

Criterion Four

Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge



Criterion Four

“Northwest College challenges itself to use data more effectively for program planning and improvement.”

Criterion Four:

Acquisition, Discovery, & Application of Knowledge

Criterion Four Statement: The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

Northwest College Prides Itself on

- A strong general education component in all degrees that supports a life of learning.
- A faculty-driven curriculum that transfers well to other colleges and universities.
- Well developed Associate of Applied Science degree programs that prepare students for the 21st century work environment with a curriculum driven by faculty and industry.
- Opportunities for students to apply their learning and research skills both inside and outside the classroom.
- Capstone courses that promote critical as well as creative thinking and facilitate the integration of learning.
- An exceptional learning environment that includes an extensive library, well-equipped science labs, and extensive technology resources.
- A residential life program that encourages whole-person development, promoting social responsibility and respect for self and others.
- Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Northwest College Challenges Itself to

- Use data more effectively for program planning and improvement.
- More effectively prepare students for success in online learning.
- Improve the outcomes of developmental learning courses
- Maintain and improve funding for faculty and staff professional development.
- Reconsider the general education component of the Associate of Applied Science in light of new transfer opportunities.

- Develop a statement which reinforces “freedom of inquiry” for non-teaching staff.
- Continue to use capstone performance data to build student skills in their earlier academic careers.

Northwest College: Who We Are

The following unsolicited e-mail was sent to Northwest College photography faculty from a program graduate:

7 January 2009

Hello Guys,

You may not remember me, but I graduated in May of '07. I just wanted to send you guys a quick hello, and let you know how I'm doing. I remember Craig [Satterlee] used to tell us how alumni keep in touch, and share their success. It always inspired me when he told us of students and their accomplishments out of school. So I figured, I'd share mine, thus far.

When I first moved to Southern California, I jumped on the first job I could. I was a school photographer. I traveled to different schools around the area and took photos of the kids for their yearbook. I was on staff for about 2 months, and I could no longer do it. The task was too mindless for me. It was more of a high school job rather than a professional job. I decided to move on.

I found Lavalu. Lavalu is an image editing company. I got hired on the spot once I showed the owner my portfolio (that I prepped in college; thanks guys!). I've been here for over a year now, and I am incredibly happy. Here, I color correct, edit, and design wedding albums. We use the latest in photo editing software, so we can correct the images as accurately as possible. We have clients from all around the world, majority who shoot weddings. We have a few portrait clients as well, but we mostly edit weddings. I have come a long way since college, and I see photography differently now. My eye has become sharper when looking for correct exposures, contrast, etc. I am one of two album designers that we have here. I was hired knowing nothing about album design, but now after over a year of experience, I design about 1–2 albums per week. Feel free to check out our website at www.mylavalu.com.

I hope all is well at NWC. I want to thank you, my photo professors, for what you've done as teachers. I could not see how much of a difference you, and the rest of the instructors have done, when I was there. It is only after a couple years out, I realize that what was learned in college, I use today. Thank you, and best wishes.

*Sincerely,
Chelsie DeWald*

As an institution, Northwest promotes life-long learning for students, faculty, administration, staff, and the community. The College provides students with

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“Northwest College has always supported continued learning for employees by providing professional development funds, tuition waivers, and free workforce training opportunities.”

a strong general education base that establishes a foundation of knowledge to support inquiry, analysis, and the application of knowledge. Northwest helps students first integrate their learning from general education, program requirements, and electives and then use that knowledge as a tool for interacting in the world. Education at Northwest College is integrative and multifaceted with learning experiences found not only in the classroom, but also in residence halls, extracurricular activities, work experiences and internships, volunteer opportunities, and student clubs and organizations.

Life-long learning is also modeled by faculty and staff. Northwest College has always supported continued learning for employees by providing professional development funds, tuition waivers, and free workforce training opportunities. In short, Northwest College is committed to providing an environment of learning for all of its constituencies.

CORE COMPONENT—4A: *Northwest College demonstrates through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff that it values a life of learning.*

Various governance documents articulate the Board’s policy on and support for freedom of inquiry at all levels of the College. Northwest recognizes in its mission documents an Enduring Value of “Intellectual Curiosity”: “We welcome change, the open exchange of ideas, inclusion of multiple points of view, consideration of existing knowledge, and the generation of new ideas.” Although the Northwest College Board of Trustees has approved statements supporting freedom of inquiry, changes in administration have led to varying interpretations; overall, however, Northwest has respected these policies.

Faculty Freedom of Inquiry

In “Faculty Employment Policies,” section 1.6.1 of the *Employment Handbook*, academic freedom is defined as a right and responsibility of faculty: “The faculty member is entitled to freedom in research, publication, and pursuit of professional/vocational areas of expertise subject to the adequate performance of the duties contained in this faculty employment policy.” In addition, the College “endorses the general guidelines of the American Association of University Professors’ 1940 ‘Statement on Academic Freedom.’”

Student Freedom of Inquiry

Students’ expectations in terms of academic freedom are outlined in the “Student Academic Rights” section of the *Student Handbook*. Among those academic rights, students are entitled to

- experience reasonable, free, and open discussion, inquiry, and expression, both in the classroom and in student/instructor conferences;

- take exception in a scholarly manner to the data or views being presented;
- expect protection against an instructor's improper disclosure of a student's views, beliefs, and political associations which may surface as a result of the instructor's teaching or advising; and
- expect protection, through established procedures, against prejudiced or capricious evaluation.



The faculty's academic freedom policy, found in the *Employment Handbook*, Section 1.5.1, also endorses students' academic rights.

Administrator and Staff Freedom of Inquiry

While the Enduring Value quoted above does not specify to whom "intellectual curiosity applies," the assumption is that it applies to all. Its application to staff, however, is unclear given that no statement exists paralleling those that protect faculty and students. The absence of a written statement for staff has led to some confusion and to some abuses by past leaders.



Northwest's planning and pattern of financial allocation demonstrate that the College values and promotes a life of learning for students, faculty, and staff. Planning and budget requests are linked to *The Strategic Plan* through the Action Resource Planning process (see Criterion Two for a discussion of planning). *The Strategic Plan, Academic Years 2008–11* calls for initiatives in support of lifelong learning. Those initiatives include the following:

Implement the New Scholarship Plan and Assess Its Impact on Year-to-year Retention

Northwest College Scholarships

Northwest College supports the efforts of its students by providing extensive academic, activity-talent, and athletic scholarship support. However, in an effort to promote lifelong learning for the entire college community, Northwest implemented the Trapper Scholarship program beginning in 2009–2010. Under this new awarding philosophy, students are eligible to receive Trapper Scholarships, which are renewable for up to four consecutive semesters and are determined by GPA and residency. This allows prospective students to plan for continued learning because they know the annual scholarship amount for which they qualify. Additionally, returning students are required to maintain specific GPA's to remain eligible.

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“This changed the landscape for financial assistance for students and colleges and allowed Northwest to create a smoother process to help students afford a quality higher education.”

Analysis of the program will not take place until 2011; however, for the Fall 2009 term, 624 students received \$663,279 in Trapper Scholarships alone. In addition to Trapper Scholarships (funded from institutional as well as private donor funds), 70 students received Academic Scholarships valued at \$53,400. Academic scholarships are awarded to deserving students demonstrating academic strength in their chosen program of study. Also, 95 students were awarded Activity-Talent Scholarships valued at \$89,000.

Additional Scholarship Opportunities

- *Hathaway Scholarships*—Beginning in the fall of 2007, the State of Wyoming began offering Hathaway Scholarships (statewide merit scholarships) to Wyoming high school graduates who met certain grade qualifications or ACT scores. This changed the landscape for financial assistance for students and colleges and allowed Northwest to create a smoother process to help students afford a quality higher education.
- *WyIN Funding*—Made available by the legislature, these scholarships are for student and faculty nursing allocation.

The Financial Aid and Scholarships area has expanded significantly. Two new positions have been added: one to facilitate Hathaway Scholarships with the State of Wyoming, and the other to coordinate increased private scholarships from the Foundation.

Develop and Implement a College-wide Professional Development Plan

Northwest College encourages its staff to continue learning. The College supports professional development opportunities and makes them available to all administrators, faculty, and staff. Faculty must detail professional development activities as part of their year-end reports, and it is a significant factor in earning tenure; staff have a professional development planning component in performance evaluations. To support professional development, all College employees have access to the following:

- **Professional Development Funds**—All constituent groups have access to professional development funds. The College has budgeted \$38,000 dollars for staff professional development, which can be supplemented by travel funds of up to \$25,000. Members of the Classified Staff have access to funds through their constituent group; Professional and Administrative staff funds are distributed proportionately to each vice president; Faculty professional development is administered separately. However, according to a 2008 survey of employees, given their workloads, many staff members struggle to find time to invest in professional development

opportunities.¹ (See Criterion Three for a discussion of faculty professional development.)

- **Professional Development Workshops**—Throughout the year, these opportunities are available to all college employees. (See Criterion Three for an extended discussion.)
- **Tuition Waivers for Northwest and University of Wyoming Classes**—All benefitted college employees may take classes tuition free from Northwest or from the University of Wyoming. Employees are encouraged to take three credit hours during their work day and may take an additional four credits outside their work day for a total of seven credit hours per semester. According to the Office of Administrative Services, since 2006, each year, an average of 66 employees has taken advantage of Northwest tuition waivers.²
- **Workforce Training Classes**—The Northwest College Center for Training and Development makes available skills-based classes, leadership classes, and supervisory trainings to help employees continue learning for the ever-changing world of work.

Although recent increases in funds have allowed more College employees to participate in professional development activities, as costs rise, the allocated funds will need to grow as well. In times of budget cuts, the priority of building professional development resources will be tested.

Implement Pilot Program for Concurrent Enrollment

The Concurrent Enrollment Pilot Project outlines a pathway for high school students to continue their learning at the post-secondary level before they graduate from high school. Currently, the plan is in a three-year pilot phase. In 2009–2010, four high schools in the College’s service area took advantage of the program, allowing the College to serve 260 students for a total of 920 credit hours. (See Appendix 4.1, Concurrent/Dual Enrollment Trends.)³

Expand Collaboration with Businesses on the Design and Delivery of New Workforce Training Programs and Increase Enrollment in These Programs

Northwest College offers Workforce Development programs that serve employers and employees in the service area as well as the state. This program meets the ongoing needs of local business and industry for a

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1 See Criterion Four Survey of Employees in the Resource Room.

2 See policy and Tuition Waiver Form in the Resource Room.

3 See *The Concurrent Enrollment Pilot Project* in the Resource Room.

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skilled workforce and reacts to unique requests from employers for specialized trainings, keeping employers and employees current in diverse local, national, and global societies. Participants in this program can upgrade technology skills, learn leadership techniques, understand and improve customer service, or be trained in new processes specific to many growing occupational areas. Northwest dedicates approximately \$350,000 annually to the Workforce Development program in addition to four staff members. (See Criterion Five for an extended discussion of workforce development.)

Northwest has also met life-long learning goals set in earlier strategic plans. For example, in *The Strategic Plan, 2007–2009*, the College set a goal of expanding online course delivery. Online courses provide access to education for students who cannot attend regularly scheduled classes on campus because of work and family commitments or because of their distance from campus. This goal was met: Online courses have expanded from 42 in 2006 to 105 in 2010. (See Appendix 4.2, Distance Education Report.) Quality checks are in place along with initial work on a revision of *The Distance Education Plan*, which will continue to guide how the College handles rapid growth in online course delivery.⁴ Additionally, the distance education staff has recently expanded by one so that students receive quality learning and have more support. However, faculty report that a number of students still struggle in adapting to this modality, so the College is beginning to track successful completion rates in online courses.

Table 4.1
Grades Awarded and Successful Completion Rate in Online Courses

	2004–05	%	2005–06	%	2006–07	%	2007–08	%	2008–09	%	TOTAL	%
A,B,C,P,S	373	57.3	490	61.1	658	63.1	1,041	68	1,169	67.1	3,731	64.7
D,F,U	142	21.8	140	17.5	159	15.2	206	13.5	240	13.8	887	15.4
I,UF,W,NS	134	20.6	171	21.3	221	21.2	280	18.3	331	19.0	1,137	19.7
Audits	2	0.3	1	0.1	5	0.5	4	0.3	2	0.1	14	0.2
TOTAL	651		802		1,043		1,531		1,742		5,769	100

NOTES: Passing Grades (A, B, C, P–Pass, S–Satisfactory); Unsatisfactory Grades (D, F, U–Unsatisfactory, I–Incomplete, UF–Unearned F, W–Withdrawal, NS–No Show)

Source: Datatel Colleague Database

IR: 5/3/2010

The data show that 64.7% of grades awarded in online courses are passing grades. Non-completers make up 19.7%, and unsatisfactory grades account for 15.4%. To help increase the successful completion rate, INET 1550,

⁴ See *The Distance Education Plan* in the Resource Room.

“Exploration of Online Learning,” was developed and first offered to students in Spring 2007 and continues to be offered every semester. Additionally, increased staffing and training are being considered to help prepare students to be more comfortable and successful in this modality. (See Criterion Three for a discussion of online enrollments.)

Similarly, in *The Strategic Plan, Academic Years 2005–2007*, the College set a goal of expanding access to face-to-face education in the service area.⁵ Northwest planned and financed the development of its outreach centers in Worland and Cody to ensure that face-to-face learning would be accessible for students wanting to continue their education but unable to come to the Powell campus. The Centers provide learning opportunities for students, many of whom have families and jobs, but who continue to learn at every stage of their lives. No matter the reason for students’ attendance, the learning is accessible in their hometowns. (For a full discussion of the Worland and Cody Centers, see Criterion Five.)

To celebrate successful learning, Northwest College enthusiastically acknowledges the achievements of students, faculty, and staff in acquiring, discovering, and applying knowledge. Student, faculty, and staff achievements are publicized via e-mail messages to all employees, and the College Relations Office sends news/photo releases to area print and electronic media, alumni publications and other outlets, as well as schedules individual employees on area radio talk show programs. In addition, such news is often covered in the *Northwest Alumni News* (the College’s alumni and other friends’ newspaper) and noted in the “Good News” items announced at meetings of the Wyoming Community College Commission. The following lists give a sense of additional ways through which the College celebrates achievement.



Celebrating Student Success

Ceremonies, Awards, and Recognition Banquets

- Graduation (December and May)
- President’s, Vice President’s, and Dean’s Lists
- Student Awards Ceremony
- Nursing Pinning Ceremony
- Division/Department Outstanding Student Awards
- Phi Theta Kappa Induction



5 See *The Distance Education Plan* in the Resource Room.

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“The faculty and students of Northwest, in keeping with the College’s mission, produce scholarship and create knowledge through basic and applied research.”

- Scholarships/Donor Banquet
- Forensics Banquet
- Athletic Awards Ceremony
- Rodeo Gala
- Block and Bridle Banquet
- Horsemen’s Club Banquet
- Residential Banquet
- Student Senate Ceremony
- Wyoming Community College Trustee Association Nominations and Awards
- “Board Purchase Award” for Art and Photography Students

Shows and Performances

- Forensics competitions
- Horse Shows
- Athletic competitions
- Monthly open mic readings
- Skills USA Competition
- Students in Free Enterprise Competitions
- Music concerts, recitals, convocations, and festivals
- Student Art Shows (e.g., Visual Art, Graphic Design, Photography)

Publications and Broadcasts

- *Visualize/Verbalize*
- *Northwest Trail*
- *Writing in the Academic World*
- *plainSpeak*
- NWC-TV
- KNWT-FM radio station

Celebrating Faculty and Staff Success

The College has a number of ways in which it celebrates faculty and staff success. In addition to the recognition provided in news releases, reports, e-mails, and Yammer postings, the College also has a yearly Employee Recognition Banquet at which select faculty and staff receive recognition awards. Northwest annually submits nominations for Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees Awards. (See Criterion Three for additional information on faculty recognition.)

Celebrating Alumni Success

The College's Distinguished Alumni Award program, begun in 1981, originally included recognition of Distinguished Alumni in three categories, Professional Achievement, Academic Achievement, and Community Service, with the honored alumni collectively serving as speakers at Commencement Exercises. In the early 2000s, the awards were narrowed to only one award to streamline the commencement ceremony. A plaque system, including a large photo of the current year's Distinguished Alumnus and individual plates for each alumnus, was created by the Alumni Association in the mid-2000s.



The faculty and students of Northwest, in keeping with the College's mission, produce scholarship and create knowledge through basic and applied research.

Student Research

Northwest College stresses the importance of research in providing a foundation for a life of learning. Primary research skills are taught in ENGL 1010, "Introduction to Composition," a course required for all students who graduate from Northwest.⁶ Indeed, students are encouraged to take this class as soon as possible to master fundamental research skills. Further, librarians provide library research sessions at faculty requests (a full discussion of these sessions appears later in this chapter). Additional coursework, then, builds on these research skills as students do research in individual classes; in technical classes, students apply theory learned either in the classroom or through research. All of this research prepares students for graduation and the capstone course, a culminating research experience. In capstone courses, students

- demonstrate their understanding of and ability to apply important knowledge and skills in their field.
- demonstrate application of their general education knowledge and achievement of all-college outcomes in writing, speaking, analysis, and multiple points of view.

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⁶ See *The Distance Education Plan* in the Resource Room.

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“Northwest College is a two-year institution with an emphasis on teaching, and although faculty are not required to do original research and publish, they are expected to stay current in their field and keep their courses current.”

- expand their skills through feedback on their work from professionals beyond the instructor. (See Criterion Three for a discussion of the capstone as an assessment tool.)

In addition to coursework, faculty look for other ways to provide research projects for students, as evidenced by the following:

- **INBRE Research Project**—Northwest is currently involved in an Idea Networks for Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) grant where faculty and students carry out biomedical research. It is funded by a National Institutes of Health grant distributed by the University of Wyoming. From 2004–2010, 25 students have participated, some for up to four semesters. Two faculty members mentor the students in their research. Students have made a total of six presentations at state and regional meetings.
- **EPSCoR**—The National Science Foundation funds the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EXPCoR). Northwest College participated with one faculty and two students in an EPSCoR summer research project.

Faculty Research

Northwest College is a two-year institution with an emphasis on teaching, and although faculty are not required to do original research and publish, they are expected to stay current in their field and keep their courses current. In addition, some faculty pursue individual research that often has a direct impact on the courses they teach. The range of faculty research interests varies, everything from books of local history to photography published in national publications, creative writing to research on and performance of music history, presentations on technology to international student programs.

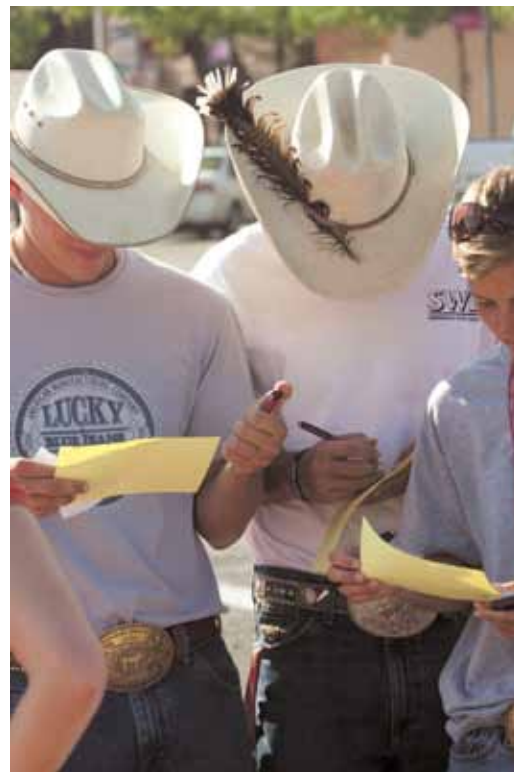
Northwest College uses scholarship and research to stimulate organizational and educational improvements. Planning and resource allocation are driven by research undertaken by instructional, administrative, and student services units.

- **Academic Assessment** takes a number of forms: Program Reviews, All-college Outcomes Studies, Program-specific Student Learning Outcomes Reports provide much of this data.⁷ (See Criterion Three for a discussion of these assessment tools.)
- **Community College Survey of Student Engagement Reports (CCSSE)** began in 2007 with the survey administered on alternate years. At this point, the initial CCSSE data is providing a baseline

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⁷ See Academic Assessment Reports in the Resource Room.

for future studies. The College is committed to using these data to advise institutional improvement.⁸

- **The Kick-off Weekend Retention Data Report** tracks retention and success of students who did and did not participate. Initial results indicate that the program is highly effective.⁹ (See Criterion Two for an extended discussion.)
- **The Capstone Course Faculty Assessment Survey** was conducted to assess the value of the capstone course requirement as a vehicle for assessing all-college outcomes. The Summary of Capstone Faculty Survey is discussed by the Curriculum Committee and the Academic Advisory Council. Results shape materials and faculty training for delivery of these courses.¹⁰ (See Criterion Three for an extended discussion.)
- **The New Intersession Student and Faculty Surveys** were conducted with the introduction in 2008–2009 of a two-week January intersession; the surveys were administered a second time in 2010. This learning opportunity was studied through student and faculty surveys, which showed a positive response to the new option. Discussion of results in the Academic Advisory Council and other college groups shapes future uses of this learning option.¹¹
- **The Faculty Use of Technology Study** and **Qualitative Review of Technology Use** were conducted as part of the Title III grant to assess faculty utilization of and satisfaction with new instructional technologies.¹²
- **Advising Surveys** are conducted to assess effectiveness and find methods for improvement. Faculty are surveyed every fall semester to gather input about their experience with advising. Similarly, students are surveyed each spring. Data from both are used to improve the advising process.¹³
- **New Student Registration and Family Orientation Surveys** are administered during each summer registration and orientation session to both students and their family members. The surveys contain two sections. The first section asks students and family members to identify and evaluate which forms of media have informed them about Northwest College. Answers assist College



8 See Community College Study of Student Engagement Reports in the Resource Room.

9 See Kick-off Weekend Retention Data Report in the Resource Room.

10 See The Capstone Course Faculty Assessment Survey in the Resource Room.

11 See The New Intersession Student and Faculty Surveys in the Resource Room.

12 See The Faculty Use of Technology Study and Qualitative Review of Technology Use in the Resource Room.

13 See Faculty Survey – Academic Advising and Advising Survey for Students in the Resource Room.

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“In career and technical education programs, faculty work with advisory boards and national associations to stay current, and some research the industry through work in the field.”

Relations staff in determining future marketing efforts. The second section asks students and family members to evaluate the New Student Registration and Family Orientation session and is used to improve future orientation sessions.

Faculty pursue research to stay current in their field of expertise. Changes to courses and programs are generally based upon this research. In career and technical education programs, faculty work with advisory boards and national associations to stay current, and some research the industry through work in the field.¹⁴ Faculty also keep current in their fields through membership in professional societies and organizations. Staff members, too, stay up to date through professional development. As examples, the Instructional Technologist attends two conferences per year to stay current on new technologies and provide faculty and staff with best practices. In addition, the Wyoming Distance Education Consortium conference has faculty and staff sessions.

A continuing challenge for Northwest, though, is systematic data collection and dissemination for decision-making. The hiring of an Institutional Researcher in March 2009 has provided new opportunities for systematic data gathering, analysis, dissemination, and utilization.

CORE COMPONENT—4B: *Northwest College demonstrates that acquisition of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.*

The general education core at Northwest College provides students with the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills and to exercise intellectual inquiry. Northwest integrates general education into all its associate degree programs through curricular and experiential offerings intentionally created to develop the attitudes and skills required for a life of learning in a diverse society. Northwest College offers:

- **Associate of Arts**—graduates must complete 39–42 credit hours of general education.
- **Associate of Science**—graduates must complete 31–37 credit hours of general education.
- **Associate of Applied Science**—graduates must complete 20–23 credit hours of general education.

Students are provided with a well rounded general education core delivered through course work, internships and cooperative education, co-curricular activities, and a residential life program. The totality of this education provides

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¹⁴ See CTE Advisory Committees 2009-2010 in the Resource Room.

breadth of knowledge and the foundation for a life of learning. This groundwork is supplemented for students as they achieve program-specific outcomes and complete electives. As specified in the College *Catalog*, Northwest's general education outcomes are categorized as follows:

- Government
- English
- Lab Sciences
- Social Sciences
- Wellness
- Comparative Cultural Awareness
- Humanities
- Mathematics
- Visual and Performing Arts



The College specifies student learning outcomes for each of the general education categories and courses are evaluated by the Curriculum Committee against these outcomes. Only approved courses can be used to meet general education requirements. Along with meeting credit requirements for general education, students are expected to apply learning from general education as a part of their capstone projects and experience.

General education strengths include the following:

- A broad range of course options are offered for each category.
- 70% of all credit hours are taught by a highly-credentialed full-time faculty.¹⁵
- All courses are reviewed and approved in light of faculty-generated and approved general education outcomes.

In addition to curricular offerings, students have opportunities to, and for some degrees must, participate in cooperative education, internships, practica, clinicals, and service learning outside the classroom. This type of learning allows students to apply their knowledge and skills in a real-world setting, guided by mentor faculty and involving business and community personnel. Through these experiences, students deepen their knowledge, build their employment skills, and come to better understand the diverse world in which they live. Nursing students, for instance, must apply newly learned skills in a controlled environment in hospitals and nursing homes;



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¹⁵ See Credits and Sections Taught by Faculty in the Resource Room.

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“Given the wide range of transfer universities students attend, decisions have been made to keep the same general education program and to ask faculty advisors to do career or college/university advising to meet particular external expectations.”

archaeology students participate in digs; students in education programs work with mentor teachers in the schools prior to certifying as Wyoming teachers; veterinary assistant students work in actual veterinary settings in an Animal Care Internship. While this is not an exhaustive list, it provides examples of the learning environments in which students can apply knowledge and skills.

Northwest College reviews the relationship between its mission and values and the effectiveness of its general education. All departmental and divisional curricular work is reviewed first by the division and then by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Curriculum Committee, which meets weekly during the academic year and is comprised of six faculty from each academic division (voting), two students (voting), and six committee liaisons (nonvoting). This committee

- ensures that general education courses are consistent with the College’s mission.
- reviews and provides approval of new courses and programs.
- determines if courses meet the criteria for general education status.
- conducts periodic evaluations of the general education curriculum.
- leads all-college outcomes revisions and data analysis.

Possible changes in general education categories and credits have been considered by the Curriculum Committee. Given the wide range of transfer universities students attend, decisions have been made to keep the same general education program and to ask faculty advisors to do career or college/university advising to meet particular external expectations. A new website and periodic workshops have been added to help students and faculty with this process. The College has a general education block transfer agreement with a variety of regional universities. The strength of Northwest’s general education requirements and these transfer agreements help degree recipients transfer as juniors. (See Criterion Five for additional information.)

Northwest demonstrates the linkages between curricular and co-curricular activities that support inquiry, practice, creativity, and social responsibility. In addition to traditional classroom work, students also participate in a range of co-curricular activities to encourage personal and professional development and build upon their general education foundation. Cooperative education internships, nursing program clinicals, and work-study positions allow students to practice and apply classroom knowledge while state and national student competitions in Skills USA and Students in Free Enterprise, for example, are venues for demonstrating acquired skills and knowledge in career technical areas. Additionally, Student Senate and many student clubs provide leadership opportunities.

Northwest’s many co-curricular activities give students the opportunity to build and test their skills outside of the classroom. For many students, these co-curricular activities provide a number of firsts: feedback from professionals in the field; out-of-state travel experiences; opportunities to learn skills related to professional

life; opportunities to plan and implement significant events; and opportunities to speak at professional events.

Although there are many instances of this, following are three notable examples.

- **Northwest College Forensics**—The Northwest College Forensics Team is one of the top programs in the nation, emphasizing educational goals, competition, and personal development. The College also offers scholarships for students involved in forensics. The team competes in 11 different individual events and two debate events and is a “walk-on team,” meaning that participation is encouraged from all who are interested regardless of experience. The squad averages between 16–25 students and consistently ranks nationally in parliamentary debate (in the top twenty for all Colleges and universities and usually in the top two or three for community colleges). From Fall 2006–Spring 2009, Northwest College Forensics never lost to a community college in sweepstakes at regular competitions. Students who compete get credit for their participation and must take CO/M 2060, “Forensics,” CO/M 2080, “Introduction to Forensics Research,” and CO/M 2070, “Tournament Administration.” In addition, students are encouraged to take classes which are a regular part of the curriculum, including “Public Speaking,” “Argumentation and Debate,” and “Oral Interpretation.”



- **Intercollegiate Athletics**—The Northwest College athletics program dedicates itself to the pursuit of athletic excellence within the framework of an academic community committed to the institution’s educational objectives. These programs are committed to helping students achieve intellectual, physical, and interpersonal growth while competing at the highest level of the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division I and the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA). Between 2006–2009, Northwest averaged 66 student athletes (3.7% of the student body). During that five-year period, student athletes received an average scholarship amount of 87%. Required coursework includes a variety of activity courses. Teams have “Code of Conduct” contracts.



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“At Northwest, learning outcomes demonstrate that graduates have achieved a breadth of knowledge, skills, and the capacity to exercise intellectual inquiry.”

- **Northwest College Livestock Judging Team**—The Northwest College Livestock Judging Program, averaging 20 students each year, has been part of the College for over 35 years, stressing the need for solid academics in the classroom, as well as excellence in the livestock judging arena. Team members dedicate themselves to practice three times a week, on Saturdays, and for large parts of semester breaks. The College offers excellent facilities, scholarship support, and strong coaching in addition to travel to competitions throughout the U.S. Scholarships are available for team members and are awarded based on GPA and ACT scores as well as livestock background. The team participates in the NILE Judging Exposition (Northern International Livestock Exposition); Northwest students are in charge of the NILE’s Livestock Evaluation Event. Regional FFA contests are held on campus. They also travel to communities to coordinate contests for other counties in Wyoming and Montana and have consistently earned individual and team awards at regional and national competitions. The Livestock Judging Team operates under a “code of conduct” contract. Required course work includes ANSC 1210, “Livestock Judging I,” ANSC 1220, “Livestock Judging II,” ANSC 2230, “Livestock Judging III,” ANSC 2240, “Livestock Judging IV,” and ANSC 1250 “Field Experience: Livestock Exhibition.”

At Northwest, learning outcomes demonstrate that graduates have achieved a breadth of knowledge, skills, and the capacity to exercise intellectual inquiry. Northwest College assesses student learning at four levels: course, program, general education, and all-college. (See Criterion Three for a discussion of the College’s *Assessment Plan*.) As explained in *The Northwest College Catalog*,

College education prepares a student both for life and for making a living. It blends the practical application of knowledge with the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. When successful, education balances the sometimes contradictory claims of social service and individual ambition. A good general education fosters freedom’s values and nurtures individual growth. It lays the foundation for further learning in a discipline or vocation, provides the tools to navigate change, and prepares one for life-long learning.

The purpose of general education at Northwest College is to shape the development of students according to these values... .

In addition to course-specific general education outcomes, the all-college outcomes further articulate Northwest’s commitment to student scholarship and inquiry. All graduates must successfully complete a capstone course, a forum for demonstrating mastery of the all-college outcomes, which include

- Analysis
- Oral Communication

- Information & Technology Literacy
- Multiple Points of View
- Writing

Learning outcomes demonstrate effective preparation for continued learning. Broad-based outcomes expand students' general education and program-specific base of knowledge and experience. Capstone courses require students to gather information, assess options, and consider multiple points of view. Also, the level of professional writing, speaking, and analysis gives students a transferable approach and set of skills for tackling new problems and professional challenges. In a 2008–2009 survey of capstone faculty, 85% of respondents indicated capstones were “very good” or “good” as an appropriate method to assess students' ability to synthesize and apply what they have learned; 10% said “fair”; and 5% indicated “weak.” The same survey found 84% of respondents concur to some degree that capstone courses provide students with opportunities to expand learning in relation to all-college outcomes while 73% agree that capstone courses provide students an opportunity to expand learning in relation to general education outcomes.¹⁶ (See Criterion Three for a discussion of assessment.)

In spite of positive capstone results in, the College remains concerned about those students who begin their education in developmental courses and their subsequent success in college-level courses. The highlighted numbers in Table 4.2 indicates Northwest's ranking among the seven community colleges.



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16 See Survey of Capstone Faculty in the Resource Room.

Criterion Four

Table 4.2

**Core Indicator #12 – Success in Subsequent, Related Coursework
2006 Cohort, Reported 2008–2009**

	DEVELOPMENTAL MATH		DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH	
	Wyoming Community College Average	NWC	Wyoming Community College Average	NWC
% of students successfully COMPLETED DEVELOPMENTAL course in Fall 2006	56.2%	52.2%	59.3%	66.5%
% of students that successfully COMPLETED COLLEGE-LEVEL course within 1 Year	32.8%	29.6%	40.8%	37.1%
% of students that successfully COMPLETED COLLEGE-LEVEL course within 5 semesters	37.9%	36.4%	45.2%	41.0%
% of students that successfully COMPLETED COLLEGE-LEVEL course within 8 semesters	42.1%	40.7%	48.0%	43.8%

As indicated by the rankings provided by the Wyoming Community College Commission for Core Indicator #12, while Northwest did well in terms of students placed in developmental English courses, its percentages of students who successfully completed developmental math courses and went on to complete college-level math courses were lower than the average of the seven community colleges for the 2006 cohort. To address this concern, a new faculty position was created to provide students more support. In addition, the Math Department undertook a two-year review of its curriculum and teaching practices, resulting in common final exam questions for tracking of student performance and the adoption of a number of instructional technologies to increase student engagement and retention. Initial assessment of these activities suggests that the changes have enhanced student course completion. Longitudinal data will confirm whether these changes in fact result in more students being ready to be successful in college-level learning.

To help all students be more successful, the tutoring program was moved to the Office of Academic Affairs, and a new interdisciplinary work group was created. This group includes directors of the Math Tutoring Center, the Writing Center, and the Presentation Lab in addition to the faculty member responsible for developmental math education. This group is working with best practices research for ways to enhance service delivery and student academic success.

CORE COMPONENT—4C: *Northwest College assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.*

To assess the usefulness of the curriculum, Northwest College faculty must regularly review programs, gain input from advisory boards when developing new curricula, and articulate with transfer institutions.¹⁷ Additionally, Northwest hires adjunct faculty who are experts in their field; these adjuncts bring currency and direct application of the content area to Northwest College students.

Northwest conducts academic Program Reviews on a five-to-seven-year schedule; these reports address the currency and relevance of courses and programs. Examples of changes made to programs following Program Review analysis are as follows:

- Dropping of low-enrolled courses and continued updating of Physical Education Activity Course topics in the HOPE program.
- Redesign of program requirements and changes in credit to address improved transfer at regional four-year institutions in the Education program.
- Closing of a fledgling program that lacked sufficient enrollment in Computer Science.
- Closing of the American Studies program and increased online course delivery to improve enrollments in the Humanities program.

In addition to Program Reviews, each Associate of Applied Science degree program has advisory boards comprised of individuals who work in the occupational area, faculty, students, and alumni. This forum allows for discussion of skills employers need in employees. Faculty then use that information to refine the curriculum.¹⁸ For example, the Drafting Technology program made changes to meet workforce needs; similarly, the Photography program moved to a digital format because of industry expectations. The new Perkins Director, hired in 2008–2009, revitalized the use of advisory committees, and although not all boards are equally effective, renewed emphasis on their importance is leading to improvements. A cross-program advisory board was added in 2009–2010.¹⁹



To ensure the relevance of courses and programs, Associate of Arts, and Associate of Science degrees, the College articulates programs with transfer institutions. Articulation may guide the courses required in a given program. The First-year Experience and Articulation Coordinator oversees program articulation and relays information to program faculty on the relevance of their

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¹⁷ See Program Reviews in the Resource Room.

¹⁸ See Perkins Advisory Committee Guidelines in the Resource Room.

¹⁹ For memberships, see CTE Advisory Committees, 2009-2010 in the Resource Room.

Criterion Four

“In keeping with its mission, Northwest’s learning goals and outcomes include skills and professional competence essential to a diverse workforce.”

program in relationship to transfer institutions. Faculty are also encouraged to attend state-wide, discipline-specific articulation meetings to stay current with the University of Wyoming curriculum changes. (See Criterion Five for a discussion of articulation.)

In keeping with its mission, Northwest’s learning goals and outcomes include skills and professional competence essential to a diverse workforce. The College’s mission, “Through exceptional, dynamic living and learning environments, Northwest College dedicates itself to individual student achievement, diversity, global citizenship, and community vitality,” emphasizes the importance of professional competence. Through informal data gathering, regional employers have indicated that they are seeking employees who can compute, read, write, communicate effectively in person and over the phone, provide customer service, and solve problems. The all-college and general education outcomes guide the instruction of these qualities in Northwest College graduates, providing students with the ability to speak and write well, to solve problems, to think critically and creatively, and to better understand the world in which they live. So that students understand the diversity of the world in which they live and work, they must also complete the Comparative Cultural Awareness component of the general education requirements. Cultural awareness is reinforced by the College’s strong international student program and on-going multi-cultural programs and events. International students present programs about their home countries, and two Fulbright Scholars in residence have provided international perspectives. Additionally, partnerships with Chile and Korea have brought to campus groups of students who have added to the many cultural events on campus and in the community.

Northwest’s learning outcomes document that graduates have gained the skills and knowledge they need to function in diverse local, national, and global societies. The College’s recognition of the importance of diversity is reflected in the mission as well as in other mission documents, such as the “Diversity Statement” adopted in 2008 and designed to reinforce perspective, skills, and behaviors central to functioning in national and global societies. In addition, the College has incorporated two diversity outcomes into its assessment plan: “Multiple Points of View” and “Comparative Cultural Awareness.” To meet the “Multiple Points of View” all-college outcome, students must “[i]dentify the attitudes, values, core beliefs, data, and/or assumptions that shape multiple points of view in relation to a particular problem, project, or topic.” For the “Comparative Cultural Awareness” general education outcome, students must succeed in courses with a “primary focus of cultural analysis that ensures an explicit comparison of culture in context.” Options range from agroecology and anthropology classes, to business and field studies classes, to language, literature, history, and political science courses.

Northwest’s Associate of Applied Science degrees have two weaknesses. First, these degrees do not have a multicultural component. Second, some Associate of Applied Science degrees do not include a college-level math course, which makes these degrees ineligible for the Bachelor of Applied Science degree at the University of Wyoming. The Vice President for Academic Affairs has raised these issues

with program chairs and faculty. Currently, these issues are being addressed at the advising rather than the programmatic level.

The College models the importance of technology. For example, many classes incorporate technology, whether it be online technology (e.g., *BlackboardCE* and/or podcasting and/or podcasting) or hands-on skills, such as that done by farrier students shoeing horses, nursing students in their practica, or photo students working in the lab. Most technical programs have up-to-date technology.

Northwest involves alumni, employers, and other external constituents in its curricular development and evaluation. In addition to drawing on the insights of advisory boards, the College relies on community surveys conducted in all service area communities to help guide course and program delivery. All new programs must collect feedback from external groups prior to approval. New program approval forms required by the Wyoming Community College Commission lead colleges to document community professional involvement in the design of new programs. Capstone courses require outside evaluators to attend presentations, and that feedback may be considered by departments and divisions as an impetus for curricular change. Programs provide these evaluators with feedback forms that go to students and may be reviewed by faculty.

Northwest supports creation and use of scholarship by students in keeping with its mission by providing students the environment, the skills and the motivation to do so. The environment for research starts with Hinckley Library, which has a physical as well as a virtual presence for all students.

Hinckley Library

Northwest College's Hinckley Library staff develops, organizes, maintains, and provides access to materials that support students and other library users in their pursuit of educational and lifelong learning goals. Staff also teach library users to find, evaluate, and utilize information resources.

Hinckley Library contains a physical collection of 53,303 books, 358 periodical subscriptions, 1,570 DVDs and music CDs, 258 music scores, and other materials to support student research. The library is a U.S. government and Wyoming state government depository. In addition, it provides access to over 80 paid research databases, which include an image database, a music database, discipline-specific online encyclopedias, a human anatomy dissection database, and a collection of practice tests. Currently, these databases make available 42,578 electronic periodical titles, as well as 57,712 electronic books. In addition, the building houses 26 PCs, 6 Mac computers, and 8 library research



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“Faculty at Northwest College expect students to master the knowledge and skills necessary for independent learning in programs of applied practice.”

computers. The library also has 4 laptop computers for students to check out for use in the building.

During the academic year, the library is open every day for a total of 85 hours per week. The building is staffed with a library assistant (not student assistant) until 10 p.m. on Sunday and until 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Hours are expanded during final exams. Library staff consists of three Master of Library Science librarians, a Bachelor of Arts-prepared librarian, and three part-time library assistants. Student staff provides support at the circulation desk. Librarians answer about 240 reference questions in a typical week.

Hinckley Library is well-funded. The total budget for 2008–2009 was \$395,317.00. The library has used money from its budget and \$150,000 from Wyoming Legislative funding to purchase books and AV materials for the collection. To date, Hinckley Library has added new materials in film, nursing, anthropology, English as a second language, and children’s literature in addition to updating the U.S.G.S. map collection for Wyoming and Montana. Typically, the library also uses a small amount of donation money, and in 2006–2007, began receiving income from the Student Senate (\$2,952.00), which must be used for items that directly benefit students.

On average 2,100 people, both students and community members, enter the library each week to use library and computer resources, get assistance with their research, or to study. Table 4.3 details student use of the Hinckley Library in Powell on the main campus. Hinckley Library also provides part-time staffing at the Cody Center.

As part of the library’s mission, librarians provide library research sessions at faculty requests. Each information literacy session is custom-designed for specific assignment(s). Instruction sessions have grown from 32 sessions reaching 452 students during Fall 2006 to 59 sessions reaching 861 students in Fall 2008. The library has been assessing student learning during these sessions with a pre and post test and has seen some improvement over the course of the semester. Faculty who use library services report that they believe their students’ papers and projects are better as a result of instruction. In Spring 2009, librarians piloted a one-credit Information Literacy class that is coupled with a student’s capstone class.

Laboratory Resources

As important as the library for an environment appropriate for research, are the science labs and computer labs. Northwest College has 11 science labs well stocked with equipment and materials to perform scientific research. Laboratory resources range from physics, biology, and chemistry labs to the drafting lab complete with computer stations, software for Geographic Information Systems, CAD applica-

tions, and a 3-D printer.²⁰ Additionally, students can choose from 42 different computer labs, both PC and Mac, hosting 500 machines. (At this time, some stationary labs are being considered for a change to a laptop lab for more effective use of space.)²¹

Table 4.3
Student Use of the Library

SERVICE/USAGE	FY2006	FY2007	% Change FY06— FY07	FY2008	% Change FY07—FY08	% Change FY06— FY08
Total Gate Count (Visitation)	69,294	71,301	+2.9	74,445	+4.4	+7.4
Total Circulation (Items Checked Out)	8,761	8,624	-1.6	10,704	+24.1	+22.2
Reference Transactions (Face-to-Face Help)	11,630	9,993	-14.1	11,201	+12.1	-3.7
Number of Instructional Classes/presentations	50	79	+58.0	88	+11.4	+76.0
Headcount for Instructional Classes/Presentations	681	1,092	+60.4	1,305	+19.5	+91.6

Finally, students are motivated to research through expectations of faculty and degree requirements. Faculty at Northwest College expect students to master the knowledge and skills necessary for independent learning in programs of applied practice. Successful meeting of this expectation is demonstrated not only in the completion of research assignments, a skill first taught in ENGL 1010 and then developed through a variety of course-specific research assignments that lead to the capstone course, but also through public programs and displays: photo shows, art shows, welding contests, open mic performances, music performances and convocations, horse shows, drafting technology displays, athletic events, archaeological digs, internships, etc.

The application of learning is essential, and as such, Northwest College provides many opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and scholarship. All Associate of Applied Science degrees at Northwest are built on a core of general education designed to prepare students for life-long learning. This type of learning assures that students can read, write, analyze and solve problems, think creatively and critically, research, and use appropriate technology. This basic foundation of general education ensures that students can learn independently in and beyond their programs. Beyond the general education core, students must also master the knowledge and skills specific to the occupational area and demonstrate the ability to handle a significant project through their capstone courses. In some Associate of Applied Science programs, students must obtain licensure

20 See Northwest College Laboratory Resources in the Resource Room.

21 See NWC Computer Labs List in the Resource Room.

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“Northwest College’s curricular requirements for general education and co-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to gain this balance.”

in the field once their degree is complete (e.g., Nursing, Welding). Northwest’s Associate of Applied Science programs prepare students for that step as well as for success in the occupation. Each Associate of Applied Science program has specific student learning outcomes. On a yearly basis, faculty report on student success relative to these specific learning outcomes.²²

In addition, most Associate of Applied Science degree programs, as well as many Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degree programs, require students to apply their skills in a work environment through a cooperative education experience or internship. In these environments, students work independently from their instructors to deepen their learning in an on-the-job experience. Experiential learning (Internships and Cooperative Education) allows students to test the waters, either with a specific company or a career field in general. Internships are work-based learning experiences, arranged through Northwest College’s Office of Work-Based Learning. These arrangements are supervised, career-related work experiences combined with reflective, academic study that helps students “learn by doing.” By embarking on one or more, students can sharpen their skills, begin a network of employer contacts, assess their strengths, and test classroom theories in a real world setting. Additionally, internships and cooperative education boosts student maturity and self-confidence levels; improves human relations skills; prepares students for life after graduation; and helps them student integrate personal values with work. Students may complete a maximum of 12 credit hours of work-based learning to fulfill associate degree requirements, applying no more than six credits of any one of these options toward the total of 12 credits. From 2006–2009, 49 students took advantage of this opportunity, totaling 144 credit hours.

Applying knowledge in a socially responsible manner is critical to a student’s development, and to ensure this, Northwest provides curricular and co-curricular activities that promote this. In *The Northwest College Catalog*, the preamble to the general education outcomes states, “When successful, education balances the sometimes contradictory claims of social service and individual ambition.” Northwest College’s curricular requirements for general education and co-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to gain this balance. The following list provides a brief sampling.

Curricular Opportunities

- **HLED 1005/SOC 1005, “Risky Behaviors”**—“Designed to increase a student’s awareness of the social influence of drugs, alcohol, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and sexual assault from a multi-disciplinary perspective (health, physiological, and sociological). Presents in logical form accurate, current information from the biological, health, and sociological sciences essential for making sound decisions regarding lifestyle choices.” Developed in answer to

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22 See Program-specific Outcomes Reports in the Resource Room.

a need of the student body, the main focus of the course is to increase student awareness and to equip them with the knowledge that leads to good choices.

- **SOC 2340, “Relationship Violence”**—“Students learn the nature and extent of domestic violence, child abuse, dating violence, and sexual assault in America and the legal ramifications. A historical perspective on relationship violence is explored as well as contemporary factors that contribute to the recurrence of the cycle of violence. Finally coping strategies and techniques to prevent burnout are addressed for the professional working with the victims of violence. Students who successfully complete this course with a grade of ‘B’ or better may be eligible for possible internship positions with Crisis Intervention Services.” This course was developed in partnership with the Crisis Intervention Centers in Powell and Cody to promote awareness of this problem as well as to train individuals to break the cycle of violence. In promoting this course, new volunteers have been recruited to the community program. Additionally, local law enforcement professionals have taken the class in order to be better informed about the facts surrounding relationship violence. It is taught by the director of the Park County Crisis Intervention Center.
- **Government Requirement for All Graduates**—Wyoming Statute, Title 21, Chapter 9, Section 102, mandates that all public institutions “give instruction in the essentials of the United States constitution and the constitution of the state of Wyoming, including the study of and devotion to American institution and ideals,” and no student shall receive a post-secondary degree from a Wyoming institution of higher education without having been instructed in the above. An understanding of politics and government is fundamental to good citizenship and contributes to the foundation of scholarly knowledge expected of college graduates. Students have three options for meeting this requirement.
- **PHTO 2385, “Theme House: Photography”** –Photography Theme House students do a community service project every semester. Students have raised thousands of dollars for different charities and causes in the past 10 years. Most recently, students organized events for a Northwest College employee to help with medical costs, the local charity Reaching Hands Ranch, and a Photography alumnus involved in a car accident. Photo Theme House students also produced a “Portraits of Cancer Survivors” show that has twice toured the state to promote awareness.



Criterion Four

“However, all Northwest College courses of study adhere to discipline-specific practices and ethics.”

- **Phi Theta Kappa**—The purpose of Northwest’s Phi Epsilon Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society is to promote scholarship, the development of leadership and service, and the cultivation of fellowship among qualified honor students at Northwest College. PTK currently has 80 members. They conduct a book drive for Better World Books every semester and occasionally work with Habitat for Humanity. A current project is to examine the PTK Honors Topic “The Paradox of Affluence: Choices, Challenges, and Consequences.”
- **CO/M 2010: “Leadership Skills: SIFE”**—Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) is a partnership between business and higher education that is preparing the next generation of entrepreneurs and business leaders to create a better world for everyone. The SIFE program concentrates on six areas: market economics, success skills, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, environmental sustainability, and business ethics. The NWC SIFE Team has been in existence since 2000 and is usually made up of between 10–20 members. SIFE is offered as a one-credit course CO/M 2010, “Leadership Skills: SIFE.”
- **Service Learning**—Northwest’s service learning program is in its early stages. (For a discussion, see Criterion Five.)

CORE COMPONENT—4D: *Northwest College provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

Northwest’s academic and student support programs contribute to the development of student skills and attitudes fundamental to the responsible use of knowledge. These considerations are woven into the fabric of general education courses—often articulated in course syllabi—and standards may vary from discipline to discipline. However, all Northwest College courses of study adhere to discipline-specific practices and ethics.

To enhance student success, the College takes a number of steps that include but are not limited to the following:

Academic Support Programs

- **Required Placement Testing**—To facilitate underprepared students’ academic success and transition into the general education curriculum, Northwest uses a placement system for math, writing, and reading courses. This placement is based on Compass, ACT, and SAT scores. Students who do not score at the college level are placed in courses designed to support development of these skills. Those who believe

their placement test scores do not reflect their proficiency may retake the placement tests.

- Developmental and College Studies Courses**—Northwest offers developmental courses in math, writing, and reading. These courses carry college credit but do not count toward graduation requirements. The College also offers two one-credit courses to help students acquire study skills. On average, 92% of first-time freshmen place into developmental courses. HMDV 1000 and HMDV 1010 are useful in helping students master use of the electronic library, computer labs, and other important academic success skills. These courses do count toward graduation and are highly recommended for all students. (See Appendix 4.3, Retention of First-time Students Who Placed into Developmental Courses.)
- Tutoring**—Several forms of tutoring are available at Northwest College. The Student Success Center offers peer tutoring in many academic areas for students. Recruited from the student body and recommended by academic departments, peer tutors represent both academic excellence and service to others. Tutoring services are free, and all students are welcome to inquire about group or individualized programs. In addition, the College supports the Math Tutoring Center, the Writing Center, and the Presentation Lab to provide faculty and staff support for students seeking assistance in these areas. These resources are separate from the Success Center. This service is well-used as is evidenced by the data shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.4
Student Success Center Peer Tutor Totals
(Fall 2003–Spring 2009)

PEER TUTOR TOTALS (FALL 2003–SPRING 2009)							
SEM.	STUDENTS	HOURS	TUTORS	SEM.	STUDENTS	HOURS	TUTORS
FA03	130	1,258	41	SP04	94	1,570	47
FA04	134	1,222	51	SP05	73	864	22
FA05	114	1,277	51	SP06	111	1,390	38
FA06	128	1,495	55	SP07	136	2,053	30
FA07	131	1,472	60	SP08	109	939	30
FA08	132	1,285	40	SP09	133	1,140	38
TOTALS	769	8,009	298	TOTALS	656	7,956	205

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Table 4.5
On-campus Housing Numbers

YEAR	ENROLLMENT	# IN HALLS	% IN HALLS	# IN APTS	TOTAL ON-CAMPUS	% ON-CAMPUS OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT
2003	1,715	394	23%	87	481	28%
2004	1,755	418	24%	73	491	28%
2005	1,754	470	27%	93	563	32%
2006	1,763	505	29%	86	591	34%
2007	1,747	541	31%	84	625	36%
2008	1,810	555	31%	76	631	35%
2009	2,198	658	30%	85	743	34%

Source: Housing Office

- **Personal Counseling**—Northwest College offers personal counseling in a professional and confidential atmosphere to students desiring it. Counselors strive to assist students in dealing with the sometimes stressful college environment, foster awareness of personal strengths and interests, and encourage students to take full advantage of the opportunities for academic and personal growth. Approximately 350 students take advantage of this service in a year.
- **Residential Life**—The Northwest College Residential Life program is more than dormitories and apartment buildings. It is an environment for human development, a living and learning community for students. In this environment, programming is offered to promote students' social, spiritual, physical, and intellectual well being. In addition, the five residence halls and two apartment complexes are safe, clean, and wired for internet access. Rules for living in the halls and apartments are clearly stated, and all students must sign a contract agreeing to appropriate behavior. All halls are staffed with student Resident Assistants (RAs), and each has a Resident Director (RD). Each apartment complex has a manager, and the larger complex has two additional staff members. All residential life operations are overseen by the Residence and Campus Life Director, with help and support from the Residence and Conference Specialist and Senior Office Assistant for Residential Life.

The number of students residing in the halls at Northwest College has grown over the past decade. As shown in Table

4.6, the number of resident students grew from 481 students in 2003 to 631 students in 2008, and, as of Fall 2009, the halls and apartments are at capacity.

Residence Halls

- Ashley Hall is one of the largest halls on campus with housing for 148 residents in 74 rooms.
- Cody Hall is the largest residence hall on the Northwest College campus and houses up to 180 residents in 90 rooms.
- Colter Hall houses 84 residents in 44 rooms.
- Lewis and Clark Hall was recently refurbished, including a new kitchen area, lobby, and resident rooms, and houses up to 148 students in 80 rooms.
- Simpson Hall is a coed, 154-bed hall featuring “suite style” living in units with four single bedrooms, a bathroom/shower and central living room.

Apartments

- Trapper Village Main has 5 apartment buildings containing 20 one- and two-bedroom apartments.
- Trapper Village West consists of 61 one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom apartments.

Programming is developed by the RAs in cooperation with the RDs and covers a wide variety of topics, everything from study habits to avoiding sexual assault to healthy living habits.

Northwest follows explicit policies and procedures to ensure ethical conduct in its research and instructional activities. Northwest also provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and practice conducted by faculty and students.

Faculty Policies

Professional Ethics: Faculty conduct is guided by policy as outlined in the “Professional Ethics,” Section 1.5.1, of the *Employment Handbook*. The College “expects that its faculty should honor and comply with the recognized standards of the profession and the ‘Statement of Professional Ethics’ promulgated by the American Association of University Professors.” The College has a “Human Subjects Research Policy.” Other literature- and laboratory-based research is unmonitored though governed by discipline-specific standards (including the handling of hazardous materials). Grant research is monitored by the appropriate agency.

Syllabi Guidelines: The Office of Academic Affairs publishes a yearly



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“As this discussion has shown, Northwest College values a life of learning, a point reinforced through its emphasis on general education, its commitment to professional development for all employees, and its work with local communities.”

guide for faculty writing course syllabi.²³ Faculty are responsible for overseeing student research in individual courses. They discourage academic dishonesty through written statements on course syllabi and may use technological tools to discover such practices in students’ work (e.g., *SafeAssign* to check student work for plagiarism).²⁴ Capstone faculty have members of the Institutional Research Committee provide feedback to students using surveys as part of the capstone experience.

Staff Policies

The *Employment Handbook* describes the rights and responsibilities of all College employees.

Student Policies

Statements on Course Syllabi: Many faculty include statements on course syllabi describing expected ethical conduct. In addition to explaining the consequences of academic dishonesty, many faculty use syllabi to articulate safety measures and to ensure compliance with government regulations as well as appropriate classroom and online behavior.

Student “Academic Code of Conduct”: The Student “Academic Code of Conduct,” housed in the *Student Handbook*, outlines the student’s academic rights and responsibilities. This section defines plagiarism, cheating, trafficking, copyright infringement, and interfering with the learning of other students. The *Student Handbook* also outlines possible actions that may be taken against students who breach the “Academic Code of Conduct.” As explained in the *Student Handbook*, students have the right to initiate instructional complaints “to resolve differences which may arise concerning a disagreement between a student and an instructor over instructional incidents.”

Northwest creates, disseminates, and enforces clear policies on practices involving intellectual property rights. Policy 1.6.6, which governs intellectual property rights, is annually disseminated to employees via the *Employment Handbook* and is available on the College website. The *Employment Handbook* further defines copyrightable and patentable material (See section 1.6.6.1.1), rights and responsibilities (See section 1.6.6.1.2), and methods for determining ownership and mediation (See sections 1.6.6.1.3 and 1.6.6.1.4).

Final Thoughts

Though Northwest College is strong in providing a life of learning for students, future plans for improvement include using data more effectively in making program adjustments; the addition of preparatory classes and tutorials for online learners in addition to greater support for these students; improved outcomes in

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23 See Writing Syllabus Guidelines in the Resource Room.

24 See course syllabi in the Resource Room.



the developmental learning courses; and a stronger general education component in the Associate of Applied Science degrees. To improve facilitation of a life of learning for staff, Northwest College expects to maintain and/or improve funding for professional development. Additionally, non-teaching staff will be provided with a statement that reinforces freedom of inquiry.

As this discussion has shown, Northwest College values a life of learning, a point reinforced through its emphasis on general education, its commitment to professional development for all employees, and its work with local communities. Northwest has the resources, both in terms of personnel and facilities, to prepare students for a life of learning and to promote continued learning for staff and faculty. If every student, like Photography graduate Chelsey DeWald, is able to say a few years after graduation, “I realize that what was learned in college, I use today,” then Northwest has been successful in meeting its mission, knowing that students received the knowledge and skills they needed to thrive in a changing world.

