

Criterion Two

Preparing for the Future



Criterion Two

“Northwest College prides itself on allocating resources to expand student learning and development through the use of technology.”

Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

Criterion Two Statement: Northwest College’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Northwest College Prides Itself on

- Making significant strides in implementing plans (e.g., *Strategic Plan, Facilities Master Plan, The Assessment Plan, The Enrollment Management Plan, and The Web Management Plan*).
- The dedicated commitment of faculty and staff to planning in the face of leadership and financial challenges.
- Allocating resources to expand student learning and development through the use of technology.
- The increased use of data for planning and decision making.
- The support provided by the NWC Foundation to enhance teaching and learning.

Northwest College Challenges Itself to

- Create a more systematic method for campus-wide collection, distribution, analysis, and use of data for institutional decision-making.
- Create a more systematic process for developing, updating, and integrating plans and assessing their effectiveness.
- Continue to create a transparent budget to achieve strategic planning goals in the face of budget fluctuations.
- Continue to augment funding through private and government grants.

Northwest College: Who We Are

Prior to 2007, the College worked under a facilities master plan created in 2001 but not consistently implemented. At one point, it was “mothballed,” a decision that had significant consequences. Eventually, however, both because of necessity and legislative mandate, the College revived the existing plan and turned its attention to facilities planning in a new way.

In 2007, a series of workshops were facilitated by the consulting firm GouldEvans as part of creating a new facilities master plan. These workshops took place over

a five-month period and involved a broad range of participants from the College and surrounding community. Issues, priorities, and goals were established through a variety of interviews and interactive techniques. Surveys were distributed to faculty, staff, administrators, and students to gather opinions, concerns, and ideas on specific topics; focus group meetings were held; and the NWC Foundation and Alumni Directors met with GouldEvans to provide additional input. The exercises allowed participants to share information, discuss differences, and come to a general consensus on the direction of the *Facilities Master Plan*.

Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs, remembers, “This master planning process was characterized by multiple group meetings and repeated opportunities for input. We were fortunate to have consultants who were willing to slow down the process to make room for multiple perspectives to be heard and more trust to be built. The consultants structured a process for college constituents, from students to the board, to reach more consensus on priorities and to develop a plan that could serve the College over a period of years and circumstances. The discussions were as important as the plan itself.”

The original completion target date for the *Facilities Master Plan* was June 2007; however, to ensure participation and a transparent process, the decision was made to conclude the effort during the Fall 2007 semester. Ultimately, four alternative master plan options were prepared and presented. These plans were reviewed by the Foundation, alumni, faculty, staff, administration, and students. A final version of the *Facilities Master Plan* was submitted after that and has provided a road map for the College to guide planning and decision making.

As Vice President for College Relations Mark Kitchen puts it, “The most recent facilities master planning process offered dramatic differences from its predecessors in that it was inclusive, broadly focused rather than predisposed by project-specific notions, and underpinned by what’s best for teaching and learning. The process resulted in prioritized projects that focus meaningfully on the future and revolve around the College’s instructional core.”

Thus far, the *Facilities Master Plan* has been a success. As President Prestwich noted in his 9 November 2009 “Presidential Update,” five projects identified in the plan are in the process of being completed: The Simpson Hall expansion and development of athletic fields; the identification of a campus “front door”; the Hinckley Library renovation; the expansion of the tack area in the Equine Center; and the addition of a sound and recording studio in the Nelson Performing Arts Center.



Criterion Two

“The Implementation and Tracking Plan, which is continually being updated, defines the strategic goals by describing how those goals are measured and identifying timeframes.”

Planning at Northwest College: An Overview

Northwest’s strategic planning process is outlined in a document submitted to North Central: *Progress Report: Northwest College Strategic Plan, 2001–2006*.¹ This was one of two follow-up reports requested as part of North Central’s 2001 decision to grant Northwest the maximum 10-year reaccreditation. Turnover in senior leadership and a failure to implement an ongoing planning process were flagged as concerns, so the goal of the adopted strategic planning process was to implement a model that would provide institutional stability and continuity while being flexible enough to adapt to change. Throughout all of this, the mission has continued to serve as the College’s guiding document. Currently, the process is undergoing review by President Prestwich.

The Strategic Plan

After several months of development and review by the numerous campus groups, in June 2008, the Northwest College’s Board of Trustees approved what was then a two-year plan, *The Strategic Plan, Academic Years 2008–2010*, which consists of the following:

- Vision statement;
- Mission statement;
- Enduring Values of the institution, along with a brief description of each; and
- Strategic Goals categorized by priorities:
 - Access
 - Support
 - Partnerships
 - Institutional Vitality
 - Student Achievement
 - Communication and Image

The strategic goals, which include both quantitative and qualitative goals, provide a guide for institutional decision-making and resource allocation. (See Appendix 1.1.) Prior to this plan, priorities had focused on each of the four areas of the College (College Relations, Student Services, Academic Affairs, and Administrative Affairs); with *The Strategic Plan, Academic Years 2008–2010*, the emphasis moved to priorities more clearly focused on student success and the College’s mission.

The Implementation and Tracking Plan

Although the previous strategic plans were well designed, there were often weaknesses in their implementation:

1 See *Progress Report: Northwest College Strategic Plan, 2001–2006*, in the Resource Room.

- The plans lacked an evaluation system to measure success.
- The plans lacked a description of assigned responsibility for the implementation and accomplishment of strategic goals.
- As activities were developed to address various targets and priorities, integration among administrative units was not consistent.

To address those deficiencies as the plan has been implemented, the college president, vice presidents, and other individuals with assigned responsibilities have created *The Implementation and Tracking Plan* (see Appendix 2.1). For each strategic goal of the Strategic Plan, *The Implementation and Tracking Plan* describes the following:

- Timeframe
- Baseline data, which is a quantitative measure for numerical goals and a more descriptive measure for qualitative goals
- Targets for each year of the plan
- Data for each completed year
- Key responsibility



The Implementation and Tracking Plan, which is continually being updated, defines the strategic goals by describing how those goals are measured and identifying timeframes. As progress is made through the Strategic Plan, the College will assess whether strategic goals are met. For example, one straightforward quantitative goal is Strategic Goal 4.1, which is to “increase FTE enrollment by 2% per year.” For that goal, Fall 2008 FTE data (1,759 FTE) was used as the baseline data. (Most, but not all, of the baseline data is from Fall 2008.) Once FTE was calculated for Fall 2009, the College found that it had met the first-year strategic goal of 1,794 FTE (a 2% increase).²

The College completed a major assessment of the Strategic Plan’s first-year results in November 2009, which was shared with the college community and Board of Trustees. *The Strategic Plan 2008–2010: First Year Progress Report*—along with its companion report, *Strategic Plan: Implementation and Tracking Plan (with First-Year Data)*—showed that the College was highly successful at meeting or surpassing the majority of the first-year targets.

At its November 2009 meeting, the Board of Trustees agreed to extend the current strategic plan to create a three-year plan, based on a request from the College President. There were several advantages to this decision:

- The 2008–2010 Strategic Plan had been successful at focusing the College’s attention on appropriate priorities and strategic goals. It made sense to provide more time for the effects of the strategic plan to be realized.

.....

² See *The Implementation and Tracking Plan* in the Resource Room.

Criterion Two

“In addition to the Strategic Plan, the President’s Advisory Council has identified several ‘major plans.’”

- The College has had the opportunity to analyze data for only one year of the plan. It will be beneficial to have two years of data prior to the creation of the next plan.
- Extending the plan until 2011 will also allow the College to have the results of the November 2010 visit by the Higher Learning Commission prior to the creation of the next plan, which will likely be a 2011–2014 plan.
- Once the Board of Trustees approved the extension of the strategic plan by one year, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee was charged with three tasks:
 - *Recommend to the Board of Trustees new strategic goals where needed.* The fact that a third year was added to the plan was a contributing factor in amending some of the goals. For example, Strategic Goal 5.3 (“Increase the first-time, full-time student fall-to-fall retention rate by 1.5% per year”) had as its first-year target an increase in the retention rate from 59.0% to 60.5%. The first-year data of 62.7% far surpassed the first-year target, so the Institutional Effectiveness Committee recommended an amended strategic goal to be a 62.0% retention rate for the second and third years of the strategic plan.
 - *Establish new second-year targets where needed.* Again, because first-year data exceeded targets—oftentimes quite significantly—for so many of the plan’s strategic goals, new second-year targets were needed in several situations.
 - *Establish third-year targets (2010–2011) for each strategic goal.*

Operational Plans

Each strategic goal in *The Strategic Plan, Academic Years 2008–2011* has an individual or individuals who have been assigned “key responsibility” for leading the College toward accomplishment of that goal. As such, the vice presidents have been given the charge to create Operational Plans (using *The Strategic Plan* and *The Implementation and Tracking Plan* as a guide) for their administrative units to meet the strategic goals for which they have key responsibility and to support the achievement of strategic goals for which they have more collaborative, but not the lead, responsibility.

Major Plans

In addition to the Strategic Plan, the President’s Advisory Council has identified several “major plans.” These plans tend to be cross-functional, have an institution-wide focus, and have major implications for successful implementation of the Strategic Plan. These plans direct resources and coordinate efforts where needed.

- *The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan*
Development Committees: Curriculum Committee, Academic Advisory Council, and Assessment Committee

Supervisory Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs

This plan addresses the way student learning outcomes are developed and assessed at the course, program, general education, and all-college levels. Northwest's faculty-led process includes several years of data collection and analysis that have resulted in the implementation of new student-support programs, the redesign of academic programs, the reassignment of faculty positions, and improved student performance, especially noteworthy at the all-college outcome level.



This plan is at the heart of the College's ability to achieve the educational outcomes stated in the mission. Through implementing this plan, the College is able to assess and enhance the extent to which it achieves its mission-driven commitment to creating an exceptional learning environment and individual student achievement. Through the general education and all-college outcomes, Northwest also supports student learning in relation to cross-cultural awareness and utilization of multiple points of view, which are important components of building support for diversity and global citizenship.³

- ***Distance Education Plan***

Responsibility: Dean of Extended Campus and Workforce

This plan begins with a guide that enumerates and describes best practices in the field of distance learning, followed by a detailed plan of how Northwest College will employ best practices to deliver a quality distance education program. The plan includes an overall structure that coincides with the strategic plan. The Distance Education Staff meet annually to determine the detailed plan for each year that will move us toward the overall goals for the five year period. The Distance Education staff writes the draft plan for approval by the Academic Advisory Committee.

- ***The Enrollment Management Plan***

Overall Responsibility: Vice President for Student Affairs

The Recruitment Plan Development Committees: Enrollment Advisory Committee, Student Affairs Leadership Team, workgroups

The Recruitment Plan Supervisory Responsibility: Vice President for Student Affairs

.....
3 See *The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan* in the Resource Room.

Criterion Two

“All the projects completed or planned have improved campus living and learning environments.”

The Retention Plan Development Committees: Academic Advisory Council, Enrollment Advisory Committee, workgroups

The Retention Plan Supervisory Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs

Enrollment management enables Northwest College to identify enrollment goals that connect with its mission, strategic plan, and resources. *The Enrollment Management Plan* is a dynamic and holistic plan consisting of two parts: *The Recruitment Plan* and *The Retention Plan*. The Enrollment Advisory Committee, which oversees plan development, implementation, and assessment, is made up of cross-functional members to assist in the integration of administrative processes, student services, curriculum, and promotion. Faculty, academic support personnel, Student Affairs staff, College Relations staff, Administrative Services staff, the Institutional Researcher, and one student are members of the committee, which meets monthly.

The plan supports the mission and individual student achievement through several retention initiatives; increases access for all students by increasing financial resources and housing availability; and supports diversity by recruiting and retaining international students and students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds.⁴

- ***Facilities Master Plan***

Development Committees: President’s Advisory Council, College Council.

Supervisory Responsibility: Vice President for Administrative Services

Historically, Northwest College has expanded without a detailed plan in place. In 2007, GouldEvans was retained to develop a facilities master plan and create a “road map” for the College—a living document to act as a framework for future planning and decision making. This effort included evaluating existing facilities and programs, creating a campus “front door,” strengthening campus identity, reconsidering overall campus organization and physical layout, creating design guidelines, and developing an implementation plan for potential projects.

In its mission statement, Northwest College states that it has an “exceptional, dynamic living and learning environment.” All the projects completed or planned have improved campus living and learning environments.⁵

4 See *The Enrollment Management Plan* in the Resource Room.

5 See *Facilities Master Plan* in the Resource Room.

- ***Priorities for Website Development Plan***

Development Committee: Web Management Committee

Supervisory Responsibility: Vice President for College Relations

This plan sets forth priorities for development of Northwest’s Website, which provides overall direction for the College’s Web presence within parameters of the site’s mission statement. Priorities on these lists represent major areas of emphasis—areas the committee believes should receive concerted effort. Plans by no means represent all work on the site that occurs in any given year.

Planning is approached by the committee in late spring and summer in a two-step process: The committee assesses progress made in reaching the previous year’s priorities, and then establishes priorities for the coming year. Drafts of the plan are reviewed by the President’s Advisory Council and College Council. Achieving these priorities enhances Northwest’s Web presence in ways that help recruit and retain students and employees, and creates a functional Web environment for the College’s various operations.

The *Website Development Plan* furthers Northwest College’s mission by identifying major projects to improve the College’s Web presence and its ability to promote student progress, stimulate efficient communication, and foster student life through encouraging lifelong learning, highlighting cultural diversity, and supporting institutional operations.⁶



- ***Big Horn Basin Market Research Plan***

Development Committee: Office of College Relations

Supervisory Responsibility: Vice President for College Relations

This plan provides a five-year road map for the College’s environmental scanning activities in its service area (Park, Big Horn and Washakie Counties). In 2005, the College Relations Office was charged with developing “home-grown” research because of a financial shortfall that prohibited using a professional market research organization. A five-year plan to survey service area residents was implemented, with annual community surveys conducted.

The plan specifies geographic areas to be targeted by community surveys each year, allowing all service area residents to be surveyed

6 See *Priorities for Website Development Plan* in the Resource Room.

Criterion Two

within the five-year period. Aggregate data collected from respondents regarding attitudes and perceptions, college selection factors, awareness of Northwest, computer use, media habits, etc., are reviewed by the Integrated Communications Committee, and executive summaries are created in the College Relations Office. Those summaries are then reviewed by the President's Advisory Council, College Council and, finally, by the Board of Trustees. Actions taken as a result of survey respondents' input and subsequent analysis have informed changes to course delivery as well as approaches to promotional efforts.

The Big Horn Basin Market Research Plan supports the Northwest College mission by helping the institution and its Board of Trustees better understand needs, attitudes, and perceptions of service area residents.⁷

Next Steps

Under the integrated planning system under which the major plans were created, two main weaknesses have been identified: Planning has not been done on a common cycle, and there are several situations where major plans do not yet have direct ties to the Strategic Plan.

Table 2.1
Development and Implementation Schedule for Major College-wide Plans

PLAN	KEY RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME FOR NEXT PLAN	SCHEDULE FOR PLAN CREATION	TARGET APPROVAL DATE
<i>Strategic</i>	President	2011–2014	Spring 2011	June 2011
<i>Student Learning Outcomes Assessment</i>	VP for Academic Affairs	2011–2014	2010–2011 Academic Year	June 2011
<i>Distance Education</i>	Dean of Extended Campus & Workforce	2012–2015	Spring & Fall 2011	January 2012
<i>Enrollment Management</i>	VP for Student Affairs	2012–2015	Spring & Fall 2011	January 2012
<i>Facilities Master</i>	VP for Administrative Services	2008 plan is in effect	Update during 2010–2011	May 2011
<i>Priorities for Website Development</i>	VP for College Relations	Annual	Spring 2011	September 2011
<i>Big Horn Basin Market Research</i>	VP for College Relations	2011–2014	Spring 2011	September 2011

⁷ See *Big Horn Basin Market Research Plan* in the Resource Room.

The College has identified strategies to deal with both weaknesses. Individuals and committees have worked to make the linkages between the college-wide strategic plan and major plans more explicit, although much of that work will occur when the College creates its next strategic plan, which will likely have a 2011–2014 timeframe. When that college-wide strategic plan is created, the focus during the development of the major plans will be on supporting the next college-wide strategic plan. Thus, the strategic plan and major plans will have more coordinated timeframes and goals.

Table 2.1 shows the timeframe for both development and implementation of the college-wide strategic plan and major plans.

The next college-wide strategic plan will be created through a collaborative process. A Strategic Plan Development Task Force—consisting of members of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee along with additional representatives—will develop the draft plan.

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee consists of the following:

- President (chair)
- Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Vice President for Student Affairs
- Institutional Researcher
- Faculty member
- Registrar
- Finance Director

Additional members of the Strategic Plan Development Task Force will likely include:

- Faculty members—a total of two Division Chairs and two other faculty members, with representatives from both transfer and career/technical areas
- Vice President for Administrative Services
- Vice President for College Relations
- Dean of Extended Campus and Workforce
- Library Director
- Student Success Programs Manager
- Residence and Campus Life Director
- Classified Staff member
- Student representative(s)

Criterion Two

“... new Major Plans will have a more specific assessment cycle, and assessments of each plan’s success will likely be provided to the College Council on a more regular basis.”

Following the development of a draft strategic plan, the plan will be reviewed by the College Council and President’s Advisory Council. Ultimately, the plan will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees.

When new major plans are created, they will also be reviewed by the College Council and President’s Advisory Council. In addition, the new Major Plans will have a more specific assessment cycle, and assessments of each plan’s success will likely be provided to the College Council on a more regular basis.

An additional challenge takes the form of tracking and publicizing results. Although Northwest College has achieved many of its planning goals, this information has not been systematically tracked until the hiring of President Prestwich. Additionally, many on campus are unaware of each year’s strategic planning accomplishments and do not perceive their input has been solicited when the College is developing the Strategic Plan. It is often difficult to foster engagement with employees not involved below the administrative, Division Chair, program director, and major committee membership levels.

Institutional Assessment Plans

Each unit at the College has also written learning outcomes assessment plans for its area. These institutional outcomes were created primarily as a result of a months-long, campus-wide effort to create learning outcomes-based initiatives in all departments and units on campus. Follow-up assessments of specified outcomes have been uneven. Now with an Institutional Effectiveness Committee and an Institutional Researcher, the College is in a position to improve the quality and consistency of these outcomes assessment activities.⁸

Standard Operating Budget

The standard operating budget is developed over several months, beginning in about December of each year. During the 2008–2009 academic year, the College President added the Action Resource Plans to the budget development process. Action Resource Plans link significant budget requests to the *The Strategic Plan, Academic Years 2008–2011*. These plans help “close the loop” by having the College’s strategic plan and major plans more explicitly drive resource allocation decisions.

Action Resource Plans describe what action/request is desired (e.g., new staff position or major piece of equipment) and the rationale for such request. Also included are a description of the linkage between the request and the College’s strategic plan, the projected outcome of the request, how success will be measured, and the projected cost and timeframe of the request.

Each major administrative unit (President’s Office, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administrative Services, and College Relations) creates an Action Resource Plan, with all requests prioritized within the administrative unit. The President’s Advisory Council then evaluates these requests and selects those to be included in a college-wide Action Resource Plan, with approved items to be

.....
⁸ See unit institutional assessment plans in the Resource Room.

incorporated into the following fiscal year’s budget.

The President’s Advisory Council has completed the Action Resource Planning process twice: once during 2008–09 to prepare for the FY10 budget, and more recently in 2009–10 to prepare for the FY11 budget. Table 2.2 provides an overview of budget items for FY11 that were approved by the most recent Action Resource Planning process.

Table 2.2
Overview of FY11 Budget Items
Approved by Action Resource Planning

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Software license increases	\$48,000
Adjunct faculty budget— <i>increase to budget if enrollment grows</i>	\$10,000
Writing Center staff— <i>increase in staffing budget</i>	\$10,000
International Academic Programs— <i>increase in support staff to support International Academic Programs as well as weekend activities for all students</i>	\$16,000
Hinckley Library— <i>extra employment hours during Summer 2010 for staff to move books and equipment during the renovation project</i>	\$6,636
Hinckley Library— <i>employment hours to staff new late-night study area</i>	\$6,169
Theatre production budget	\$5,000
Model UN project— <i>funding to support program expansion</i>	\$5,000
Campus Resource Officer position— <i>increased funding needed to make the position an NWC employee</i>	\$3,500
Assistant Wrestling Coach position— <i>increased funding for the current position due to the large number of wrestlers and the individual nature of the sport</i>	\$3,000
Athletic Training— <i>establishes a start-up budget</i>	\$8,000
Athletic Department— <i>increase for contracted services</i>	\$5,500
Disabilities Services— <i>increase in student employment hours</i>	\$4,500
Disabilities Coordinator— <i>increase contract from 10 to 11 months</i>	\$4,825
Human Resources— <i>supplemental staff costs</i>	\$15,000
Bandwidth increase	\$1,500
Administrative computing— <i>hardware</i>	\$10,000
Computing Services— <i>parts/repair</i>	\$5,000
Computing Services— <i>budget for recycling and properly disposing of outdated hardware</i>	\$4,000
WebCT / Moodle— <i>funding for the one-year overlap</i>	\$35,000
Content management system— <i>upgrade</i>	\$9,500
Web development— <i>funding for contracted services to create online forms and web apps</i>	\$20,000

Criterion Two

“Opening the Cody Center and Worland Center facilities reflect recent attempts to expand services for Northwest’s outreach communities.”

CORE COMPONENT—2A: Northwest College realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

A capacity study done in 1999–2000 has remained largely unchanged; moreover, individual groups have a strong sense of their capacities as defined by external factors (e.g., finances, the service area, state and local politics, etc.). No new classroom buildings have been built, and although renovations have adapted the use of some space, overall they have not added significant classroom capacity. Opening the Cody Center and Worland Center facilities reflect recent attempts to expand services for Northwest’s outreach communities. Northwest also developed more online degree courses and worked with area high schools to design concurrent enrollment options as strategies to facilitate growth in FTE that does not impact campus space issues.

While the Strategic Plan is the guiding planning document supported by other operational plans, Northwest has a number of planning documents that demonstrate that the College is paying attention to emerging factors such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization. Three central plans are the following:

- ***The Instructional Technology Plan*** fostered the Title III grant that guides the College in making decisions about technology allocations.⁹
- ***The Comprehensive Distance Education Plan*** was revised in 2009, is based on best practices, and was developed by the Distance Education staff in consultation with faculty, Division Chairs, and Academic Affairs administrators. This plan was reviewed by the Academic Advisory Council and, finally, approved by the President’s Advisory Council.¹⁰
- ***The International Recruiting and Program Plan*** describes activities targeted to recruit and support diverse populations from around the globe. (See Criterion Three for a discussion of global opportunities for students and Criterion Four for additional information on the general education diversity requirement.)¹¹

The College utilizes a number of environmental scanning practices.

- **Market Research**

In 1998, Interim President Mark Kitchen authorized Northwest’s first comprehensive market research. Working with the Clarus Corporation at a cost of about \$40,000, the College conducted four “scans.” The data were then analyzed by work teams. In 2005, the College planned to conduct a follow-up study; however,

9 See *The Instructional Technology Plan* in the Resource Room.

10 See *The Comprehensive Distance Education Plan* in the Resource Room.

11 See *The International Recruiting and Program Plan* in the Resource Room.

President Miles LaRowe believed that the fee was excessive and directed the Vice President for College Relations to create and administer an in-house study in an attempt to determine constituent needs and attitudes. After that, the Integrated Communications Committee, a cross-campus group, devised *The Five-year Plan: Big Horn Basin Market Research* based on geographic areas. The plan will be completed in 2010.¹²

Surveys were mailed to residents or could be completed online. In the end, the response rate was around 10%. Results of community surveys are analyzed by the Integrated Communications Committee, and executive summaries are produced and shared with the campus and Board of Trustees.¹³ In addition, College Relations Office personnel create documents called *Observations and Considerations re: Promotion* that inform the Office’s promotional plans.¹⁴



Over the years, the responses to these surveys have varied. Survey responses are not necessarily representative of the communities in that the average ages of respondents has tended to be higher than that of the average Northwest College student, and the surveys were not as comprehensive or effective as phone and in-person surveys. Recent results, including improved response rates, are encouraging; however, the College is investigating options for using a professional organization in the near future to provide a more comprehensive scan.

- **Community Meetings**

A second environmental scanning took place during the accreditation self-study process as a series of community meetings was held throughout the service area in Cody, Powell, Worland, and Meeteetse. The comments at these meetings showed the diversity of Northwest’s service area.¹⁵

The community was also invited to provide input into the creation of the *Facilities Master Plan*. In an evening meeting, community members were encouraged to voice needs and concerns.

- **“Key Leaders” Meetings**

Each month, community “Key Leaders” gather for breakfast

.....

12 See *The Five-year Plan: Big Horn Basin Research* in the Resource Room.
 13 See *Big Horn Basin Market Research Executive Summaries* in the Resource Room.
 14 See *Operations and Considerations re: Promotion* in the Resource Room.
 15 See *Community Meetings Summaries* in the Resource Room.

Criterion Two

“Wyoming citizens tend to prefer direct interaction over responding to surveys, so significant feedback comes via personal contact with the Office of Extended Campus and Workforce Training.”

meetings to discuss issues of interest or concern within the community, including state and local revenue opportunities (e.g., grant projects, campaigns for tax levies), infrastructure needs, and economic development. Attendees include the Northwest College President, the City Manager of Powell, the Superintendent of Schools, the Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, and the Powell Valley Healthcare Administrator.

- **Informal Feedback**

Wyoming citizens tend to prefer direct interaction over responding to surveys, so significant feedback comes via personal contact with the Office of Extended Campus and Workforce Training. This information is channeled to the appropriate college personnel and committees. Moreover, all trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff are community members and hear a great deal about what the College does well and what it needs to improve. While this information is anecdotal and unsystematic, it is valuable.

Northwest is supportive of innovation and change. The following list provides a few notable examples.

- **Retention Activities**

Planning was a major consideration of the 2000 accreditation visit, and retention was cited as a concern in the *Report of Findings and Recommendations* made to Northwest College by Noel Levitz (February 2000) because the College’s retention rate was below the national average for two-year public schools. The Northwest College five year retention average was 51% in 2000 and the national average for two-year public schools at that time was 52.5%.

As a result of these major influences, Northwest College developed *The Retention Plan*, which it has modified, updated, and maintained since 2002. In 2004 *The Retention Plan* was incorporated with the recruiting plan into *The Enrollment Management Plan*. Throughout the history of this planning, the process has been grounded by the following statement, which appears in some form in each of the plans: “Retention is a campus-wide concern that involves every area and process at NWC. Therefore, NWC is resolute in its focus on building a retention plan that is *participatory, sustained, systematic, and organized*—four key elements in effective retention programs according to research found in ‘Developing the Quality of Student Life and Learning Plan: A Retention Planning Resource.’”

Goals and activities developed through the plan include the areas of Academic Advising, Student Technology, First-year Experience, Financial Aid, Residential Life, Developmental Education, Career and Transfer Services, and Student Support Services. A

variety of activities have been initiated through the planning process.

During the summer of 2009, tutoring was moved from the Office of Student Services to the Office of Academic Affairs. New tutoring and developmental education work groups began in the fall of 2009. (See Criterion Four for a discussion of tutoring and retention of students placing into developmental coursework.)

The Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Student Affairs have worked with Title III to support a number of student retention activities. The College added career and transfer planning, and online student support resources for career and degree planning (See Criterion Three) in addition to providing expanded articulations and advisor training (See Criterion Five).

A major retention activity started in August 2006 with Kick-off Weekend (KOW), a four-day orientation. After three pilot years, changes were made to improve the program. Kick-off Weekend consists now of two credited classes, HMDV 1200, “Academic & Career Orientation” (1 credit) and PEAC 1014, “Wellness Orientation” (.5 credit). Learning Outcomes were created by a focus group of faculty and staff.

Throughout KOW, 32 wellness activities and 48 academic sessions are offered during the day. These activities and sessions are facilitated by College staff, faculty, and returning students. Large group activities are hosted every evening. KOW starts with a “Welcoming BBQ” for students and their families and concludes with a Faculty Open House that allows students to become more acquainted with the campus and faculty. As Table 2.3 indicates, response has been positive.



Table 2.3
Kick-off Weekend Participation

	KOW 2006	KOW 2007	KOW 2008	KOW 2009
Total who participated in at least one activity	370	254	258	351
Total who received credit	368* (na%)	121 (47.6%)	146 (56.6%)	213 (60.7%)

*During KOW 2006, students were able to receive credits for both wellness and academic programs, so “Total who received credit” reflects a duplicated student count. In subsequent years, students were only able to receive credit for either wellness or academic programs, so numbers reflected for those years are unduplicated student counts.

Criterion Two

“The institution has focused considerable energy on classroom teaching technology, electronic student-learning support, on-line course-delivery technology, and electronic information to facilitate learning and service to students.”

In the last four years, students who have received credit from Kick-off Weekend have been studied as a cohort. These students have completed more credits, have a higher overall GPA, and have a higher retention rate, which have helped increase the overall College retention rate. In 2000, Northwest College’s five-year retention rate average was 51%. By 2009, the retention rate had increased to 62.7%.

• **Investments in Technology**

The institution has focused considerable energy on classroom teaching technology, electronic student-learning support, on-line course-delivery technology, and electronic information to facilitate learning and service to students. These resources include but are not limited to the following:

- SMARTHINKING
- TutorTrac
- Revised and expanded My NWC Portal
- SmartBoards and related digital projection and recording devices in classrooms
- Vodcasting
- WEAVE Outcomes Tracking Software
- Online degree audits
- Online early alerts
- Online scholarship applications
- ePortfolio for student use
- Redesign of Northwest College website
- Purchase of a Web content management system

As the demand for technology increases, the College will need to continue to invest wisely in the key technological resources to remain competitive. (See Criterion Three for a discussion of instructional technology.)

Northwest incorporates into its planning those aspects of its history and heritage that it wishes to preserve and continue. From its earliest iteration in 2001, strategic plans have encompassed valued characteristics that are part of the fiber that weaves the College together as a community. An earlier version listed 15 enduring values to be retained and nurtured, including challenging, lively classroom instruction with high quality transfer and technical programs and learning opportunities outside the classroom; accessible and supportive faculty and staff; challenging, co-curricular activities; a highly residential campus that is friendly, safe, and student centered; attractive, well maintained facilities; a host county that is proud of the College and supports students; and a regional center

for education, culture, and sports.¹⁶ The enduring values were revisited, updated, and broadly reaffirmed in 2008, restated as values statements. To clarify these values, they were arranged under broad headings:

- High Expectations
- Purposeful Learning
- Social Responsibility
- Intellectual Curiosity
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Community Engagement and Vitality
- Celebration of Accomplishment¹⁷



In terms of formal archives, Hinckley Library houses collections of college catalogs, college and local newspapers, and college yearbooks in addition to files on many prominent people associated with the College. However, a systematic method for recording historical events and for interviewing retiring personnel needs to be created.

As a means of identifying authority for decision-making about organizational goals, the Board of Trustees operates under State of Wyoming statutes and its *Rules and Regulations*.¹⁸ The College’s “Administrative Organizational Chart” is outlined in the *Employment Handbook*. (See the Criterion One for additional discussion.)

CORE COMPONENT—2B: *Northwest College’s resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.*

Northwest has adequate financial resources and fiscal flexibility to support achievement of the educational quality it claims to provide.

Financial Resources

Revenues and Expenditures

The College has been fortunate that Wyoming’s mineral-based economy has produced increased state revenue in recent years. (See Table 2.4 and Appendix 2.3, FY 2004–2010 Revenues and Expenditures.)

.....

¹⁶ See strategic planning brochures in the Resource Room.
¹⁷ See Appendix 1.1 for the mission, vision, enduring values, priorities, and strategic goals.
¹⁸ See *Rules and Regulations Pertaining to the Governance of the Northwest College Board of Trustees* in the Resource Room.

Criterion Two

As a point of comparison, in FY 2001, the College had revenues totaling \$16,404,358; that amount had roughly doubled by FY 2009 to \$30,664,882. (See Table 2.5 and Appendix 2.3, FY 2004–2010 Revenues and Expenditures.) During this time, the College has grown its financial reserves and invested money into equipment and facilities improvements for programs. More importantly, because Northwest’s

Table 2.4
College Expenditures from FY 2004–FY 2010

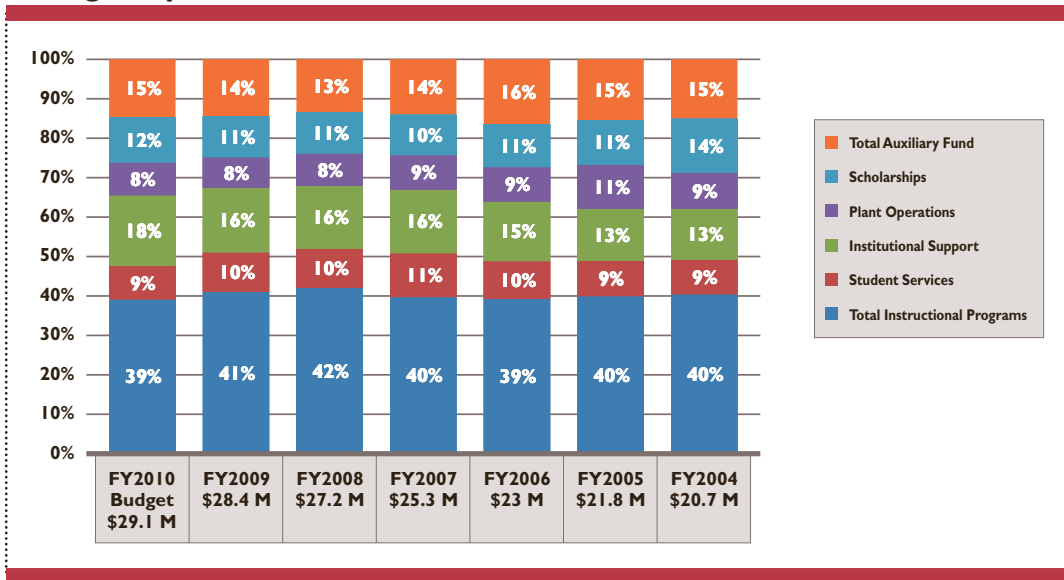
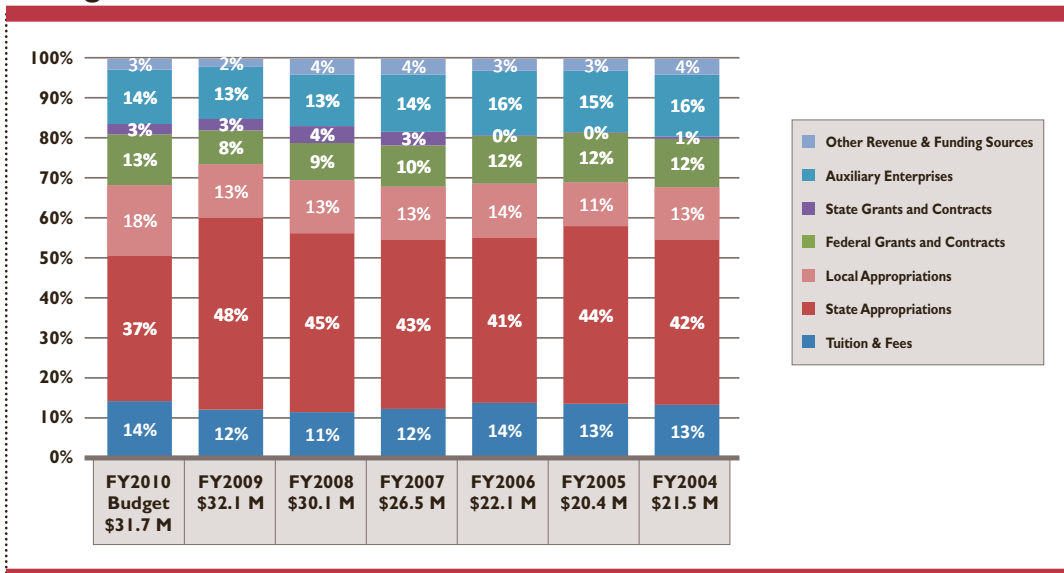


Table 2.5
College Revenues from FY 2004–FY 2010



mission focuses on “providing superior living [student services] and learning [instruction] environments,” the College has continued to allocate its budget so that expenditures demonstrate the institution’s priorities of student learning in and beyond the classroom, including through residence hall programming.

With state funding provided on a biennial basis, a significant percentage of the College’s budget is set in advance through the funding provided to state agencies by the Legislature and Governor. Since 2003, the College has built its financial reserves to the statutory limits (8%); this provides flexibility for supporting and strengthening programs and resources for better mitigating an economic downturn. During the 2009–2010 biennium, College reserves were above the statutory limits, and excess reserves were used to fund capital projects taken from the project priority list in the *Facilities Master Plan*. It should also be noted that Northwest applies for a variety of federal and state grants and programs. In 2008, the College received \$1.2 million in grant monies; in 2009, that amount was roughly \$1.1 million.¹⁹

The Governor cut statewide community college funding for the 2009–2010 budget by 10%, and then through the redistribution of community college funds, the College had an additional decrease in State revenues of 10%. Fortunately, local appropriations and an increase in tuition offset all but \$725,000 of the decrease. The College went through an open process, using the Strategic Plan as a guide to determine how best to cut the budget while minimizing the impact on student programs. The President invited constituent group representatives to a budget meeting to provide suggestions and feedback on other proposals. The College was able to reduce its budget by \$600,000 without significant cuts to programs and used reserves to cover the remaining deficit.

The tax base of the state and local governments primarily comes from extracted minerals, which have recently seen a dramatic decline in prices because of the economic downturn. At best, the College expects revenues to remain flat for the next two biennia, and there is a possibility of more decreases in appropriations. The College will continue to control costs while working to maintain services to students.

Auxiliary Enterprises

The College’s auxiliary enterprises operate with profit margins that allow for minor re-investment into future improvements. In 2008–2009, auxiliaries generated approximately \$4.2 million in



.....
19 See Schedule of Expenditure of Federal Awards in the Resource Room.

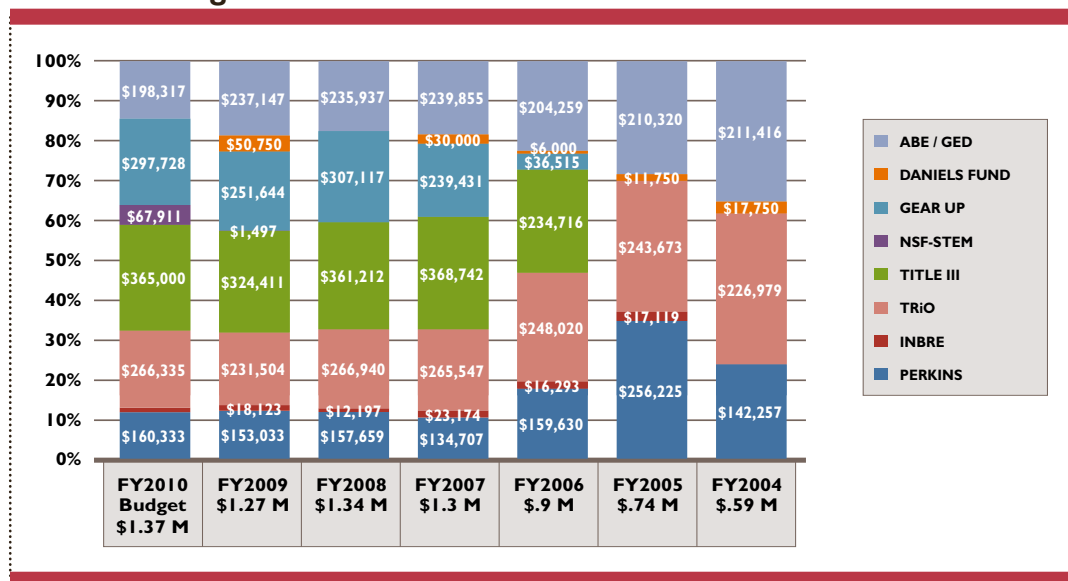
Criterion Two

sales and had a profit of almost \$100,000 after contributing \$275,000 towards the \$400,000 bond payment for the Simpson Hall addition. Auxiliary enterprises include Food Services, Residence Halls, Trapper Village Main, Trapper Village West, Bookstore, Child Care Center, Stabling, Johnson Fitness Center, Student Health, Printing Services, College Farm, Field Station Food, and Conferences/Facilities. However, while many auxiliary enterprises operate with profit margins, some operate at a loss that is covered by Northwest's optional 1 mil fund. In 2008–2009, the College contributed \$94,000 to four auxiliary enterprises, and \$60,000 went to support the Child Care Center, which serves Northwest College students and employees. The College believes that the Child Care program is essential for serving nontraditional students in addition to providing learning opportunities for Early Childhood Education students. The College is working to create a maintenance fund for auxiliaries in the event that state funding is lost.

Grant Funding

Northwest College has supplemented its state and district revenues through a number of short-term and long-term grants. The short-

Table 2.6
Grant Funding from FY 2004–FY 2010



term grants have funded primarily focused projects or activities (e.g., speakers, targeted-group retention, multicultural programming). These funds have enriched the educational and cultural experiences of students, the College, and local communities. The College has benefited from a number of longer-running grants that provide significant



funding for educational equipment, innovation, and additional support for at-risk students. A brief listing of these grants is shown in Table 2.6 with a five-year total of the grant contributions from each.

In late 2009, Northwest College hired a full-time Grant Writer. By upgrading the position, NWC was able to hire an employee with significant higher education grant-writing experience to advance its work in this important area. The position is funded as a partnership between the College and the NWC Foundation to bring about greater coordination in resource development activities for the College.

A new Grant Office Process has been developed with forms for idea submission and research as well as concept development planning to aid in fleshing out proposals. Northwest College invested in a Foundation Center subscription to provide online, searchable access to information on approximately 98,000 granting entities. Grants meetings are also being conducted with divisions and non-academic departments to identify potential needs that can be addressed in this manner. Discussions have also begun regarding developing some initiatives in areas where federal funding may be available (e.g., healthcare, alternative energy, etc.) so that Northwest is prepared to respond to requests for proposals that have short lead times.

NWC Foundation

One of Northwest's greatest assets is its relationship with the NWC Foundation. Northwest has an operating agreement with the Foundation, which operates to raise and manage private funds for the College's financial benefit. From December 2003 to February 2004, Leigh and Associates performed a study to assess the feasibility of a NWC Foundation initiative to undertake a \$10 million campaign for scholarships, technology funds, and three building projects. The consultants conducted 43 separate interviews (31 face-to-face and 12 by telephone) with 45 individuals drawn from a cross section of alumni, friends, and community leaders. The College and Foundation gleaned information about how Northwest is perceived by key constituents, including strengths and areas for improvement. Interviewees were supportive of a campaign, and overwhelmingly selected the concept of endowments versus the idea of building projects, in part due to potential endowment matching dollars from the State of Wyoming and because there was a sense that buildings should come from state or local tax dollars. The report recommended the campaign focus on endowing scholarships and leading-edge technology with a goal of \$5 million (donors could not imagine the Foundation raising \$10 million). This study has guided the Foundation's fundraising work.²⁰



.....
20 See Foundation Reports in the Resource Room.

Criterion Two

“The Northwest College Foundation has had significant fund-raising success with annual cash flow to the College nearing the \$1 million mark.”

In July 2004, the Foundation launched its first comprehensive fund-raising campaign. The five-year effort set out with a goal to raise \$6 million, primarily for endowments. The mark was met inside of three years, and the goal was raised to \$8 million. Wyoming’s seven community colleges were each provided with up to \$4.5 million from the State of Wyoming as a 1:1 matching fund for contributions through the Wyoming Community College Endowment Challenge Program. Northwest was one of four colleges to fully match the first appropriation and receive another \$2 million of incentive dollars from the State. Commitments for these funds were also fully used, and Northwest is now working with its subsequent legislative appropriations of \$1.33 and \$1 million. The campaign’s focus areas are endowed scholarships and technology. The campaign ended 30 June 2009, having surpassed the \$9 million mark.

With more than \$20,000,000 held in scholarship endowments, including \$7,121,995 of state matching funds, the NWC Foundation is a key funding source for Northwest’s new Trapper Scholarship Program. From January 2001 to December 2009, the Foundation raised a total of \$19,504,162. The Northwest College Foundation has had significant fund-raising success with annual cash flow to the College nearing the \$1 million mark. Revenue for the College’s scholarship program and instructional equipment dropped temporarily due to decreased return on Foundation investments. In 2008, Northwest pledged \$146,000 to cover these shortfalls with an additional \$220,000 from reserves to ensure a successful launch of the new Trapper Scholarship Program.²¹ With improved economic conditions, Foundation resources are recovering.

In terms of technology, the NWC Foundation created an endowment to address the needs of instructional programs and outfit classrooms for current student learning modes, which was identified as a top priority during campaign planning. More than \$500,000 has been raised from private donors. After doubling these contributions with matching funds from the State of Wyoming, the Instructional Technology endowment holds more than \$1.1 million. Since the campaign’s inception, over \$165,000 has been awarded to support instructional technology grants. These funds have been awarded for equipment purchases in the Photography, Biology, Performing Arts, Chemistry, Agriculture, Journalism, Culinary Arts, and Nursing programs as well as for the library.

Human Resources

Northwest uses its human resources effectively. Recruiting and retaining a quality workforce is imperative to the College, which is improving its evaluation

.....
²¹ See *NWC Foundation Plan* in the Resource Room.

process by standardizing forms and timelines and by requiring annual professional development planning sessions with each employee.

Effective Staffing and Competitive Salaries

Northwest spends approximately 70–72% of its operating budget on personnel, which is consistent with other Wyoming community colleges although instructional costs are slightly higher than those of other colleges. Currently, the state’s Administrative Services Vice Presidents are working with the Wyoming Community College Commission to evaluate how this value is calculated to ensure that all colleges are using consistent data. Based on the new 2009 allocation model, Northwest will need to reduce costs for instruction, instructional support, and student support services to bring FTE costs closer to the state average.

A compensation study was conducted in 2007–2008 to provide guidelines and a structured system for determining compensation of non-faculty staff. Each non-faculty constituency group requested that the College utilize an unbiased consultant to conduct a survey of college positions and recommend a compensation system. Employees, supervisors, and area vice presidents all had a role in developing job descriptions. The Steering Committee, which included a representative from all affected constituency groups, selected the decision-banding method from several different methods, which was approved by the President and the President’s Advisory Council. Fox Lawson, an external consulting firm, submitted a first draft that was reviewed by the Steering Committee, supervisors, and the appropriate vice president. Two separate appeal processes have attempted to ensure proper band placement for all employees. The first appeal process was done through Fox Lawson; the President’s Advisory Council elected to have a second appeal process, which the Council oversaw with the President making the final decision. Eight employees were granted title changes based on appeals while 10 employees had their requested band placement granted based on appeals.



Because of legislative allocations in 2008, on average, faculty received up to a 20% raise in 2008; classified staff received an 18% raise, and professional staff and administrators received 10%, bringing average salary levels to 107% of mid-point of the salary range for non-faculty employees.²² These increases make the College more competitive in terms of regional comparative data. Increased compensation dollars

.....
 22 See Northwest College FY 2010 Salary Structure in the Resource Room.

Criterion Two

“These [salary] increases make the College more competitive in terms of regional comparative data.”

are expected not only to bolster employee recruiting but also aid with retention although Northwest’s retention data indicates that it is better than many Wyoming institutions of higher learning and well above the national average in terms of employee retention. From FY 2003–2007, Northwest saw a turnover of 8.25%; for Wyoming colleges and the University, that number was 11.78%, and the national average was 22.96%.²³ The College has indicated its commitment to maintaining current salary levels, and if possible, small salary increases, even during the economic downturn.

Succession Planning

The College is anticipating a significant number of retirements in senior positions. As 2009 data indicates, over 30% of Northwest College full-time employees are over 55. (See Table 2.7.) Some 43% of faculty are over 55, 31% of administrative staff, 23% of professional staff, and 27% of classified staff.

Although succession planning is listed as a goal in the Strategic Plan, Northwest College cannot promote individuals into significantly different positions than they hold because policies require that a competitive search be conducted for any open position. However, Northwest College is implementing a new evaluation system that is designed to facilitate employee communication of short- and long-term career goals. This process will assist any employee wishing to acquire needed skills to be a better candidate for other jobs. Professional development opportunities continue to be available despite budget reductions. (See Criteria Three and Four for discussion of professional development opportunities.)

.....
²³ See Wyoming Turnover Data in the Resource Room.

Table 2.7
Northwest College Full-time Employee Population
by Age and Constituency Group in 2009

CONSTITUENCY GROUP	AGE RANGE	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL IN GROUP
Administrative	<36	2	13%
	36-40	1	6%
	41-45	2	13%
	46-50	3	19%
	51-55	3	19%
	>55	5	31%
Administrative TOTAL		16	100%
Professional	<36	20	27%
	36-40	7	9%
	41-45	5	7%
	46-50	12	16%
	51-55	14	19%
	>55	17	23%
Professional TOTAL		75	100%
Classified	<36	5	8%
	36-40	7	11%
	41-45	11	18%
	46-50	11	18%
	51-55	11	18%
	>55	17	27%
Classified TOTAL		62	100%
Faculty	<36	9	11%
	36-40	10	12%
	41-45	6	7%
	46-50	13	15%
	51-55	10	12%
	>55	36	43%
Faculty TOTAL		84	100%
EMPLOYEE TOTAL		237	

Source: Human Resources Office

Northwest intentionally develops its human resources to meet future changes. The College does this by creating new positions and reallocating existing positions to provide support for planning and operations. Although Northwest has seen many changes since its 2001 accreditation, the following new positions have

Criterion Two

“Northwest’s history of financial resource development and investment documents a forward-looking concern for ensuring educational quality, and one area of note is the College’s development of its facilities.”

had a significant impact on planning/resource development/allocation: Human Resources Director; Director of Finance; Full-time Grant Writer; and Institutional Researcher. (See Criterion Three for a discussion of faculty changes.)

Facilities

Northwest’s history of financial resource development and investment documents a forward-looking concern for ensuring educational quality, and one area of note is the College’s development of its facilities. Northwest is proud of its physical plant, which is comprised of 57 buildings located on 124 acres. The College also has the Mickelson Field Station, located some 50 miles west of Powell, as well as the Cody Center in Cody and classrooms in Worland. According to a 2007 *Validation of Statewide Resource Study*, prepared by the Wyoming Community College Commission, Northwest has 695,389 gross square feet in its physical plant, making it second only to Casper College in terms of building square footage.²⁴

Guiding the College’s physical development are two plans: *Facilities Master Plan* and *The Facility Condition Assessment Survey/Plan* conducted by CTA Associates in 2002.²⁵ The assessment project centered around inspecting 21 major buildings on campus, evaluating their condition, and pointing to deficiencies that would require repair as part of upgrading or keeping the buildings in good working order. The buildings were examined from architectural, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical standpoints. A second element of the report was an energy study that examined existing energy use and systems and identified potential energy projects. The Vice President for Administrative Affairs is taking the lead on a planned energy audit to increase campus efficiency. It should also be noted that Northwest was the first “Disaster Resistant University” in Wyoming, a designation granted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Overall, campus buildings are well maintained. In 2004–2005, the State began giving community colleges major maintenance money, which was distributed by a formula. Northwest began receiving \$800,000–\$1.1 million annually, depending on state allocations. (Prior to receiving those dollars, all major maintenance money came from locally generated funds.) Since 2004, Northwest has spent \$7.8 million on maintenance, remodeling, and renovations. This money has allowed Northwest to address the backlog of projects for campus buildings, including addressing some of the building deficiencies noted in *The Facility Condition Assessment Survey/Plan*:

- Roof membrane replacements on seven buildings
- Electrical panel breakers installation
- Fire alarm and sprinkler systems installation in all residence halls.
- Emergency lighting installation

24 See *Validation of Statewide Resource Study* in the Resource Room.

25 See *The Facility Condition Assessment Survey/Plan* in the Resource Room.

- HVAC mechanical equipment installation in the Fagerberg Building
- Mechanical systems reinforcement for the computer server room
- Boiler installation in the Nelson Performing Arts Building and Colter Hall
- Significant remodeling in Lewis and Clark, Colter, Cody, and Ashley Halls to update rooms, lounges, and bathroom facilities



In terms of classroom remodeling projects that address growth in program areas like Photography and Nursing, the College dealt with space needs by remodeling parts of buildings to create a new digital photo lab and a nursing laboratory classroom, special simulation nursing labs, and an improved lecture hall (FAB 70) in addition to adding work stations to the Drafting Lab. Renovations to Hinckley Library created additional group study space. Northwest has invested the following amounts in building renovations:

- Nursing Building (2009): \$203,000
- Library Expansion (2010): \$2.3 million
- Creation of Nelson Performing Arts Recording Studio (2010): \$800,000
- New Plant and Soils Lab (2010): \$250,000
- Redesign of Fagerberg Building, Room 70 (2005): \$55,000
- Equine Barn Replacement (2004): \$250,000
- Athletic Fields Rebuilding (2010): \$350,000



Additional investments in new or renovated facilities and physical resources include the following:

- **Outreach Centers**—Northwest College contracted for expanded space in Cody and redesigned its delivery in Worland. The new Cody space has allowed for additional course offerings and increased enrollment. (See Criterion Five for a discussion of outreach.)
- **Motor Pool Replacements**—In 2009, the College motor pool reported that student activities, teams, and employees traveled some 243,000 miles. After having some difficulties with travel, Northwest has invested a good deal of money into updating its motor pool. In an average year, Northwest spends between \$250,000–\$300,000 on travel. The motor pool budget for 2010 is \$200,000 with an additional \$100,000 budgeted for vehicle



Criterion Two

“The College has improved its maintenance of effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using organizational information in addition to creating appropriate feedback loops.”

replacement. This is expensive but necessary given the College’s physical location, emphasis on learning outside the classroom, and the need for student and employee safety. For general use by faculty and staff for off-campus travel, the College has three buses, six vans, and nine cars. This does not include vehicles dedicated to specific tasks (e.g., maintenance). Several years ago the College made a significant policy change to increase faculty, staff, and college group accessibility to the fleet. Mileage charges to those using the vehicles were dropped; instead, costs were absorbed in the motor pool budget.

CORE COMPONENT—2C: Northwest College’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

Northwest demonstrates that its evaluation processes provide evidence that its performance meets its stated expectations for institutional effectiveness. At annual planning retreats held from 2002–2007, the major administrative areas reported on progress related to past priorities and goals. After review at planning meetings, goals were either declared completed and removed from the next strategic plan iteration or verified/refined as a continuing priority for the future. Since the arrival of President Prestwich, a more formal process of documenting progress has occurred with *The Implementation and Tracking Plan*.

The College has improved its maintenance of effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using organizational information in addition to creating appropriate feedback loops. Northwest lost its institutional researcher in 2000. After that, data gathering became a distributed set of tasks with no centralized oversight or systematic usage. Institutional data gathering focused primarily on meeting off-campus reporting (e.g., Wyoming Core Indicator Report for the Legislature; IPEDS; Mountain States Report). The Office of Academic Affairs has reported and used enrollment and faculty load data for course and program planning and resource allocation. The College’s systematic collection and use of data saw significant improvement with the hiring of an institutional researcher in March 2009 and the creation of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee in the summer of 2009. This Committee and the Institutional Researcher work together to assess the quality of currently available data and needs for additional data; use data for planning and decision making; capitalize on multiple college perspectives to analyze available data; and provide institutional effectiveness information to the College, community, and other constituencies. However, the College’s use of appropriate data and feedback loops has been uneven with data often becoming “siloeed.”

Northwest conducts periodic reviews of academic and administrative subunits to contribute to organizational improvement. Academic departments undergo a

formal Program Review approximately every five years in addition to annually reviewing academic and tracking program-specific student learning outcomes. (See Criterion Three for a discussion of academic assessment.)²⁶ In 2007–2008, all units at the College established written learning outcomes. These outcomes were to be assessed yearly as all employees consider ways in which to improve their contributions to student learning. This process needs more systematic oversight, support, and use for long-term planning. Some units have closed the loop better than others.

The College works to provide adequate support for its evaluation and assessment processes. Northwest has purchased WEAVE software to track and monitor annual academic program-specific outcomes. Title III has dedicated resources to student data tracking with a focus on student progress, learning outcomes assessment, and basic skills program development; however, these funds will disappear at the grant's end. The Office of Academic Affairs has a small assessment budget that has not grown since 2001.



CORE COMPONENT—2D: *All levels of planning align with Northwest College's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.*

Coordinated planning processes center on the mission documents that define Northwest's vision, values, goals, and strategic priorities. Although the College's planning process may have varied since 2001, given changes in presidential leadership, the basic elements have remained the same, and the mission has continued to serve as the institution's guiding document.

The College takes steps to show evidence of its planning and implementation. Monthly reports from area vice presidents to the Board of Trustees show accomplishments in various areas; starting in 2008, these reports were categorized by strategic priority. The addition of a Finance Director has enhanced Northwest's ability to begin building a system of data sharing, so the budget can more clearly support the Strategic Plan. The Board of Trustees and College Council receive detailed quarterly budget reports.

Northwest's planning processes involve internal constituents and, when appropriate, external constituents. The following list provides examples of those involved in planning:

- **College Council**—The Strategic Plan, major initiatives associated with it, and budget updates are presented to College Council.

.....
²⁶ See Program Reviews and Assessment Reports in the Resource Room.

Criterion Two

“Constituency group members are also encouraged to communicate with and gather input from those they represent.”

Meeting agendas and minutes are shared with all employees. Constituency group members are also encouraged to communicate with and gather input from those they represent.²⁷

- **President’s Advisory Council**—Made up of the College’s President and four Vice Presidents, the President’s Advisory Council meets to advise the President.²⁸
- **Academic Advisory Council**—Although the Academic Advisory Council has traditionally been involved in institutional planning, increasingly, this role is restricted to the academic area. Furthermore, initiatives are increasingly generated at the President’s Advisory Council level with the Academic Advisory Council’s role limited to discussing implementation, a shift many chairs and faculty have found frustrating.²⁹
- **Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT)**—The Team meets bimonthly to determine critical student programming needs and serves as an advisory team to the Vice President for Student Affairs. During the 2008–2009 year, SALT met jointly with the Academic Advisory Committee to discuss issues impacting students. This collaborative meeting has strengthened ties between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.
- **Web Management Committee**—The Web Management Committee provides overall direction for the College’s Web presence. Specific committee responsibilities are to develop and evaluate annual website development priorities; develop major policy and other documents which ensure a first-rate Web presence; report major Web developments to their respective units; and work with the Webmaster to monitor development, technical, staffing, promotional and other trends as they relate to Northwest’s site.³⁰
- **Enrollment Advisory Committee**—The Enrollment Advisory Committee is a college-wide, cross-functional committee that reviews and helps establish the direction of recruitment and retention at the College. This committee assists the Vice President for Student Affairs in developing and monitoring *The Enrollment Management Plan*.³¹
- **Integrated Communications Committee**—Cross-functional membership of this committee includes major administrative offices that deal directly in communications as well as three vice

27 See College Council minutes in the Resource Room.

28 See President’s Advisory Council minutes in the Resource Room.

29 See Academic Advisory Council minutes in the Resource Room.

30 See Web Management Committee minutes in the Resource Room.

31 See Enrollment Advisory Committee minutes in the Resource Room.

presidents who have the decision-making authority to integrate the Committee's initiatives. The Committee's goal is to achieve high quality, clear, consistent communications that reflect the College's mission and vision statements as well as its enduring values. The Committee's focus is on strategy implementation rather than on policy development; therefore, its composition is not intended to be constituency-based. Depending upon the nature of specific agenda items, non-members are invited to join meetings from time to time to assist with projects.³²

- **Curriculum Committee**—This committee oversees general education and all-college outcomes requirements in addition to other curriculum changes. (See Criteria Three and Four for an extended discussion.)³³

External feedback comes from a range of sources, including market research surveys, the Board of Trustees, the Foundation and Alumni Boards, various academic advisory boards, and local business leaders.

Final Thoughts and Future Plans

Although Northwest College got off to a good start in making changes and improvements to its planning process and procedure after the 2001 accreditation review, the middle of the decade saw the process deteriorate. The past two years have seen the process come back to life with new connections being made and new processes being established.

The year 2008 serves as the baseline year for the *2008–2010 Strategic Plan* which has been extended through 2011. The Strategic Plan is now tracked using the *Implementation and Tracking Plan*. This information has been distributed to all college employees and reviewed by College Council as the College starts to prepare next year's budget. An Institutional Effectiveness Committee was convened in Fall 2009 with an initial purpose of helping the Institutional Researcher and the administration evaluate and analyze the quality of the data. Although a definitive process has not been finalized, a process is evolving.

.....
32 See Integrated Communication Committee minutes in the Resource Room.

33 See Curriculum Committee minutes in the Resource Room.

