 high schools per year to talk with prospective students and encourage them to visit campus. We also sponsor three open-campus events each year. These are days set aside for prospective students to tour campus, visit our housing, and meet with instructors or counselors.
Outreach to Constituents

In Strategic Goal 3, Itasca pledges to “reach out to people from diverse backgrounds and provide them with learning opportunities and services that respect and draw upon the strengths of their cultural backgrounds and empower them to achieve their educational goals.” The College commits significant resources to attract, recruit, and support students in the service area, especially those who might not otherwise consider a college education. Outreach efforts include working with students in middle school and high school through the federally funded TRiO programs Talent Search and Upward Bound and collaborations through the Applied Learning Institute with regional high schools to enroll high school students in career programs. As discussed, summer programs include Engineering Camps, Upward Bound, and, for younger children, College for Kids.

Talent Search and Upward Bound

Itasca has fostered success of disadvantaged students from the region’s high schools, many of whom are Native American, through the federal TRiO program Upward Bound since 1991. In 2007 the College received a grant to expand its educational outreach and support for disadvantaged youth in our region through another TRiO program, Talent Search. Both programs identify and assist individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds with the potential to succeed in higher education. Upward Bound serves high school students; students can participate in Talent Search from grade 6 through graduation. Talent Search also reaches out to adults through offering services to students up to age 27 re-entering high school and college and to veterans of any age.

Upward Bound has partnerships with nine regional school districts, Talent Search with twelve. Students in Upward Bound and Talent Search are advised to enroll in the post-secondary institution of their choice. All go on to higher education, and about 50% choose Itasca.

Services include:

- Study skills information
- Interest assessment
- Career exploration
- College information
- College visits
- Assistance in applying to colleges
- Financial aid and scholarship information
- College exam preparation
- Cultural events

In addition to the study skills, college preparation, and career exploration services available in both programs, students in Upward Bound take part in leadership-building programs.
and, as noted, have the opportunity to live and take classes on the Itasca campus in special summer residential sessions.

**Academic Resource Center**

This year was the last year of a three-year Blandin Foundation grant with area school districts to provide Virtual Itasca Area Academy of Learning (VITAL) online learning. Part of this grant supported Accuplacer testing at area high schools: Greenway, Grand Rapids, Hill City, Remer, Floodwood, Northhome, Deer River, and Nashwauk-Keewatin. Accuplacer is the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system-endorsed assessment tool for incoming college students. The partnership allowed all juniors to assess their Elementary Algebra skills and obtain immediate feedback regarding their readiness for college. A special focus was placed on encouraging these students to continue their math sequence through their senior year in high school.

**Career Fair**

Career Day, held in early March for the last eight years, brings around 700 high school juniors from 11 area high schools to campus. The day starts with a 45-minute presentation on motivation and goal setting by a professional speaker. That is followed by 18 career information sessions. The students register in advance to attend the two sessions that interest them the most. The day also includes a fair in the gym, during which students get a half hour to visit with area businesses and college representatives about career choices, and a free pizza lunch. The Career Fair has been a tremendous opportunity for the College to connect with area high school counselors and encourage area students, including prospective ICC students, to begin thinking seriously about college.

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

One of the faculty counselors received an ICC Foundation minigrant to provide outreach by doing career exploration with area tenth graders.

**Financial Aid Outreach**

ICC strives to maintain affordability for students through financial aid and strong support from the ICC Foundation, which has the largest endowment in the District, a long history of supporting students, and a strong asset base. A total of $6.7 million in financial aid was awarded in 2007-08 to 1,037 students. A full 96% of students who completed a Free
Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and enrolled at ICC received some type of financial aid. In addition, ICC awards a higher percentage of gift aid than other Minnesota schools, according to a Minnesota Office of Higher Education study for FY 2005.

The Blandin Foundation provides annual funding for six different financial aid programs. There was $348,000 available to award during the 2008-09 school year. For academic year 2007-08, the ICC Foundation funded 137 scholarships to 122 students, totaling over $109,000. Individual scholarship awards range from $100 to $3,000. The ICC Foundation has over 50 endowed scholarships.

As discussed, the College seeks to reach out to nontraditional students. Adults may find themselves more likely to consider a college education with rising unemployment and economic downturns. The Alliss grant is an opportunity grant designed to help Minnesota residents who do not hold a baccalaureate or higher degree and have been out of school for at least seven years. The grant is not based on family income and is available to all new Minnesota community college students who meet the above qualifications. The grant provides payment of tuition for one course (up to five semester credits) and also covers the cost of required textbooks for that course. To qualify, the course selected must be either a transferable course that would be accepted as a part of an AA, AS, or AAS degree program or a preliminary or a developmental-level course if it is required for the student to start a degree program. Since 2002-03, ICC has waived tuition for a total of 130 credits through the Alliss grant. About 7 to10 awards have been given each semester since the grant started.

According to a new report from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), “High Expectations, High Support,” cited in the November 21, 2008, Chronicle of Higher Education, unfamiliarity with financial aid and the complexity of the FAFSA forms are a barrier to students accessing a college education (Eric Hoover, “Community-College Students Need Better Financial Advising, Survey Finds,” p.A19). Nearly half (45%) of CCSSE respondents this year cited lack of finances as a reason they would likely withdraw from classes or leave college—and these are the students who initially chose to go. The article recommended a number of ways to make financial aid more accessible to students—outreach and education to parents and students before they apply to college and sitting down with students at a computer to fill out the FAFSA when they apply for admission. Itasca has long been doing both.

ICC’s Financial Aid staff visit eight to nine area high schools between January and March each year to give students information about applying for financial aid. There are computers in the Financial Aid Office so that students who visit the campus may begin the FAFSA process immediately with the assistance of Financial Aid staff.

Just as important as accessing financial aid is understanding the responsibilities involved in accepting it. Students who choose to attend Itasca receive a financial aid award letter that directs them to a website link with information about the obligations and consequences of accepting financial aid. The financial aid consequences of not attending class, not withdrawing properly, or not maintaining satisfactory academic progress are addressed
orally in registration sessions and open campus days. Each year, an orientation day speaker
discusses debt and budgeting with new students, and the College has also offered
workshops on the topics. Financial Aid staff plan to incorporate a budget worksheet with
the award letter next year for students to use to figure out their “bottom line.”

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Office of Multicultural Affairs conducted focus groups of Native American students about barriers to
accessing higher education. They found that one of the biggest barriers was, as noted above, completing
the FAFSA. Because of the distrust of the federal government, especially around issues of privacy and
finances, Native American students often do not receive assistance or needed documentation from their
parents to complete the FAFSA. The Office of Multicultural Affairs sought a grant to help provide educa-
tion about the FAFSA at Native American Language and Culture Quiz Bowls. A Blandin Foundation grant
will fund the production and distribution of an informational video, in which Native American students
explain what the FAFSA is, why it’s important, what documents are needed, and how to complete the
form. The Quiz Bowl will provide opportunities to view the video, which will also be distributed to school
guidance counselors to help dispel concerns and increase awareness of the FAFSA.

Outreach to Native American Community and Students of Color

ICC has responded to educational needs of the American Indian community by initiating
a three-tiered approach:

- Guarantee American Indian Studies and Native language learning
opportunities are provided on campus by creating an endowed chair in
American Indian Studies.
- Preserve Native language by facilitating statewide high school and collegiate
Native American Language and Culture Quiz Bowl Competitions.
- Facilitate seamless transfer agreements to four-year institutions so that students
interested in continuing American Indian and Native language studies may do
so.

To attract and serve American Indian students and to expose the campus community to
the culture and history of northern Minnesota’s largest minority population, the College
inaugurated an American Indian Studies program in 2002. Students may choose from
a two-year course of study or a one-year certificate. ICC has articulation agreements in
American Indian Studies with the University of Minnesota-Duluth and the College of St.
Scholastica.

An endowment for a permanent faculty chair of American Indian Studies has given the
program stability, and successful Grotto grant funding has allowed the program to expand
and provide leadership in Minnesota indigenous language revitalization. Participation in
the Ojibwe language courses has increased from 6 to over 40 participants since 2000. A record five enrolled tribal members graduated in spring 2008, four of whom received an AA degree with an American Indian Studies emphasis. ICC successfully obtained a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant in partnership with White Earth Tribal College, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum to develop a digital archive of Native American artifacts for teaching and learning purposes. Further grants are under development.

Another example of outreach to Native American prospective students is in the Natural Resources program. When the Forest Service partnered with ICC in 2001 to initiate the Wildland Firefighting program, one of the main goals was to recruit for diversity. One of the instructor’s responsibilities was to get more women and minorities into the agency, and in 2003, he received a $10,000 grant in partnership with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe to help accomplish this task. The program continues to recruit Leech Lake Band members through the Enbridge scholarship.

As discussed earlier in this report, ICC’s Engineering program has been awarded a $2 million grant from the Blandin Foundation to increase diversity among the student body and diversity awareness. The grant, Perspectives in Engineering, will provide 10 full-ride scholarships to African American students and other students of color beginning Fall 2009.

Criterion Five: Core Component 5c

Itasca Community College demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

That Itasca Community College places a high value on responsibility and responsiveness to constituents is evidenced by its vision, values statement on responsiveness, and Strategic Goal for community partnerships. The College has a responsibility to the community to meet educational and training needs. To students, Itasca has an ethical obligation to provide a quality education that will prepare them for career or transfer and to ensure that transfer policies are clear, fair, and offer a largely seamless pathway to higher education.

Access and Opportunity

As an open-door institution, Itasca provides access to a college education for all students who have the ability to benefit, including high school students who meet eligibility requirements for the post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) program, and most adults
who have earned a high school diploma or GED. Admission to programs that have an enrollment cap is on a first-come, first-served basis. If a program—such as Nursing—is full, students are wait-listed and often are able to enroll.

The movement to provide distance-learning options to improve access to college has made it much easier for region-bound students to complete educational programs at community colleges and four-year degree programs. ICC has made a commitment to provide specific high-need programs with alternative-delivery systems. For example, ICC’s Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program is offered online with clinical experiences on ground in a weekend format. In addition, these students are provided the opportunity to continue their education through partnerships with Itasca Nurse Education Consortium (INEC) schools, such as Hibbing Community College. They can access interactive television classes and local clinical experiences to complete their RN degrees through this bridge program.

In addition to online and interactive television offerings, Itasca has special arrangements for students to complete onsite four-year degrees through the Arrowhead University Consortium (AUC), which brings four-year completion programs to northeast Minnesota. Some of those delivered at ICC include the BA in Business Management (the 2+2 program) with the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota; BS in Education with Bemidji State University (the Distributed Learning in Teacher Education, or DLiTE, program, offered online with local teaching experiences); and a four-year completion in Applied Psychology. AUC partners include Bemidji State University, the College of St. Scholastica, and the University of Minnesota-Duluth. More partners are added on an as-needed basis. In terms of other distance options, Itasca also has articulation agreements with Franklin University, an online institution that offers four-year and graduate-level studies in areas such as business, accounting, and health management. Still, placebound individuals have limited options for pursuing a four-year degree, with the closest four-year colleges at about an 80-mile distance from ICC.

Itasca’s “Degree in Three” commitment pledges online and evening course offerings sufficient to allow students working full time during the day to complete an Associate’s degree in three years. Each year the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and the counseling and advising staff reviews summer offerings to determine high-need courses. The College takes into account other opportunities at sister colleges within the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) to determine what will be the most efficient and cost-effective routes to serve student needs. Looking to the future, the chief academic officers within NHED are planning to collaborate in developing summer offerings for summer session 2009.

The College offers early- and late-start classes, truncated classes, and block classes to help meet student scheduling needs and increase success. The Dean of Academic and Student Affairs plans schedules in concert with counselors to ensure that students can access the classes they need. One particularly successful course scheduling experiment offers a developmental English and college-level composition block-class sequence in
spring semester to give students testing developmental a second chance to complete their freshman composition requirement by the end of their first year of enrollment.

The Dean of Academic and Student Affairs consults with the counselors while planning the schedule to make sure that critical classes for degree completion and transfer agreements are offered. Although some classes must be offered regardless of enrollment, budgetary constraints force a conservative approach to class availability, and classes with low enrollment are cancelled to help reduce costs. Such cuts limit student choices in meeting general education requirements and, at times, may delay graduation. The Foundations of Excellence process recommended schedule planning on an annual rather than semester basis to help counselors and students plan classes. This annual schedule will be implemented in fiscal year 2010.

Higher Education Access and Pathways

Itasca is involved in a number of partnerships with regional high schools and northern Minnesota institutions of higher education to increase students’ access to higher education. These collaborations capitalize on the strengths of each of the partner institutions and improve their capacities to offer classes and programs students need. Examples of collaborative efforts include:

- Shared instruction among low enrollment classes within the District
- Itasca Chemistry classes offered via interactive television to Rainy River Community College and Hibbing Community College students
- Natural Resources/Law Enforcement diploma completion through Hibbing Community College
- Bachelor’s degree completion in Education with Bemidji State University through the DLITE Program
- Bachelor’s degree in Business Management completion with the College of St. Scholastica
- Bachelor’s degree in Psychology completion with Bemidji State University
- Applied Learning Institute programs in Engineering (Project Lead the Way), healthcare, and other fields in collaboration with regional school districts and NHED colleges

Online Courses

The College has entered into online education cautiously due to national and state statistics showing decreased student success in online classes in comparison with on-ground classes. However, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system has established a goal of offering 25% of its courses online by 2015. To provide course options for placebound and working students, the College online goals have been to offer an online track under the Practical Nursing program and to offer selected Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) courses online.
The Foundations of Excellence Philosophy and Transitions Dimension Committees both recommended that the College expand online offerings for placebound students and encourage more faculty members to develop online classes.

The College also helps to meet the educational needs of placebound students through interactive television offerings. Students may use the College’s interactive television facilities to take courses offered in this format by other institutions.

**Applied Learning Institute**

The **Applied Learning Institute** (ALI) grew out of the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative as a means to provide educational pathways for high school students in the region and to provide a trained and skilled workforce for projected areas of economic growth in northeastern Minnesota. Formed in 2006, ALI programs have been developed in the fields of advanced automotive, business entrepreneurship, construction trades, healthcare, industrial technology, natural resources, and pre-engineering. ICC’s ALI programs include Project Lead the Way (Engineering), healthcare, natural resources, and technology.

ALI is a partnership connecting 16 northeastern Minnesota school districts, the colleges of NHED, **Iron Range Resources** (IRR), Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), and **Minnesota Center for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence** (MNCEME). ALI is funded through a Minnesota legislative appropriation to NHED, funds from Iron Range Resources, and membership dues from partner institutions.

**Post-Secondary Enrollment Option**

Regional high school students have taken advantage of the **PSEO program**, which allows eligible high school juniors and seniors to take college classes, earning credits that count toward both high school and college graduation. Eligibility for PSEO is based on class rank and GPA. Annually, the College has served between 70 and 100 PSEO students. The number spiked in FY 2006 and FY 2007 due to students and parents taking advantage of these credits as the price of higher education increased. However, the number of PSEO students has returned to 95 students in FY 2008 and 68 students in the past year as area K-12 schools have entered into arrangements with other higher education institutions for concurrent enrollment programs, such as College in the Schools (University of Minnesota-Duluth). While Itasca participated in two pilot concurrent enrollment classes and offers some college credit through ALI programming, the College opted not to offer concurrent enrollment classes at the high schools due to concerns about academic integrity and the blurring of the distinction between high school and college.
Ease of Transfer

As discussed elsewhere in this report, the MnTC facilitates transfer to all Minnesota public four-year institutions as it is accepted by all for fulfillment of general education requirements. To improve the transfer process for specific programs and majors, we currently have 45 transfer program guidesheets for BA, BS, and BFA programs at public and private schools in Minnesota and bordering states. These two-year curriculum guides represent AA and AS degree transfer “tracks” to these public and private colleges and universities rather than signed articulation agreements. These transfer guidesheets are updated by a faculty counselor every two years in tandem with the catalog revision.

Itasca is proud to formally partner with public and private colleges and universities across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and North Dakota in articulated transfer agreements. The result of our collaborative partnerships with university departmental faculty, ICC faculty, and admissions offices, these agreements provide seamless transfer into numerous Bachelor’s degree programs. Itasca has 14 signed agreements with the University of Minnesota - Duluth, 10 with the College of St. Scholastica, 7 with Bemidji State University, 4 with University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 4 with the University of North Dakota, and numerous other agreements with colleges such as University of Minnesota-Crookston, St. Cloud State University, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Michigan Technological University, and North Dakota State University.

Many of these institutions visit ICC to meet with students. In addition, Student Support Services (SSS), Talent Search, and programs like Engineering and Class Act take their students on college visit trips.

Our students utilize online sources to gather information they need for career exploration and smooth transfer. The Minnesota Internet System for Education and Employment Knowledge (ISEEK) allows students to explore career options and plan their education. For transfer information, the MnTransfer.org site, recently overhauled, is an excellent resource. USelect, a link on MnTransfer.org, allows students to check course equivalencies at all two- and four-year Minnesota State College and Universities system institutions. Students also increasingly access online their Degree Audit Review System (DARS) reports, which track completion of program requirements, to make sure that they are completing the appropriate coursework for graduation. In addition, the new RightNow program provides a link on the website to Frequently Asked Questions about transfer and other concerns and a place to ask questions not on the list. Questions posted through RightNow are immediately emailed to the appropriate person on campus for a response.

As discussed in component 4c, Itasca students continue their education at high rates. Since 1999, 57% of Itasca graduates have continued their education, and a 10-year high of 71% of 2007 graduates are continuing their education.
Education/Training Meeting Community Needs

Itasca is an important part of the social and economic life of the region. Customized Training (CT) is specifically charged with providing flexible, targeted training that business clients and their employees need. All program planning and evaluation is performed through the lens of community needs. According to the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), job growth in our region is primarily in the healthcare, engineering, and natural resources areas. In addition, workforce education needs have been identified regionally in energy, pulp and paper technology, and childcare due to changing demographics and expected retirements. The College has worked with area industries to improve and create programs to meet these needs. New programs have included the Pulp and Paper Technology diploma, AAS, and AS programs, and the Child Development certificate and Early Childhood Education AS programs. Engineering options have been expanded to include industrial technology pathways. In addition, the College has created nursing tracks to facilitate enrollment and transfer timelines that work better for students, including Fast-Track Nursing, online Practical Nursing options, and agreements with Hibbing Community College to streamline an RN degree.

The College has also worked with newly laid-off, unemployed, and underemployed individuals. For example, when UPM Blandin Paper Company, Grand Rapids’ largest employer, laid off over a third of its workforce (300 employees), the College stepped in immediately to work with company officials and employee leaders to examine education and retraining needs; about 75 of the laid-off employees enrolled at Itasca. On a smaller scale, when the Ainsworth oriented strand board plant shut down, the College provided computer training to workers through CT.

Fast-Track Nursing Program

To help laid-off workers from UPM Blandin Paper Company get a new start in a short timeframe, a new, temporary fast-track program was initiated to enroll students in the Practical Nursing program midsemester in the spring and start their first-semester classes during the summer session. These 15 students were ready then to begin the second semester of nursing classes on time and graduate with diplomas at the completion of spring semester. The timeframe for graduating with a diploma in Practical Nursing for this fast-track group was shortened from 16 months to 10 months.

Pulp and Paper Technology Program

The College has responded to the need of UPM Blandin Paper Company to have a workforce better trained in paper science by creating the Pulp and Paper Technology program. This program is coordinated by CT staff and taught by adjunct faculty. UPM Blandin Paper Company and other area companies support these educational tracks to fill future retirements with qualified workers. Itasca is also partnering with the University of Minnesota and the National Center of Excellence for Pulp and Paper Technology and

"Thank you for the encouragement you have given me over the semester and the confidence you have instilled in my abilities as a college student. I am confident that my new career direction will suit me well, and I never thought I would learn to like computers!"

--Testimonial from a laid-off Blandin employee
Training, which is located at Alabama Southern Community College. ICC is the Midwest node of pulp and paper technology training in the United States.

The Pulp and Paper Technology program is tailored to the educational goals of the student. The Pulp and Paper diploma is designed for current and new workers at paper companies. This option works to increase skills and knowledge so that companies can become more competitive in the global market and is not designed for transfer to a four-year college or university. The Pulp and Paper Technology AAS degree involves more advanced math and science classes as well as more emphasis on communication skills. The degree is designed to meet the need for a more qualified and adequately trained paper company technician. Finally, the Pulp and Paper Technology AS degree is for students interested in earning a four-year degree in Pulp and Paper Science. Students take classes in Chemistry, Physics, and advanced math in addition to classes needed to complete the MnTC. Students transfer to the University of Minnesota to complete their Bachelor’s degree. Started with grant funding, the need for the Pulp and Paper Technology program was so strong that it is already self-sustaining.

Early Childhood Education Program and Child Development Certificate

According to a report by the Blandin Foundation, Itasca County does not have enough quality childcare for working parents. In response, ICC developed the Early Childhood Education program, which prepares students for transfer to Bemidji State University to earn a four-year Early Childhood Education degree, and the Child Development certificate, a vocational certificate that prepares students for employment as a daycare provider with infants, toddlers, preschoolers, K-grade 3 children in Head Start programs, childcare centers, family childcare homes, and extended day programs in the school.

Training Diverse Teachers

The Deer River High School principal approached Dean of Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Barbara McDonald with a concern. Deer River has a student population that is 20% Native American but lacks Native American teachers. In order to attract more Native American students to teaching and to smooth their progress toward a teaching degree, ICC entered into an articulation agreement with St. Scholastica to educate teachers certified in Native American language and culture.

Future Connections

Through a program called Future Connections, a CT representative teaches a two-week, 40-hour work readiness class in job skills to Workforce Center clients with the goal of giving them the skills to attain immediate employment or possibly to develop a longer-term educational goal for future employment. Future Connections is a partnership between Itasca County Health and Human Services (ICHHS) and ICC CT. The program, which teaches resume writing, networking, interviewing, the job searching process, and goal
setting, is held about every six weeks and has been ongoing for several years. Students are referred through the Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training and Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA). To encourage longer-range planning as well, one of the ICC counselors generally comes as a guest speaker to talk to Future Connections students about careers and the education the College can offer.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The College is working with other NHED institutions to provide the education needed to meet the industrial technology needs of the Iron Range in the future through a Power Generation program that is under development and possible future programs to train alternative energy technicians.

The College and CT are working with ICHHS, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, AEOA, and others on a program called Grand Works. The first Grand Works project was piloted last year. Now in its planning phase for 2009, Grand Works will be an annual program serving 7 to 10 individuals currently on state financial assistance with the goal of becoming “workforce ready” and landing a paying job. Many of the participants have experienced some form of setback, such as physical or mental conditions, drugs or alcohol, criminal backgrounds, domestic issues, or financial problems. In the program, participants receive life coaching and prepare for and take the National Workforce Readiness Credential. CT also assigns them a mentor who is a Chamber member to get them involved in the community. Participants attend Chamber events and network with potential employers. Last year’s cohort group gained confidence, and a large percentage went on to find full-time work.

The College is also developing a program called the Landing Strip, which is designed to facilitate the enrollment of unemployed and underemployed nontraditional-age residents at ICC to give them additional skills and credentials. Referred through KOOTASCA Community Action, prospective students in the Landing Strip program will receive services and a packaged schedule of courses (math, Introduction to Computers, and one other area) designed to improve the experience and success of nontraditional students at Itasca. To identify what difficulties nontraditional students face when applying at ICC, the coordinating group sent a “mystery shopper” to ICC to apply for admission. What they learned was that nontraditional students may not know what questions to ask and thus may not get the information they need when applying for college and financial aid. As a result of that insight, students enrolled in Landing Strip will receive one-on-one help completing Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms, a common stumbling block for students nationwide.

“I like the fact that I ended up with a resume. But more than that, I am impressed with how this class motivated me to expand my outlook in life in general. I gained insight to first get the job and then get over the roadblocks.”

--Future Connections student
Criterion Five: Core Component 5d

Internal and external constituencies value the services Itasca Community College provides.

Although college-community relationships are longtime and wide-ranging commitments, “community” is a fluid concept, and thus documenting how the community values college services is challenging in any quantifiable way. To evaluate how the community values Itasca’s services, we examine the contributions of our alumni, the use of facilities, attendance at events, enrollment in Continuing Education and demand for Customized Training, a Community Survey, letters from representatives of the public, and testimonials from staff and faculty.

ICC Alumni

While engaging alumni and friends of Itasca at annual mini-reunion events in Minnesota, Florida, Arizona, and California, ICC development staff members hear many affirmations about Itasca. “If not for Itasca . . .” or “Itasca was the start of my wonderful life” are consistent themes of appreciation from alumni, parents of former and current students, and community members. The ICC Foundation, in partnership with the ICC Alumni Association, is recognized nationally and through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system as a leader in alumni giving rates and alumni programming for two-year colleges. On the 2007 Voluntary Support of Education (VSE) Survey, of the 155 public community colleges responding across the country, Itasca ranked number 6 using the criterion of highest endowment per student ($2,805). Alumni giving participation rates at two-year colleges nationally are 1.1%. Itasca maintains a 2.8 to 3.1% rate, nearly three times the national average. In addition, alumni strongly support Itasca’s endowment fund. Of the over 50 endowed scholarship funds managed by the ICC Foundation, 18 were established by Itasca alumni and their families.

Facilities Use

Our community values the College facilities. Forty-two different businesses or community organizations have reserved space at Itasca in the past year. (See Community Use of Facilities in the Resource Room for a complete listing.) Depending on the space and the use, facilities at the College may be used at no cost or low cost by community groups and businesses. Organizations such as the Northeastern District Dental Society host workshops at the College. Youth competitions including Math Masters, Business Professionals of America, Academic Triathlon, and Native American Language and Culture Quiz Bowls hold their events annually on campus. The National Forensic League Speech Tournament, with 1,000 participants, fills the buildings every Spring Break. Expositions are held on campus as well, including the Women’s Expo and the Loon Country Quilters quilt show. Organizations collaborating with campus groups use the facilities at no cost. For example, the area Human Rights Conference was held in cooperation with the student-driven Civil
Liberties Conference in Spring 2008. Last spring and again this year, the GetFit Itasca initiative, a collaboration which includes Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital, the YMCA, K-12 educators, and others, will hold their event celebrating healthy living at ICC. Randomly selected respondents to a 2001 Community Survey (the last time such a survey was completed) agreed that “ICC facilities are used regularly by the community it serves” (3.25 on a 4-point scale, in which 4 was the highest level of agreement).

### Attendance at College Events

The external and internal constituents demonstrate that they value the College through their attendance at College-sponsored events. Throughout the year, the College hosts speakers, conferences, training sessions, community classes, celebrations of achievement, and other activities that attract our constituents. Examples include:

- ICC’s Ethics Conference attracted over 700 participants to the campus.
- The annual Dean’s Dinner includes over 300 participants. Students who make the Dean’s List, their parents, grandparents, children, and significant others come together to celebrate their academic accomplishments. Many faculty and staff volunteer their time at this event.
- ICC’s annual graduation ceremony fills the gym.
- Throughout the year, the College hosts speaking events that are free and open to the public. Attendance varies from a few dozen to 280 (the Davies Theater capacity).

### Enrollment in Continuing Education

The College serves several thousand people each year through the Center for Continued Learning, which provides Community Education, Customized Training opportunities, and the special programs College for Kids, SeniorNet, and Motorcycle Safety. Of these offerings, the two-week College for Kids program stands out because it has long brought hundreds of children to the College annually. The program had a steady enrollment 250 in its early years, peaking in 1992 at about 700; it now draws about 550 per year. In a 2001 Community Survey, randomly selected respondents agreed with the statements “ICC offers excellent continuing education opportunities” (3.14 on a 4-point scale) and “ICC offers excellent specialized training for businesses” (3.10).

### Community Surveys, Testimonials, and Letters

The College has not conducted a formal and statistically valid community survey since 2001. At that time, an impressive 90% of the randomly selected survey respondents had been to the College (2001 Community Survey). The 169 respondents rated statements
about the College on a 4-point scale. The statements yielding the highest level of agreement were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC is an important part of the Itasca County community.</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC adds substantial value to the community.</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC is crucial to the future of the community it serves.</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many respondents to the 2001 Community Survey had attended ICC classes (almost 70%) or events (almost 80%), and over 73% were aware of programs and services available at the College. Over 80% of the respondents stated that ICC had been responsive to their needs in the past.

Although the College has not repeated that survey, we have solicited input in the host of ways described in component 5a and have tremendous anecdotal evidence of community support and of the value the community places on the College.

In preparation for this self-study, the Provost asked 11 community leaders to reflect on the value of the College to the community. These leaders represent organizations or businesses that have collaborated with the College, used College facilities, taken advantage of Customized Training opportunities, or rely on the College to provide a trained workforce. In short, these leaders testified to the varied ways Itasca serves the community. All of their responses are in the Resource Room. Excerpts from their letters are printed here:

“For the past two years, the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission has worked with Itasca Community College Student Government and the administration of the college to sponsor a Civil Liberties Conference on the college campus in Grand Rapids. . . . The college is seen as a neutral site where the expression of ideas—those we like and those we sometimes don't like so much—can be discussed in a safe and comfortable atmosphere. I personally would not want to live in a community where a college such as Itasca is not an important part of our discussion of all ideas.”
–Barb Sanderson, Chair, Human Rights Commission

“I am writing to you on behalf of the Northeastern District Dental Society to express our gratitude to you and your organization for the excellent service you have provided for our members these past years. . . . We have consistently received very positive feedback from our speakers and our members regarding the courtesy and helpfulness of your team at ICC.”
–Mike Hagley, DDS, Second Vice President/Program Chair, Northeastern District Dental Society

“Itasca Community College is a critical asset for the Grand Rapids area community . . . . The College has become an essential player in developing the workforce for our region.
In addition to my role in guiding the human resources systems here at Grand Rapids State Bank, I am the chair of the Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority and in January will take a seat on the Grand Rapids City Council. I know firsthand how critical it is to have ready resources to provide the education and training for workers and businesses and other organizations in our community. At this moment, 15% of all bank employees are enrolled in accredited courses, management development programs, or participating in personalized tutoring or coaching provided by Itasca Community College. . . . We provide many other industry-specific training for all employees, but without ICC we would have no obvious source for the other types of training and development we need on an ongoing basis.”

--Edward M. Zabinski, Senior Vice President, Grand Rapids State Bank

“ICC and MDI have collaborated to serve the community in many . . . ways. . . . ICC leadership and faculty are an integral part of the Itasca Area community. . . . Clearly our community is a significantly better place to live and work because of ICC.”

--Peter McDermott, President and CEO of Minnesota Diversified Industries (MDI)

“ICC is a catalyst for sustaining high-quality opportunities for the northeastern Minnesota region by responding specifically to the needs of business and the community and providing key educational opportunities, job training, and business support. . . . In order to keep creating new products that global customers want, Blandin must develop highly skilled and innovative workers. Recognizing this concern, Itasca Community College partnered with the University of Minnesota to create and expand a Pulp and Paper educational initiative to assist Blandin and other paper mills in creating technologically advanced ‘operators of the future.’”

--Bob Buescher, Senior Human Resources Specialist, UPM Blandin Paper Mill

“Grand Itasca has enjoyed a very positive relationship with Itasca in the LPN training program. . . . In addition to the nursing training program, Itasca’s customized training program has been instrumental in Grand Itasca’s efforts to institute Lean Health in our organization. . . . [T]hey have been excellent partners and have been open to working with us so the training meets our specific needs.”

--Matthew A. Richie, Vice President, Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital

“IAASA [Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault] relies greatly on strengthening connections with community leaders, like ICC, in order to fulfill our mission. . . . IAASA and ICC developed this proactive and innovative collaborative effort to provide information/awareness and supportive services to students on campus who are impacted by the issue of sexual violence. Without the assistance of ICC’s administration, staff, faculty, and students, this program—Support Within Reach—would not be successful.”

--Amanda K. Ysen, Executive Director, Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault

“AFFP [Advocates for Family Peace] . . . has a history of hiring students who have received a two-year degree in human services. The students that we have hired have been well prepared for their work with us. ICC is a strong asset to our community.”

--Melissa Scaia, Executive Director, Advocates for Family Peace
“Itasca Community College provides an excellent post-secondary experience for the Northland Community Schools students who chose the post-secondary [enrollment] option permitted by the state of Minnesota. Itasca Community College is also a partner of the Northland Community Schools in the collaborative efforts conducted by the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative. Northland Community Schools has found the programs and staff at Itasca Community College to be excellent.”

--Michael J. Doro, Superintendent, Northland Community Schools

We quote a last letter in its entirety:

“The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce and Itasca Community College are Intentional Strategic Partners in Education, Workforce Development, Economic Development and Community Development and have been so for many years.

“It would be difficult for me to list all of the numerous projects, boards, initiatives, meetings and influence that we have participated in together over the years. Suffice it to say that ICC is an integral part of our community in all respects.

“An example that I would like to share with you just took place on Monday of this past week at a Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce Luncheon where Dr. Michael Johnson, Provost of ICC, was our guest presenter. Dr. Johnson asked a very simple question of our audience of diverse business owners, non-profits and community leaders. That question was on the order of, ‘Would those of you who have had interaction with ICC, such as taking classes, serving together on boards, engaging in projects, supporting economic and social development, etc., please raise your hand?’ Every person in the room raised their hand in response.

“I can’t think of a better example that would show without a shadow of doubt the important role that Itasca Community College plays in our community. Every person in that room had been affected by their relationship with ICC in a positive manner and I believe that if you asked that same question of a group of citizens on the street, you would get a similar response.

“Itasca Community College is simply a great community partner.”

--Bud Stone, President, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce

The ICC Community

One of the best indicators of how constituents value Itasca Community College is the tremendous numbers who have followed their parents, spouses, siblings, and children to the College. Multiple generations within some families have attended Itasca. A solicitation of stories from faculty and staff about coming back to Itasca and encouraging relatives to attend Itasca yielded almost 50 responses.

A few examples illustrate the commitment that staff and faculty feel toward the College:

- A Nursing faculty member, Suzanne Aldrich, reports that her mother taught at ICC for 30 years and her father was in charge of the ICC maintenance
department for many years. Suzanne and both of her sisters completed the LPN program at ICC, and her son graduated from ICC’s Wildland Firefighting program.

- Most of Engineering instructor Ron Ulseth’s family tree attended Itasca: his grandmother (and all her brothers), father, mother (and all her brothers), wife, and three children; he did as well.
- A staff member of Upward Bound graduated from ICC in 1985. Her husband graduated in 1977, her brother in 1971, her father in 1942, and two of her aunts in the late 1930s. Her sister-in-laws both attended ICC for two years, and now her nephew is in the ICC Engineering program.
- Another Engineering faculty member named 16 relatives who were graduates.
- For most of the past 10 years, all of the coaches have been alumni of Itasca.
- Two of the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs’ college-age children have attended Itasca; so have the wife, one of the daughters, two nephews, and a sister of the Provost.

In place of a formal summary of Criterion 5, we feel the following story encapsulates the College’s engagement with and service to the community in the past, present, and into the future. Thus, we let this narrative close the main body of our self-study.

Pat Fideldy, a retired elementary school teacher who has returned to teach in the Class Act program, shared this story in response to the solicitation of “family stories” about Itasca. It exemplifies the connection we at the College feel with our students, each other, and the community:

“In 1970 I had been out of high school for eight years and was married with two little kids when my husband and I decided that I needed to continue my education. After taking the ACT test, I registered at Itasca State Junior College (ISJC) for the fall quarter. Realizing how much I loved going to school, it was a short step to deciding to be an educator. I finished at ISJC with honors, gave the student commencement speech, and started commuting every day to Bemidji State University. I began teaching at the elementary school level after graduating summa cum laude from Bemidji. After 32 years of teaching, I have come full circle and am now teaching at ICC. If this college would not have been available to me, I seriously doubt that I could have continued my education. Driving daily 75 miles to Bemidji for two years was difficult; doing so for four years would have been impossible. I am proud to say that we are still serving the nontraditional student with the same care and compassion that I received so long ago. Now my son is currently taking Pulp and Paper Technology classes at ICC, and my granddaughter completed her Nursing Assistant certificate program here and plans to continue in the Practical Nursing program in the near future. (My 13-year-old granddaughter also plans to come here for Class Act, but that may not be real reliable information!)”
Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

As called for by our mission, Itasca Community College identifies constituencies and serves them in ways we both value.

Summary of Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- There is high level of faculty and staff volunteerism and active engagement on campus and within the community.
- Itasca has strong partnerships with business, industry, and nonprofit agencies in our service area.
- The College has excellent working relationships with regional school districts through the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative and the Applied Learning Institute.
- The College provides ongoing educational and training opportunities to its constituents through Community Education programs and Customized Training.
- The College has a strong history of outreach to the community through events such as Career Day, Financial Aid school visits and parent meetings, the annual powwow, and Civil Liberties Conferences.
- College reaches out to serve first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students through its TRiO programs: Student Support Services, Upward Bound, and Talent Search.
- Itasca’s Testing Center provides an important community resource for test-taking and test-proctoring.
- The College enjoys strong support from the ICC Foundation Board, General Advisory Committee, and program advisory committees.
- Faculty value community service and engage students in service-learning projects.
- There is high year-round usage of ICC facilities by external constituents.
- Alumni and retirees demonstrate their high regard for the College through their ongoing involvement with the College and strong financial support.

Challenges

- Itasca needs a more formal process for evaluating the College’s engagement in the community and the community’s engagement with the College.
- Increasing workloads make it more difficult to find time for community outreach.
- The College lacks a systematic method for collecting and analyzing community needs and perceptions.
- The community’s high demand for usage of College space and food services puts a strain on the facilities.
Federal Compliance

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

Itasca’s credit hours are based on the Carnegie Classification, with one credit equaling 15 to 16 contact hours. Most classes are three credit hours, or 45 contact hours. Labs have twice the amount of contact per credit hour. Itasca follows a semester calendar, with two academic terms scheduled between late August and late May. There is also a three-week condensed summer term from the end of May through the first of June and a five-week term running from June to July. The College offers a variety of scheduling options for students, including regularly scheduled full-semester courses, eight-week block classes, early- and late-start classes, hybrid courses (partially offered online), weekend experiences, and online classes. Equivalent seat times to the full-semester schedule are maintained for all alternatively scheduled classes. Experiential classes, such as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Experience class, include estimated experiential equivalencies to seat time. Instructors and the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs work together to ensure compliance in terms of seat time.

Itasca’s credit requirements for certificate, diploma, and degree programs are aligned with national standards. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system strives for consistency in credit hours for courses, using the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) and Degree Audit Review System (DARS) to standardize equivalent courses and requirements. Recent Minnesota legislation has directed all two-year degree programs to be reduced to 60 credits (and all four-year degree programs to be reduced to 120 credits). This legislation will impact all system institutions. All of Itasca’s two-year programs, which have required 64 credits, will go through a review process to reduce the credit requirements. The Associate in Arts program will be reviewed in Spring 2009 to conform to the new requirement. Some Associate in Applied Science programs may undergo a process to seek a waiver of the requirement.

Tuition is charged by credit hour. The tuition rate is recommended by the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) and approved by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees and is subject to change each academic year. Under the Minnesota-Wisconsin/Minnesota-North Dakota/Minnesota-South Dakota Public Higher Education Reciprocity Agreements, students from Wisconsin, North Dakota, or South Dakota may attend Itasca Community College at a reciprocity tuition rate. The appropriate
higher education council in each state establishes rates annually, and ICC is notified accordingly.

Itasca Community College’s annual full-time (30 credits) tuition and fees for 2008-09 ($4,489) is slightly below the average for the state’s two-year public colleges ($4,565) and about the same as the average for NHED institutions ($4,496).

Differential tuition rates for online courses were approved by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Office of the Chancellor. The rates applied at ICC (an additional $25 per credit) were determined by the NHED chief finance officers. These rates apply to all courses delivered fully online (with no more than three meetings face to face) to offset additional technology support. The additional charges are posted on the ICC website and in the semester schedule.

Information related to the tuition and fees can be found in the ICC Catalog and the website as well as Minnesota State Colleges and Universities’ “Go Places” system-wide catalog.

**Organizational Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act (Title IV)**

Itasca Community College complies with all requirements of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act (Title IV). We will provide copies of all documents relevant to Title IV compliance to the Higher Learning Commission’s site review team. Title IV documents (Educause Center for Applied Research documentation, Program Participation Agreements, Financial Institution Shared Assessments Program documentation, audit documentation, etc.) are stored in a locked file cabinet in the Financial Aid Director’s office. Most are also available online from the secured US Department of Education website.

The College is authorized to participate in the following federal financial aid programs:

- Pell grant
- Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
- Perkins loan
- Work-study
- Federal Academic Competitiveness Grant
- Stafford loans (subsidized and unsubsidized)
- Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) loan
Table 32. Federal Loan Default Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stafford Loan</th>
<th>Perkins Loan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY06</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY05</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>FY04</td>
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<td>FY01</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY00</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All students who qualify for loans receive information in their award notification booklet and on the Financial Aid web pages about their responsibility to attend and pass classes and make satisfactory academic progress or be forced to repay loans early and risk losing eligibility. In addition, loan recipients must complete online loan counseling prior to receiving loans. The required counseling ensures that students understand the legal ramifications of accepting the loan. Itasca requires the loan counseling annually, above and beyond the legal requirement of counseling prior to the first time receiving a loan.

The College has also taken steps to prevent abuse of federal financial aid. Beginning Fall 2008, financial aid disbursement was delayed until the eleventh business day after classes started. Faculty report non-attendance of students electronically by the tenth day, and students who have not attended class are blocked from collecting their awards. In addition to this procedure, which prevents disbursement of aid, students who have never attended class receive an FN (F non-attendance) to signal that they have no right to the financial aid.

Financial Aid Audit Findings

Financial aid practices are audited by the legislature and the federal government. Prior to the new Financial Aid Director’s start date, ICC (as well as other Minnesota State Colleges and Universities institutions) was found during an internal system audit to not be reporting changes to National Student Loan Database System (NSLDS) records every 30 days as required. A simple change was made to our reporting timeframe on the NSLDS website. The College is now in compliance with this requirement.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system conducted an internal audit for ICC’s federal financial aid compliance in mid-November. Results had not been reported as of this writing but will be available from the Financial Aid Director. System audits occur
annually, state audits every two to three years, and federal audits (Program Reviews) once every 10 years or so.

Campus Crime

Table 33. Campus Crime Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reports*</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate Crimes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Murder</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Forcible Rape</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicle Theft</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcible Sex Offenses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Forcible Rape</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Forcible Sodomy</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Sexual Assault w/ object</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Forcible Fondling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-forcible Sex Offenses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Incest</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Statutory Rape</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arrests</td>
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<td>Liquor Law Violations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug Violations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons Violations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reports of alleged criminal activity do not necessarily constitute an arrest or conviction.*
Right to Know

In compliance with federal law, ICC provides graduation and transfer rates to all current and prospective students. Admission and Records staff went through mandatory training in the “Right to Know” law. The College provides this information to students on the website under Quick Facts and in the ICC Facts booklet. Graduation and transfer rates are also reported in the annual Student Profile, and copies of the information are sent to students if requested.

Onsite Office of Civil Rights Compliance Review

Itasca receives federal funding, which requires a higher standard of oversight for organizational compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In April 2004, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system internal auditors conducted a site visit to monitor compliance. As a result of this site visit, the College completed a Voluntary Compliance Plan. The Director of Disability Services tracked audit findings and progress in resolving them. As of March 1, 2007, the College was in full compliance with all requirements of the Office of Civil Rights. The Director of Disability Services has all documents related to the audit and compliance plan in electronic format on her computer.

The College submits information annually on equity in athletics for compliance with Title IX. This information is collected from all coeducational institutions of higher education that participate in Title IV (student federal aid programs) and have intercollegiate athletics. Data is then migrated to the Office of Postsecondary Education’s public website so that it is accessible to the public.

Federal Compliance Visits to Off-Campus Locations

Itasca Community College has no off-campus locations as defined by the Higher Learning Commission.

Advertising and Recruitment Materials

Itasca refers to accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools in the ICC Catalog and on the ICC website. In the process of completing this self-study, ICC has become aware of the need to add the URL and a local phone number of the Higher Learning Commission in the catalog. The required information is included on the College’s website.
Professional Accreditation

ICC is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools:

Higher Learning Commission
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, IL  60602-2504
Phone: (312) 263-0456
www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org

ICC’s Practical Nursing program is accredited by the Minnesota Board of Nursing:

Minnesota Board of Nursing
2829 University Avenue, SE Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN  55414
Phone: (612) 617-2270
www.state.mn.us/portal/mn/isp/home.do?agency=NursingBoard

ICC’s Natural Resources program is recognized by the Society of American Foresters:

Society of American Foresters
5400 Grosvenor Lane
Bethesda, MD  20814-2198
Phone: (866) 897-8720 / (301) 897-8720
www.safnet.org

Third-Party Comment Process

Through paid advertisements, Itasca Community College solicited public comments for the comprehensive reaccreditation evaluation process and informed the community at large that a team of Higher Learning Commission consultant evaluators will conduct a comprehensive evaluation visit at Itasca Community College April 27-29, 2009. An ad was placed in the Grand Rapids Herald Review, which has a circulation of 8,500, on a page dedicated to Itasca Community College; in the Manney’s Shopper, which is distributed to over 18,000 residents in the Grand Rapids regional area and another 35,000 throughout the rest of Aitkin, Cass, Itasca, Koochiching, and St. Louis Counties; and on ICC’s website, campus bulletin boards, and in the College newsletter. Examples of the ads are in the Resource Room.
Requirements of Institutions Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation

Itasca Community College does not hold dual accreditation.

Organizational Records of Student Complaints

ICC’s administrators have an open-door policy for students. They take complaints seriously and address them individually. The College follows the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system Policy 3.8 for student complaints and grievances. Most complaints are informal and not submitted in writing. A student with a complaint may go to any one of the administrators. In general, complaints related to academic/student issues come to the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, while finance or facilities issues are directed to the Director of Finance and Facilities. In the case of an informal complaint, the administrator meets with the individual and takes notes. Generally, the concern is resolved at that time with no formal complaint. Formal written complaints submitted to administration follow a process outlined in the Affirmative Action plan. If the complaint involves an allegation of sexual, racial, cultural, or religious harassment or discrimination, the Regional Diversity Director/Investigator for the Northeast Minnesota Community and Technical Colleges will be called on to perform an investigation, with the Provost as the final decision maker. Otherwise, the investigation is conducted internally by the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, with the Provost as the final decision maker. Records of complaints and their resolution are kept in the administrative secretary’s office.
Summary Reflections and Request for Continued Accreditation

Itasca’s reaccreditation journey allowed for the College community to further reflect on our vision, mission, values, and foundational processes. The Foundations of Excellence self-study provided a unique opportunity to assess and revalidate our mission to first-year students, and to affirm our commitment to being a learning community college. Examining our college against the Higher Learning Commission PEAQ criteria confirmed our strengths and areas of challenge as it provided the opportunity to thoughtfully prepare for the future with an enhanced sense of purpose and focus.

The College believes this self-study report accurately demonstrates that Itasca has met the HLC’s criteria and offers these reflections in light of the four HLC cross-cutting themes.

Future-oriented

The College’s Strategic Plan drives every aspect of Itasca’s operation, with a focus on teaching and learning as foundational to our mission to provide academic and career-related education. We believe this makes the College “the best place to start” for our learners, as our tagline claims. Itasca’s strong history and commitment to the region it serves is demonstrated in its collaborative partnerships, proactive outreach, and responsiveness to the community in times of change. The College is proud of its engaged faculty and staff, the support we provide to all of our learners, and our service to the community.

Learner-focused

Our students are at the center of all we do. The College prides itself on innovative teaching in a learner-centered environment where all students feel empowered to meet or exceed their expectations. A growing assessment program supports ongoing teaching and learning improvement; a wide range of student services supports all learners with the tools they need to be successful. We reach out to serve first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students and provide them with services that respect and draw upon the strengths of their cultural backgrounds. Our faculty and staff embrace lifelong...
learning supported by the College’s professional development opportunities and personal enrichment options.

**Connected**

At the heart of our work are the relationships we build with students, faculty, staff, and the community. This is the basis of our vision—to be the resource that enables our constituents to realize their full potential. The College’s teaching and learning spaces afford the opportunity for faculty and students to build learning communities. Student life is active, with many clubs promoting options for student engagement, wellness activities, and leadership development. Externally, the College extends learning into the community through internships, practica, service learning, community service, and research activities. Likewise, faculty and staff are actively involved in the community and model connections through volunteering their time and talents. Area businesses, industry, and nonprofit agencies look to the College to meet their needs. Many of these collaborative efforts are visible on campus—Support Within Reach, Infinity, College for Kids, SeniorNet, Applied Learning Institute, the Student Veterans’ Assistance Center, Adult Basic Education, and the Grand Rapids Area Learning Center. These connections between the College and these wide-ranging constituents demonstrate the College’s commitment and engagement with those it serves.

**Distinctive**

Itasca is distinctive in many ways, shaped by its commitment to learning communities and our connectedness within the community and region we serve. The College’s Engineering program is nationally recognized as a success model in student learning and retention. This program exemplifies Itasca’s broad success with student retention and persistence. Using results from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and graduation rates, *Washington Monthly* magazine rated Itasca the thirteenth best community college in the nation and first in Minnesota. Our commitment to our entering students is pledged to them and the public in our First-Year Student Philosophy statement. Our efforts to promote critical thinking and civic and global engagement afford many unique opportunities to our students, including study-abroad experiences, involvement in national and local research projects, and innovative learning experiences, such as small-scale chemistry, medical research projects, internships, cooperative education options, and many others. Our summer enrichment programs, such as the Engineering summer camps, College for Kids, Upward Bound, and the Health Occupations Today camps, offer opportunities to a wide range of students who otherwise might have no access to these experiences.
Request for Reaccreditation

Itasca Community College, through an intensive and engaged process of self examination, has produced a report of findings that demonstrates that the College fulfills the Higher Learning Commission’s criteria for reaccreditation. The processes we conducted for the Foundations of Excellence self-study and the Higher Learning Commission self-study have confirmed that the College’s vision, mission, and Strategic Plan drive the academic and institutional planning processes, and that the College has prepared for its future. The College acts with integrity and good stewardship to uphold its mission and serve the common good of its constituents. We are committed to high quality innovative teaching and learning, providing a sense of place in a learner-centered environment, and empowering our diverse learners to reach their full potential. Itasca Community College respectfully requests continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, a Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, for a period of 10 years.
Acronyms

2+2 ........ A four-year Business Management degree program through the
College of St. Scholastica and Itasca Community College
AA .......... Associate in Arts
AAS .......... Associate in Applied Science
AASC ........ Academic Affairs and Standards Council
AAUW ....... American Association of University Women
ABE .......... Adult Basic Education
ABET ......... Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
ACC .......... Arrowhead Community Colleges
ACCR ...... Arrowhead Community College Region
ADA .......... Americans with Disabilities Act
ADD .......... Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD ....... Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AED .......... Automated External Defibrillator
AEOA ...... Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency
AFFP ...... Advocates for Family Peace
AFSCME .... American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees
AHEC ....... Area Health Education Consortium
AIDS ....... Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ALC ...... Area Learning Center
ALI ....... Applied Learning Institute
APA ....... American Psychological Association
ARC ....... Academic Resource Center
AS .......... Associate in Science
ASL ......... American Sign Language
AUC .... Arrowhead University Consortium
BA .......... Bachelor of Arts
BFA ....... Bachelor of Fine Arts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAAP</td>
<td>College Assessment of Academic Proficiency</td>
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<td>CAMP</td>
<td>Collaborative Assessment of Mathematics Project</td>
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<td>CAT</td>
<td>Classroom Assessment Technique</td>
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<td>CCSE</td>
<td>Community College Survey of Student Engagement</td>
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<td>CDA</td>
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<td>Center for Innovation</td>
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<td>CISS</td>
<td>Campbell Interest and Skill Survey</td>
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<td>Career Ladder for the Education and Advancement of Nursing</td>
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<td>COOP</td>
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<td>Campus Crusade for Christ</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFWI</td>
<td>D grade/Fail/Withdraw/Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLiTE</td>
<td>Distributed Learning in Teacher Education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNR</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EF</td>
<td>Education First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAFSA</td>
<td>Free Application for Federal Student Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERPA</td>
<td>Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FISAP</td>
<td>Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>F-non-attendance (grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSGC</td>
<td>Faculty Shared Governance Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full-Time Equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY</td>
<td>Fiscal Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYE</td>
<td>Full-Year Equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYE</td>
<td>Freshman Year Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED</td>
<td>General Educational Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTA</td>
<td>Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Alliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GPA . . . . . . Grade Point Average
GPS . . . . . . Global Positioning System
GSA . . . . . . Gay Straight Alliance
HEAPR . . . . Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement
HLC . . . . . . Higher Learning Commission
HR . . . . . . . Human Resources
HRIS . . . . . Human Resource Information System
I CAN Learn . Interactive Computer Aided Natural Learning
IAASA . . . . Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault
IASC . . . . . Itasca Area Schools Collaborative
ICC . . . . . . Itasca Community College
ICCFA . . . . Itasca Community College Faculty Association
ICHHS . . . . Itasca County Health and Human Services
IEDC . . . . . Itasca Economic Development Corporation
IEP . . . . . . Individualized Educational Program
IJC . . . . . . Itasca Junior College
INEC . . . . . Itasca Nurse Education Consortium
IPEDS . . . . Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
IRR . . . . . . Iron Range Resources
ISD . . . . . . Independent School District
ISEEK . . . . Internet System for Education and Employment Knowledge
ISJC . . . . . Itasca State Junior College
ISRS . . . . . Integrated Statewide Records System
IT . . . . . . . Information Technology
ITEX . . . . . Itasca Technology Exchange
ITS . . . . . . Information Technology Services
K-12 . . . . . Kindergarten to twelfth grade
K-14 . . . . . Kindergarten to second-year of college
LIS . . . . . . Land Information Systems
LPN . . . . . . Licensed Practical Nursing
MA . . . . . . . Master of Arts
MAP . . . . . . Master Academic Plan
MAPE . . . . Minnesota Association of Professional Employees
MBA . . . . . . Master of Business Administration
MDI . . . . . . Minnesota Diversified Industries
MF1G . . . . . Many Faces One Goal
MFP . . . . . . Master Facilities Plan
MJSP . . . . . . . Minnesota Jobs Skills Partnership
MTP . . . . . . . Master Technology Plan
MMA . . . . . . . Middle Management Association
MMI . . . . . . . Mildly Mentally Impaired
MMSC . . . . . . Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center
MNCEME . . Minnesota Center for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence
MnSCU . . . . Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
MnTC . . . . . . . Minnesota Transfer Curriculum
MPCA . . . . . . Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
MSCF . . . . . . Minnesota State College Faculty
NBPTS . . . . . National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
NCA . . . . . . North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
NCAA . . . . . National Collegiate Athletic Association
NCLEX . . . . . National Council Licensure Examination
NEAT . . . . . Northeast Alliance for Telecommunications
NEH . . . . . . National Endowment for the Humanities
NESU . . . . Northeast Service Unit
NHED . . . . . Northeast Higher Education District
NRRI . . . . . Natural Resources Research Institute
NSD . . . . . . Not seeking degree
NSF . . . . . . . National Science Foundation
NSLDS . . . . National Student Loan Data System
NWCG . . . . . National Wildfire Coordinating Group
OIR . . . . . . Office of Institutional Research
OLA . . . . . . Office of the Legislative Auditors
OSD . . . . . . Office for Students with Disabilities
OSHA . . . . . Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PAI . . . . . Priority Action Item
PhD . . . . . . Doctor of Philosophy
PIE . . . . . . Perspectives in Engineering
PLUS . . . . . Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students
PPST . . . . . Pre-Professional Skills Test
PSEO . . . . . . Post-Secondary Enrollment Option
PTK . . . . . . . Phi Theta Kappa
R2T4 . . . . . . Return of Title IV Funds
RAI . . . . . . . Recommended Action Item
RAMS . . . . . Range Association of Municipalities and Schools
RIMS II . . . . . . Regional Input-Output Modeling System
RIP . . . . . . . Really Important People
RN . . . . . . . Registered Nurse
RRCC . . . . . Rainy River Community College
SAF . . . . . . . Society of American Foresters
SCOPE . . . . Strategic Comprehensive Program Enhancement
SENSE . . . . Survey of Entering Student Engagement
SEOG . . . . . Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant
SSS . . . . . . . Student Support Services
STEM . . . . . Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
Title IV . . . . Higher Education Reauthorization Act
UFT . . . . . . . Unlimited Full-Time
UM . . . . . . . University of Minnesota
UMD . . . . . . . University of Minnesota-Duluth
UPT . . . . . . . Unlimited Part-Time
US . . . . . . . United States
USDA . . . . . United States Department of Agriculture
USFS . . . . . United States Forest Service
VITAL . . . . . Virtual Itasca Area Academy of Learning
VSE . . . . . . . Voluntary Support of Education
WELD . . . . . Workforce Exchange for Learning and Development
WPA . . . . . . . Works Progress Administration
YLVC . . . . . Youth Leadership for Vital Communities