

Mid-Cycle Evaluation (Year 3)
Peer-Evaluation Report

North Idaho College

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

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A confidential report of findings prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Introduction

North Idaho College's Mid-Cycle Evaluation took place during a time of continuing transition for the institution. For the most part, the changes pointed in a positive direction. November 2024's elections had brought new voices — and a greater sense of unity — to the board of trustees. The college's accreditation sanction had been reduced from Show Cause to Probation in January 2025. Since then, NIC's governance groups had withdrawn or abandoned their earlier no-confidence petitions. By fall, the college's enrollments, donations, and bond ratings were up, rekindling a sense of fiscal optimism. The campus's attention was returning to matters of core function.

The visit's timing, however, introduced some ripples into NIC's forward-moving current. Despite January's reduction in sanction level, NIC had yet to resolve a number of governance-related recommendations, some of which remained out of compliance with NWCCU standards. Over recent years, NIC had undergone multiple special evaluations on these matters. In the most recent visit, a year ago, the evaluators had acknowledged NIC's substantial investment in board policies and practices between 2022 and 2024. Even so, the 2024 team had concluded that, though the board's previous efforts held promise, only time could tell whether the institution would implement and sustain them. The 2025 mid-cycle evaluators were tasked with measuring what difference a year had made.

Meantime, due to those more pressing governance issues, NIC's mid-cycle visit had been postponed twice, leaving a two-year gap in oversight of fundamental, but critical processes like student learning assessment and the evaluation of mission fulfillment. Those broad domains, normally the core of any routine mid-cycle evaluation, also overlapped squarely with a pair of outstanding recommendations, both dating back to NIC's last Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE), five years earlier. As a further consequence, the compounding delays would leave the college with a narrow 18-month window to respond to any findings from the mid-cycle evaluation before NIC's next EIE.

In light of these timing-related factors, the fall 2025 visit needed to serve three purposes:

- To provide NIC with formative mid-cycle feedback it can use to prepare for the EIE
- To revisit NIC's progress in resolving assessment- and planning-related recommendations that had emerged from NIC's last EIE, five years earlier
- To evaluate the college's continued attention to governance-centered concerns and related recommendations that, in recent years, had overshadowed other accreditation-related processes

Visit Summary

A five-member peer evaluation team visited North Idaho College October 16-17, 2025. The college's Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report, posted August 29, provided the evaluators with a thorough response to all required elements of the visit, supplemented by more than twenty

folders of exhibits. The team found the report to be clearly written and well organized, despite some repetition and a tendency toward narrative description over self-reflection and identification of next steps. Notwithstanding the report's 70-page length, the team learned a great deal more onsite than the report presented. The "Looking Forward" chapter was surprisingly brief and general.

Over the course of the team's two days onsite, evaluators interviewed more than 60 faculty, staff, and student leaders. Respondent groups and individuals included the trustees, president, provost, constituent group leaders, President's Cabinet, division chairs, assessment and enrollment/retention committees, and the chief officers for finance, human resources, and student services. As noted by previous visiting teams, the people of North Idaho College were unfailingly candid, collegial, and responsive, both before and during the visit.

Part I: Mission Fulfillment

North Idaho College is making solid progress in demonstrating fulfillment of its mission:

North Idaho College meets the diverse educational needs of students, employers and the northern Idaho communities it serves through a commitment to student success, educational excellence, community engagement and lifelong learning.

NIC's new Strategic Plan, adopted in mid-2025, is central to NIC's mission-fulfillment efforts. Over the course of the visit, constituents widely acknowledged that the plan was developed collaboratively and represented a workable blueprint for NIC's next five years. The plan now frames the president's annual goals. The Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report provided the evaluation team with ample weblinks and documents that delineated very clear goals, objectives, and measures that support the college's mission.

NIC's mission fulfillment metrics align with both 2025-2030 Strategic Plan and NIC's peer institution data. The college's Mission Fulfillment Dashboard presents meaningful metrics that are easily understood, reflecting NIC's mission fulfillment progress and how NIC currently stands among its peers.

Strengths

During the visit, the President's Cabinet underscored their confidence in the new Strategic Plan itself as a tool to direct college energies. The group provided multiple examples of ways, in particular, that the college is meeting Goal 3 – Expand and Strengthen Relationships with Business, Industry, Educational, and Community Partners, which the president and his team see as drivers for much of their recent work. Business and industry partners are more engaged as evidenced by new apprenticeship partnerships and increased career training partnerships; and enrollment has grown dramatically after greater engagement with local high schools.

The college's benchmarking efforts are also noteworthy. In the self-study as well as in meetings onsite, the evaluation team learned that the intentional selection of regional and national peers

included schools from IPEDS and the National Community College Benchmarking Project.

PowerBI dashboards are another tool that has armed college stakeholders with the data needed to focus on mission fulfillment through data collection and analysis to promote continuous improvement. In meeting after meeting, NIC staff expressed their enthusiasm for having access to meaningful, just-in-time data. These resources appear to have been transformational in creating an environment that fosters inclusive planning across departments and divisions at the mid- and upper-management and faculty leadership levels. One example is especially illustrative. Recognizing the need to focus on enrollment growth to ensure institutional sustainability, the multi-constituent Recruitment Committee began to meet weekly to analyze enrollment data, identify gaps and areas for intervention, and utilize college resources to implement targeted marketing and high-touch tactics. Both the self-study and onsite interviews highlighted successful interventions that resulted from those discussions, including targeted marketing for new and dual-credit students, expansion of on-campus recruiting activities, and expanded NIC Connect outreach activities at the high schools. These initiatives received college support and necessary resources, and their efforts have clearly resulted in increased enrollments.

Across both instruction and support services, faculty and staff shared their excitement about having access to data that they can disaggregate by discipline, course, student demographics, campuses, and other meaningful student characteristics. The examples provided by 2025-30 Strategic Plan and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) leads demonstrated that most faculty and staff are familiar with the Strategic Plan and are able to connect their department's role to it, using data to identify student achievement gaps, propose interventions, and secure resources to pilot and implement the recommended interventions.

This momentum has buoyed the entire college, as reflected by college staff during every meeting with evaluators.

Areas for continued growth

One particular gap was not addressed in the report and was missing throughout the site visit: a documentable continuous improvement process. Though countless examples of good work were shared anecdotally, faculty, staff, and administrative leaders noted that the decision-making processes behind the examples were largely informal. People described the easy accessibility of senior administrators and the inclusive make-up of the 13-member President's Cabinet as assets in getting things done at NIC. But campus leaders acknowledged the need to develop a more structured process for planning, resource allocation, and evaluation of the outcomes of their decisions. As NIC prepares for its Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE), the college may wish to establish a continuous improvement process that more clearly documents evidence of a continuous cycle of improvement and closing the loop.

Part II: Student Achievement

During this site visit, the evaluators observed that NIC has demonstrated great momentum and notable successes in student achievement. The report and evidence submitted by the college demonstrate that NIC broadly utilizes a user-friendly approach to assess student achievement data, guide its institutional improvements, and support investments in student success.

Strengths

The college regularly monitors student achievement measures such as retention, persistence, completion, and post-graduation success. Further, as noted above, NIC benchmarks these measures against similar institutions at the state, regional, and national levels, chosen from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) comparison groups. NIC's student achievement measures are disaggregated by categories that reflect the characteristics of the college's student population.

Plentiful, user-friendly data are available via the college's PowerBI data dashboard system. Moreover, these data are clearly being used by academic and student support departments across the college to inform planning, decision-making, and resource allocation. NIC's Retention Committee reported that, using NIC data tools, it is able to make recommendations and secure resources to take timely action when student achievement gaps are identified. Additionally, the Student Learning Outcome Assessment (SLOA) committee's faculty and staff leads demonstrated that they were not only familiar with these tools, but they are actively engaged in using them to identify gaps and propose interventions. In interviews onsite, various stakeholder groups presented examples of meaningful investments in improvement efforts. Examples include a summer bridge program for international students, enhancements to resources for residential students, new student orientation, a college-wide Culture of Care effort, a new First Year Experience program, and a revamping of liberal arts math.

Publicly available on NIC's accreditation webpage, the Mission Fulfillment Dashboard presents the college's student achievement data and peer comparisons.

Areas for continued growth

As with mission fulfillment, mentioned above, a formal continuous improvement process and evaluation component are not currently evident in NIC's student achievement work. As NIC prepares for its Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) visit, the evaluation team encourages the college to build on and to document its efforts to "close the loop" on the successes that are evident, particularly regarding new initiatives and interventions such as orientation and First Year Experience.

Part III: Programmatic Assessment

Since 2020, North Idaho College (NIC) has made substantial progress in developing a systematic, faculty-driven approach to assessing student learning across its programs, moving

from what faculty once described as a “patchwork” of practices to an organized and increasingly consistent process centered on software-housed rubrics and interactive dashboards that make assessment results both visible and actionable.

Strengths

NIC’s advancements since 2020 have centered around (1) establishing a uniform structure for gathering learning evidence across modalities and divisions, (2) using data to identify and respond to achievement gaps, and (3) engaging faculty across nearly all academic areas in a culture of inquiry and improvement with a common language around assessment of learning.

Structure

The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) committee includes representatives from every academic division, with many areas designating an assessment lead faculty member who receives a stipend to facilitate training and support. SLOA provides regular communication, professional development, and a reporting structure that brings assessment topics into monthly division meetings.

Data systems and accessibility

Data collection is built around rubrics housed in Canvas, NIC’s learning-management software. These rubrics align to course-level outcomes, which in turn map to program and General Education (GEM) outcomes. The latter align with Idaho State Board of Education outcomes.

Two key improvements exemplify NIC’s progress in data-management since 2020:

- *Consistent data collection.* Every course section is provided with a rubric within its Canvas shell which is pre-populated with course learning objective language. Faculty design signature assignments which they align with specific learning objectives and collect data on student learning using the rubrics. This standardization ensures that evidence of student learning is comparable across courses, modalities, and locations.
- *Interactive dashboards:* In coordination with Institutional Research, data from Canvas is transferred into dashboards which are accessible to SLOA leaders, division chairs, and deans. The assessment data can be disaggregated by student demographics, status, location, term, or faculty type, making possible targeted analyses of achievement gaps. Faculty can use these dashboards to review multi-year trends and inform action plans.

General Education (GEM) assessment

GEM faculty have institutionalized annual assessment cycles that serve as “closing-the-loop” processes. Each fall, faculty teams collaborate on and submit assessment action plans for review by division chairs, deans, and the SLOA committee. The plans describe how assessment results have informed the proposed curricular or pedagogic changes. Examples include:

- *Math literacy course redesign*: Noting a performance gap among students who did not respond well to high-stakes testing, faculty implemented alternative assessments and restructured course preparation, yielding significant improvement in outcomes.
- *ESL and communication skills*: When assessment data revealed a persistent gap in communications outcomes for English as a Second Language (ESL) students, faculty collaborated with academic leaders to pilot an ESL summer bridge program.

Areas for continued growth

While NIC's faculty and leadership take pride in their assessment work, they remain aware of possibilities for improvement. Often, respondents noted opportunities to expand participation and to formalize continuous-improvement processes as among next steps.

Career Technical Education (CTE) assessment

At NIC, program reviews follow a five-year cycle and serve as the primary mechanism for programmatic assessment. Faculty use review findings to create five-year plans, and CTE advisory committees meet semiannually to discuss progress and emerging industry needs. However, between review years, there is no standard mechanism for annual reporting or reflection. Onsite, NIC division chairs noted that adoption of Canvas rubric assessment in CTE is the current priority to achieve greater parity with GEM processes.

Integration with planning and mission fulfillment

Conversations with faculty groups indicated that assessment data and program review findings inform many academic conversations and, occasionally, meaningful budget decisions. However, these same respondents noted that the path from idea to implementation at NIC remains largely informal and person-dependent, with interventions often emerging organically through small group conversation rather than formal planning channels. While this flexibility encourages innovation, it also means that projects may lack consistent follow-through or institutional ownership once a pilot phase ends. Creating a repeatable process to document initiative development and to sustain and evaluate successful projects could strengthen the college's capacity to "close the loop" systematically.

At the same time, parallel structures — such as the Recruitment and Retention committees, SLOA, and divisional leadership teams — all work on student success, but without formal integration. Recruitment and Retention efforts are anchored in Strategic Plan Goal 1 (growth and retention), while SLOA focuses on student learning and equity gaps. Each of these groups generates data and pilot initiatives, but they appear to operate on separate tracks.

NIC has an opportunity to strengthen its efforts by establishing a comprehensive planning cycle that formally links assessment of student learning, program review, and strategic initiatives to mission fulfillment indicators. Such a cycle could help ensure that learning data can inform

planning decisions and that institutional priorities feed back into assessment focus areas.

Participation

Of NIC's approximately 132 full-time faculty, division leads indicated that nearly 100 percent participate annually in assessment activities. Adjunct participation is estimated at a lower rate but is increasing from previous years with regular support from chairs and faculty leads. Dual-credit instructors show low and inconsistent engagement which division chairs suspect is likely due to more limited training and support. These gaps are already a next priority for the SLOA committee. CTE faculty participation remains uneven, although division chairs and deans report steady growth in discussion of assessment at monthly meetings. Fully integrating CTE programs into the same Canvas and dashboard structure used for GEM courses represents an important strategic step forward.

PART IV: Moving Forward

Despite substantial distractions, North Idaho College has continued to make progress toward its Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness by sustaining its momentum in the areas of mission fulfillment, student achievement, and programmatic assessment. Over the course of the visit, stakeholders from across the college expressed feeling that they have solid footing to continue the work on the goals shared in the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report. The evaluation team agrees with those self-identified goals:

- Continuing NIC's strategic planning implementation
- Scaling up NIC's learning assessment systems and professional development
- Leveraging NIC's data visualization tools to develop, implement, reassess, and refine student learning improvements
- Sustaining NIC's enrollment management initiatives to recruit and retain students

Further, the team believes that, though the timeline is short, North Idaho College is well positioned to prepare for the final step in its seven-year accreditation cycle.

Without deflecting energy from sustaining NIC's momentum or diminishing any emphasis on NIC's self-identified priorities, the evaluation team might offer three themes for consolidating the college's efforts over the next 18 months:

Formalizing continuous-improvement processes

Across the domains of mission fulfillment, student success, and student learning assessment, one key area for improvement is to establish — and document — continuous improvement cycles that demonstrate that NIC is closing the loop, tying resource allocation to planning and assessment. Because time is short, the college may not be able to complete multiple full cycles of these processes. But there's arguably time to design, pilot, and initiate "assess-plan-do-evaluate" loops in the college's student achievement efforts, student learning assessment initiatives, and other areas. Clear accountabilities and multi-year timelines can demonstrate

NIC's capacity to sustain the work beyond the EIE report's due date.

Identifying and addressing gaps

Because NIC's fundamental processes have been already making good progress, it seems feasible to remediate some, if not all, of the gaps that the mid-cycle evaluation has brought to light. For example, while participation in learning assessment efforts is high among full-time GEM faculty, engagement remains more limited among adjunct, dual-credit, and CTE faculty. Continuing targeted outreach, onboarding, training, mentorship, and system access can promote consistent application of assessment processes across all programs and modalities. Other gaps may present opportunities for enhancements. NIC may benefit from explicitly identifying student-learning assessment as a component of the Mission Fulfillment framework or, at a minimum, from connecting recruitment and retention work with SLOA and academic leadership to create shared measures and joint reporting.

Writing the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) report

In addition to the operational items above, the evaluation team identified some suggestions for NIC to consider as it writes its next self-evaluation report:

- Provide greater clarity around existing NIC decision-making processes. Even if such processes are informal, the evaluators will benefit from understanding their sequence. Diagrams may be helpful in describing relationships and decision trees.
- In addition to narrating what has occurred, consider incorporating some evaluation of what is working, what remains to be done, and what might be a timeline for next steps.

PART V: Addendums

Recommendation 1: Spring 2020 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability

Establish meaningful indicators (metrics) to align with and measure institutional goals and objectives in its evaluation, planning, and resource allocation processes to support institutional effectiveness and student achievement (2020 Standard 1.B.1 and 1.B.2).

Progress on Recommendation 1: Spring 2020

As noted earlier, the college has made notable strides toward fulfilling the elements of this recommendation, nonetheless leaving room for additional progress.

Strengths

NIC has developed and put into place a new five-year Strategic Plan, which includes meaningful indicators that align with and measure meaningful goals and objectives. The college's benchmarking makes meaningful use of regional and national peer data. Sophisticated, yet user-friendly dashboards have been deployed to support individuals and groups in their efforts to make data-informed decisions. These accomplishments align closely with elements of Standard 1.B.2.

Areas for continued growth

More work lies ahead for the college as NIC stakeholders develop clear, documented processes for applying data-analysis to planning and resource allocation. As repeated elsewhere in this report, NIC's decision-making processes, though inclusive, appear generally informal. During meetings with senior leadership and key committee leads, the recurring theme was that college stakeholders are indeed collecting and analyzing data that are aligned with the Strategic Plan's measures, motivating multiple laudable initiatives that have resulted in early wins and demonstrate promise in their impact on student success. However, all stakeholders very transparently shared that the college processes for funneling good ideas to decision-makers (and funding) occur in an organic manner. The president emphasized his effort to be "in the room," where possible, so that he could assure that new initiatives would receive needed funding and that obstacles would be cleared.

Though these processes are efficient in activating innovation, there is less evidence that they incorporate deliberative resource-allocation processes, re-evaluation, or follow-through to justify ongoing investments. Recommended next steps involve developing — and documenting — processes and cycles for evaluating, planning, and allocating resources that support mission fulfillment, as called for by Standard 1.B.1.

Recommendation 2: Spring 2020 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability

Engage in an effective system of learning outcomes assessment processes across all academic and learning support programs and use the results of those assessments to evaluate the quality of learning and to inform academic and learning-support planning (2020 Standard 1.C.5 and 1.C.7)

Progress on Recommendation 2: Spring 2020

Earlier sections of this report have acknowledged that, since 2020, North Idaho College has made marked progress in its learning outcomes assessment effort. Where gaps remain, they relate primarily to ensuring consistent participation across instructional areas and to formalizing the use of results within NIC's planning and budgeting frameworks.

Strengths

NIC has worked to establish a clear and sustainable structure for assessing student learning across programs and modalities. Notable accomplishments include:

- *Widespread buy-in:* The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) committee — comprising representatives from every division — coordinates training, provides resources, and maintains communication channels that ensure consistency of practice. Each division has a designated assessment lead who supports colleagues and facilitates the exchange of assessment findings. Unsurprisingly, participation among full-time faculty is strong, and assessment topics are now regular items at division meetings, indicating that outcomes assessment is becoming embedded in NIC culture.

- *Data management:* The college's decision to house assessment processes within Canvas has contributed to transparency and ownership among faculty. Faculty conduct assessment using Canvas-based rubrics aligned to course and program outcomes. Data gathered from rubrics is made available through interactive dashboards maintained by Institutional Research staff, allowing disaggregation by demographic variables, modality, and instructor type. The dashboards enable faculty and academic leaders to analyze learning trends and identify achievement gaps, establishing the foundations of an effective system for evaluating the quality of learning.
- *Use of results:* Assessment results are increasingly used to inform academic planning and instructional improvement, with a recent math literacy redesign and ESL communications initiative as key examples. General Education (GEM) faculty now prepare annual assessment action plans — approved by division chairs, dean, and SLOA — that document how results will inform curricular and pedagogical planning.

Areas for continued growth

While a few areas persist as challenges, they are recognized by NIC leaders at all levels, and the college is actively working to overcome them. They include:

- *Use of results in decision-making:* While examples of data-informed improvement are evident, processes for translating assessment results into resource allocation and institutional planning remain informal. Conversations with academic and student services leaders indicated they recognize the need to establish a structured assessment-to-action cycle which will link findings to planning proposals and documenting outcomes, as Standard 1.C.7 expects.
- *Consistent engagement:* Onsite, division chairs and deans indicated that participation among Career and Technical Education (CTE) faculty, adjunct faculty, and dual-credit instructors is improving but not yet comprehensive, as Standard 1.C.5 calls for. Both the SLOA committee and division chairs recognize the importance of working to increase participation among these groups. Division chairs and deans indicated that CTE participation is a current priority, with dual-credit instructor participation to follow.

A related concern involves sustaining assessment efforts between program reviews. The current timing of program reviews for academic programs provides for robust reporting every five years; however, interim assessment activity varies between CTE areas. Onsite, division chairs, deans, and faculty described ongoing efforts to build a regular annual cycle of assessment reporting to improve continuity and reduce the heavy workload of the five-year program review report.

Recommendation 2: Spring 2022 Special Report

The Board of Trustees adheres to institutional and Board policies, particularly those pertaining to appropriate roles and responsibilities, expectations, professional conduct and ethics, and grievance procedures. (2020 Standard(s) 2.A.1; 2.D.2; ER 9)

Progress on Recommendation 2: Spring 2022

The college's self-study and interviews with all members of the board of trustees confirmed that trustees are taking seriously their role as a policy board in accordance with NIC *Policy 2.01.02 Responsibilities and Duties*.

Affirmative evidence

In conversations onsite, the board cited its comprehensive set of policies — developed by the board starting in 2023 and guided by NIC's two consultants from the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) — as a strong framework for policy governance both for the current slate of trustees and for those succeeding them. The policies are published on the NIC website. In meetings with the evaluators, the board pointed to its regular policy-review cycle and annual trustee attestation cited in *Policy 2.01.10 Board Member General Conduct* as a structure that will provide for continued adherence to appropriate board norms and practices. Board members described their ability to share varying viewpoints, discuss complex issues, listen to advice from others and make decisions in the best interest of the college and student success.

During the visit, members of President's Cabinet confirmed the board complies with its conduct policy, emphasizing that the trustees consistently demonstrate respect for each other and follow proper decorum, per the policy's expectations. Cabinet members also shared that, as the policy directs, individual trustees consult the president before reaching out to them.

NIC's newly elected trustees successfully completed a robust onboarding process this year, in keeping with *Policy 2.01.11 New Board Member Orientation*, adopted in 2023.

Areas for continued growth

The board has an opportunity to build on its policy structure by codifying an annual board self-assessment and an annual review of board goals. When approved, the 2025-26 Board Goals could be published on the NIC website.

Recommendation 3: Spring 2022 Special Report

The institution works to rebuild its administrative and academic leadership team. This includes:

- *The appointment of a permanent president utilizing a process that permits an appropriate level of engagement by institutional stakeholders. (Standards 2.A.3, 2.A.4)*
- *Hiring for the currently vacant/interim Vice President positions after the permanent president is identified. (Standard 2.A.2) (2020 Standard(s) 2.A.2; 2.A.3; 2.A.4)*

Progress on Recommendation 3: Spring 2022

NIC has made substantial progress in rebuilding its administrative and academic leadership team. Overall, governance and administrative stability has been restored, leadership practices are aligned with policy and accreditation standards, and stakeholder confidence has improved.

Affirmative evidence

The current, permanent NIC president was initially appointed in June 2022 through a process that the current self-study describes as inclusive and adherent to board policy. The president's contract was renewed most recently in December 2024. Documents and interviews confirmed that the board is following its policies on presidential evaluation and goal-setting.

Beyond the presidential level, the institution has largely re-established its senior leadership team, filling all key administrative positions through open, competitive, and policy-aligned hiring processes. The next major step will be the permanent hiring of the provost, with a national search planned once the college returns to good standing with NWCCU. The Human Resources Department has outlined a detailed process involving campus-wide input, open forums, and external recruitment support, ensuring continued transparency and inclusivity.

Areas for continued growth

A successful provost appointment and ongoing climate assessment will further strengthen long-term institutional resilience.

Recommendation 1: Fall 2024 Special Report

The Board of Trustees must resolve the issues underpinning all "No Confidence" resolutions and provide evidence of a willingness to work with and support faculty, staff, and students when their concerns are communicated. (2020 Standard(s) 2.D.2)

Progress on Recommendation 1: Fall 2024

The 2025 evaluation team found ample evidence that the earlier "No Confidence" resolutions had been resolved to the constituent groups' satisfaction and, equally important, that the board had taken steps to maintain an atmosphere of trust, going forward.

Affirmative evidence

As an online video of the session confirms, the November 20, 2024, board meeting included a written statement from the chair of the board addressing the college community's multiple votes of no confidence. The statement, read by the vice chair, expressed support for participatory governance and respect for NIC's constituency groups. At that meeting, each trustee supported the chair's statement.

Onsite, NIC's faculty, staff, and student constituent-group leaders confirmed that each had either formally rescinded the votes or declared them resolved. In describing their group's process for reaching that decision, the themes included observations of board policies being

routinely followed, and board members treating each other and college employees with respect.

The college's ACCT consultants cited the creation and execution of a comprehensive set of board policies — and a continuing interest in updating and augmenting those policies — as evidence of the board's commitment to maintaining the confidence of its constituents.

In interviews, trustees affirmed their interest in regularly receiving constituent reports on a wide range of topics addressing college operations during their meetings. The board members emphasized the importance of treating guest speakers with dignity and using these regular reports as a strategy to identify concerns early before issues rise to a more serious level.

In a subsequent conversation, the board chair and vice chair described a work session held shortly after the November 2024 election with the full board and members of the resident's Cabinet to discuss strategies to build relationships and avoid future votes of no confidence.

Areas for continued growth

In onsite interviews, faculty and staff said they are acutely aware of the board policies adopted over the past few years and will be closely watching to assure they are followed. Given the newness of the policies, continued demonstration of their usage and regularly scheduled reviews will be critical to assure trust is maintained across constituencies.

Recommendation 7: Spring 2023 Special Report

The Board and College President should ensure that they adhere to the inclusivity articulated in the college's planning and decision making processes. The Board and College President should demonstrate a commitment to an environment respectful of meaningful discourse, in their official capacities and when interacting with each other. (2020 Standards: Std. 2-Preamble)

Progress on Recommendation 7: Spring 2023

As documented in NIC's self-study Report and affirmed through interviews with the trustees and president, significant evidence points to a positive relationship between the board and president consistent with Board Policy 2.02.01 *President's Authority and Responsibility*, 2.02.02 *Presidential Performance Review* and 2.01.10 as cited above.

Affirmative evidence

The college's self-study pointed to several developments that demonstrate an appropriate relationship between the board and the president, such as the hiring of a college attorney based on the president's recommendation; an updated presidential evaluation process; a budget approval process for FY 2026; and the development of defined goals, measurable outcomes and clear timelines for the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

In an interview, the president cited regular, positive informal and formal communication with each trustee, marked by mutual respect and a clear understanding of each other's roles. He

pointed to the regular updates on college operations provided to the board during public meetings as an effective tool to continue building trust between the president and the board.

Likewise, the college's ACCT consultants observed the board sharing insight and guidance with the president on a variety of important issues while ultimately letting the president do his job and assuring that he understood they were behind him.

The board chair, in turn, described the board's role as advising the president and letting him lead the college.

Areas for continued growth

The president has an opportunity with the creation of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan to develop a regular reporting cycle to the board on the progress being made on the plan goals.

Postscript

In addition to addressing the recommendations noted above, the college included a status update on Recommendations 2 and 3 from the Fall 2024 Special Report, which are scheduled for full review as part of NIC's Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) in 2027.

Recommendation 2: Fall 2024 Special Report

The institution must take action to improve retention of existing employees and maintain adequate staffing to ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs. (2020 Standard(s) 2.F.3)

Update on Recommendation 2: Fall 2024

Evidence gathered suggests the college is making meaningful progress toward improving employee retention and maintaining adequate staffing to ensure the integrity of its academic programs. Human Resources Department data indicate improvements in employee retention and staffing, including declines in departures, successful hiring for critical leadership and faculty positions, and enhanced professional development and onboarding practices. Leadership stability has increased with the reappointment of the permanent president and the filling of senior leadership roles, notably including a permanent chief human resources officer. Additionally, a recent campus climate survey, administered by ModernThink, reflects notable improvements across multiple indicators of employee confidence, communication, and collaboration. Collectively, these trends demonstrate that the college is effectively strengthening its human resources capacity and institutional culture.

Recommendation 3: Fall 2024 Special Report

The college president and leadership, with the support of the Board of Trustees and stakeholders, adjust their business model to ensure long-term financial sustainability consistent with institutional priorities. (2020 Standard(s) 2.E.2)

Update on Recommendation 3: Fall 2024 Special Report

Based on its report and interviews onsite, NIC appears to be making consistent, measurable progress toward long-term financial sustainability. The college has implemented targeted budget realignments, strengthened board-level fiscal oversight, and improved transparency in financial planning, signaling a strong commitment to sustainable financial practices.

In interviews during the visit, President's Cabinet members described successful efforts to fund priorities that moved the college forward in critical areas. Leaders noted that the college has emerged from a period of “survival mode” and is now focused on developing a sustainable framework for resource alignment. They shared examples such as the strategic use of salary salvage to retain personnel, cross-divisional partnerships like IT’s collaboration with academic programs to expand dual-credit opportunities, and efforts to build adaptability into cyclical planning processes to ensure that financial decisions align with institutional priorities.

Cabinet members agreed that while significant progress has been made, the institution would benefit from a more formalized prioritization mechanism that directly links budget allocations to strategic plan goals and measurable outcomes.