

Assurance Argument
West Shore Community College

Review date: 7/20/2020

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

West Shore Community College's (WSCC) mission statement not only captures the essence of why the organization exists, but also serves as a driving force behind many of the college's decisions and processes. It is succinct, yet powerful. The mission of WSCC is simply "to make our community a better place in which to learn, live, work, and prosper." Framed and mounted on the wall of the John M. Eaton Board Room in the WSCC Administrative Building, the mission statement is frequently referenced during meetings of the President's Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees. Decision-making processes are often guided by determining which course of action will best fulfill the college's mission, rather than which will result in the most favorable budgetary impact.

1.A.1 – The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.

The mission statement itself was [last revised in November 2008](#) through a broad-based process that included cross-disciplinary internal constituents, the Board of Trustees, and external stakeholders. Prior to that revision, WSCC's mission was a [rather lengthy list](#) of the different aspects of the college's operations (e.g. delivering high-quality, affordable educational services with student learning as its highest priority; developing powerful partnerships with other educational organizations, optimizing student success; supporting diversity and heightened global awareness through special programs and ongoing academic instruction; and more). While comprehensive, this list was understandably unwieldy as a mission statement and impossible to communicate quickly and effectively.

Since its development, the current mission statement has been reviewed and reaffirmed several times as part of the college's overall strategic planning processes. In 2014, WSCC undertook a [significant revision to its strategic plan](#) to more strongly emphasize the importance of student success. This process once again included "a diverse cross-section of college representatives and input from outside

stakeholders, students, faculty, and staff” and also included a reaffirmation of the mission statement. In 2017, during the midst of a change in presidents, the [strategic direction of the college was once again reaffirmed](#) as part of the commencement of a comprehensive strategic planning process. That process culminated a year later in a new WSCC strategic plan and once again resulted in a [reaffirmation of the current mission, vision, and values](#).

1.A.2 –The institution’s academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

The college’s mission also influences the academic programs and student support services offered by the college. By emphasizing learning, living, working, and prospering within the mission statement, WSCC is committing to a holistic approach to assisting individuals and communities. In other words, the mission is not just to give someone a quality education and then send them on their way, but rather to continuously interact with them throughout their lives in myriad ways that improve their overall quality of life. In order to achieve this mission from an educational standpoint, WSCC offers a variety of degrees in both occupational and transfer programs so that students have a multitude of educational and career path options available to them. Interactions with the college can begin as young as eight years old or earlier through programs like [College for Kids](#) or participation in the community-focused [Muddy Fox Trot](#), and can continue into an individual’s 90s by exercising at WSCC’s [Recreation Center](#) or participating in one of our many community service courses. The college also provides a variety of [tutoring services](#) to assist students with their studies, a wealth of [student clubs](#) to get them connected to their peers and participating in a topic of interest, and a variety of internships and [articulation agreements](#) that can streamline the process of finding employment or transferring to a university. Training courses and conferences for working professionals are also regularly offered, such as the annual [Early Childhood Education Summit](#). There are innumerable additional examples that could be shared as evidence of how WSCC tries to positively impact the lives of everyone living in our surrounding communities in pursuit of its mission, and many of these are shared throughout this Assurance Argument. As a final piece of evidence to show that WSCC satisfies its mission by serving a broad-based group of students from various demographic groups, the college’s [historical enrollment summary](#) is attached.

1.A.3 – The institution’s planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

As mentioned earlier in this response, many of the decisions made by WSCC leadership are guided by which course of action will best fulfill the college’s mission. The college is blessed with adequate financial resources to allow it to truly focus on the betterment of students and the community, not solely on economic concerns. Still, as is suggested within this sub-component’s description, the alignment of WSCC’s planning and budgeting priorities with the college’s mission is best described within the context of Criterion 5.C.1. Therefore, this sub-component is fully addressed in that section.

Sources

- 10 Year Enrollment Profile

- College for Kids (2019)
- ECE Summit (2018)
- Former Mission Statement from 2005 Systems Portfolio
- Learning and Testing Center Narrative Description
- Muddy Fox Trot (2020)
- Partnerships
- Rec Center Brochure
- Revised Mission from 2009 Systems Portfolio
- Strategic Directions memo (2017)
- Strategic Plan Memorandum to the Board (2014)
- Strategic Plan Memorandum to the Board (2018)
- Student Organizations List (2019)

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

1.B.1 - The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.

WSSC maintains a public mission statement, vision statement, and list of core values, which have evolved in accordance with the process described in 1.A.1. The college also operates under a [strategic plan](#) that contains four areas of strategic focus, 11 specific objectives, and measurable targets for each of them. Whereas the mission of the college is to “make our community a better place in which to learn, live, work, and prosper,” the vision of the college is to “be one of America’s premier community colleges, driven by a passion for assuring student success, serving our entire community, and pursuing greatness.” The core values of WSSC are learning, integrity, excellence, inclusiveness, and creativity.

All of these are communicated publicly in various forms. The strategic plan document itself is one of the key forms of communicating the college mission and is available through a dedicated page on the college’s website, which is accessible via a single click from any page. This plan is referenced regularly at public meetings like those of the Board of Trustees, such as when the president gives his annual [Year in Review report](#) on the college’s progress towards its strategic objectives. The college’s mission is also publicly displayed on the About Us page of the website and can be found [hanging on the wall](#) of the John M. Eaton Board Room alongside the vision statement and core values. The vision statement of the college can also be found on the back of all employee business cards, thus serving as a regular reminder to employees and an effective communication tool for any new contacts that are made. It was also included in a 117-page [history book](#) that was produced in commemoration of the college's 50th anniversary in 2017.

1.B.2 - The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.

The strategic plan, complete with its explanation of the college’s mission, vision, values, and

strategic areas of focus, is kept up-to-date and provides an overview of the college's priorities. For example, within the narrative for the [strategic area of focus Strengthen Our Organization](#), the college explains that it will provide the tools and resources necessary for faculty, staff, and administrators to excel in their roles. Within the *Serve Our Community* section, the college commits to providing activities like workplace development and training, recreational services, and cultural enrichment opportunities. The president's annual update to the Board also provides an opportunity within a public forum to reflect on the activities that have been provided over the past year to ensure that the college is fully meeting its mission.

1.B.3 - The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Over the past year, the college has developed three public-facing brochures that attempt to provide the intended constituents of the college with additional information about the education programs and services it provides. While the mission is not explicitly included within these documents, they were each built around the tenets of the WSCC mission and, thus, are reflective of how the college communicates its mission publicly. The first of these documents is intended for [students and potential students](#). In a quasi-timeline format, the brochure communicates that both traditional and non-traditional students have a place at WSCC, that the college experience is about developing connections with others and growing students' potential, that tuition is inexpensive and financial aid is available, and that the college has lots to offer both in terms of academics and co-curricular activities. Another brochure intended for [parents](#) describes the institutional partnerships available from WSCC, the safety of the college campus, the affordability of a WSCC education and the other funding sources available, and the quality of the education from a career- and transfer-readiness perspective. Lastly, a [community brochure](#) provides information on college resources like the recreation center and ice arena, the Performing Arts Series, and continuing education classes. Each of these brochures is distributed widely at all college events and placed around campus so that visitors can easily discover them.

Sources

- Community Brochure
- History Book Excerpt
- Mission on Wall
- Parents Brochure
- Presidents Year in Review
- Strategic Plan.pdf
- Strategic Plan.pdf (page number 2)
- Students Brochure

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

1.C.1 - The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.

WSCC takes its role as a cultural leader in the community seriously, and promoting the value of social and cultural diversity in society represents a major institutional commitment. WSCC embodies this commitment through its actions and identifies inclusiveness as a core value of the college. The WSCC [strategic plan](#) explicitly states that one of the college's major functions is to "meet the needs of our diverse constituencies and audiences". Furthermore, a major objective of the current strategic plan is to "[increase the number of community engagement activities](#)". These activities frequently center upon increasing awareness of and appreciation for diversity. For example, a goal of the WSCC Performing Arts Series is to spread multi-cultural awareness to WSCC students and the community. Beginning eight years ago, the director of the WSCC performing arts program established a world music component to the series. Over the years, this program has brought world music, dance, and theater to WSCC's region, providing audiences with a taste of diverse cultures through the arts. Events have included K-12 clinics, lectures, residencies, and performances. Some of the distinguished world artists have included a Gahnaian dancer, a Columbian harpist, an African kora player, and various other lecturers and musicians from around the globe. The college also supports various student clubs aimed at issues of diversity and inclusion, such as one providing LGBTQ+ support.

Lastly, in alignment with the college's stated commitment to inclusiveness and diversity, the general education programs offer a wide range of courses that speak directly to issues of multiculturalism and human variety, while the institution's popular [Humankind Series](#) provides a community-focused educational series that examines cultural, social, and political parallels between the United States and a particular region of the world. Both the general education offerings and the Humankind Series are described in further detail within the response to 3.B.4.

1.C.2 - The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

WSCC models its stated commitment to diversity through the actions it takes both internally and in the community. First and foremost, WSCC is an equal opportunity employer. The top of each job application states, "West Shore Community College is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and strictly prohibits discrimination against any person on the basis of age, ancestry, citizenship status, color, creed, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, genetic information, marital status, mental or physical disability, height, weight, national origin, race, religious affiliation, sex,

sexual orientation, or veteran status in its activities, admissions, educational programs, and employment". Backing up this statement are two board policies. [Board Policy 2008: Hiring](#) states the college's commitment to using non-discriminatory hiring practices, while [Board Policy 2015: Discrimination/Harassment](#) affirms the college's commitment "to maintain a work environment free of harassment and unlawful discrimination". WSCC's president also signed a CEO [commitment to diversity and inclusion](#) as part of a [Talent 2025 initiative](#), which aims to increase workplace diversity through leadership, benchmarking, resource sharing, and events.

The college also takes steps to encourage diversity within its student population, even though the demographics of WSCC's service region are very homogenous. The college monitors its [student diversity](#) and proactively takes action to increase participation from minority groups whenever possible. For example, courses have regularly been offered at sites within Oceana County, which is located to the south of WSCC's service district. This county has a high percentage of Hispanic residents, many of whom are migratory and can have difficulty traveling to WSCC's campus. These courses are therefore offered directly within their region to help reduce travel barriers. As a result, the overall percentage of WSCC students that are Hispanic has risen from 7% in 2015 to 10% in 2019. An English as a Second Language course for this region is also being developed but was delayed due to the onset of COVID-19.

Similarly, the community of Baldwin to the east of the college's service region has a high percentage of African American residents and struggles with issues of poverty, including transportation, housing, food, and child care. In response to these recognized challenges, the college's president convened a [meeting of community leaders](#) in January 2020 to discuss creative strategies that would assist these individuals with pursuing higher education. An example of a [letter of invitation](#), sent to a state senator, is included to further articulate the intent of this meeting. The relationships developed during that meeting have led to further collaborations since that time, and additional meetings of this group are being planned. Lastly, the college uses some of the money it obtains from the Carl D. Perkins grant to encourage non-traditional gender enrollment in its occupational programs. For example, professional videos have been produced highlighting women welders and male nurses to break down gender stereotypes and encourage all individuals to freely consider careers that interest them.

Sources

- Baldwin Letter to Community Partners
- Baldwin Meeting Attendees and Brief Notes
- Board Policy 2008 - Hiring
- Board Policy 2015 - Discrimination and Harassment
- Ethnicity Profile
- Human Kind Link 2
- Presidents Commitment to Diversity
- Strategic Plan.pdf
- Strategic Plan.pdf (page number 2)
- Strategic Plan.pdf (page number 4)
- Talent 2025 Diversity Initiative

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

1.D.1 - Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.

WSCC's mission intrinsically demonstrates the college's commitment to the public good through its broad inclusion of the overall betterment of public life, not solely the purveyance of education. "To make our community a better place in which to learn, live, work, and prosper" focuses primarily on the community, not just WSCC students or stakeholders. Furthermore, the college recognizes that the educational role in which it serves is just one component of its true mission. Education leads to improved quality of life, better work opportunities, and overall prosperity, each of which is equally part of WSCC's mission as a public institution. To explicitly recognize this commitment, the Board of Trustees maintains a [governance policy](#) that establishes effective working standards and states, "Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the College is an integral part of our community and serves ever-changing needs. Trustees are accountable to the community for the performance and welfare of the college".

The actions and decisions made by WSCC's administration and board reflect these ideals. The best example of this commitment came just last month (June 2020) when the college's [Board of Trustees chose to levy just 65% of the authorized millage for capital improvements](#) to provide some relief to those community members who are struggling financially as a result of the pandemic. For many years, the college has also [operated services like the recreation center and ice arena at a loss](#) simply because the community finds such value in them. Whenever the college has analyzed its website traffic, the hours of operation pages for the recreation center and ice arena are always the most frequently visited. The college also frequently allows rooms on its campus to be used free-of-charge by non-profit groups and community partners, and the events offered on campus regularly target the entire community, not just potential students (e.g. the Muddy Fox Trot, Humankind).

1.D.2 - The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.

Being a [public community college](#) with an [elected Board of Trustees](#), WSCC does not have any

investors or parent organization. Likewise, the only external interests the college supports are those that align with its mission of making the community a better place to learn, live, work, and prosper. As such, the college places its emphasis on the quality of the education that it provides and the value created by keeping its tuition and fees low. The [Board of Trustees maintains a policy](#) that emphasizes this commitment to student success by "implementing promising and proven practices that better the learning experiences and outcomes of its students". The college's tuition is also among the lowest in the state at \$106 per contact hour for in-district students, and the college has already decided to keep this rate for the coming year. Decisions made at the President's Leadership Team or Board of Trustees level are focused on academic and community interests, and any conversation about economic gains or losses are purely out of a sense of proper stewardship of public funds. This is evidenced by a monthly [Academic Report](#) to the Board of Trustees, at which the vice president of academics and student services updates the board and public about recent accomplishments and changes within academics. These updates frequently center around topics of student success or highlight faculty innovations that have benefited students.

1.D.3 - The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

WSSC takes great pride in engaging its external constituencies, which include educational and social service providers, employers, and the general public. WSSC employees often serve on local boards, such as the college president serving on the CEO Council for Talent 2025 (a group with the goal of making West Michigan a top-20 employment region) and the director of the tutoring and testing centers serving on the board for the Mason County Promise. The college campus houses the local Michigan State University Extension Office and the West Shore Educational Service District Career Tech Center, an intermediate school district that provides a wide variety of occupational programs that brings about 500 high school students to WSSC's campus each day. The college engages local employers by involving them in program advisory boards and frequently visits their facilities to discuss their needs and talk about how the college can prepare graduates for employment.

WSSC engages the general public in numerous ways. Thanks to the [recreation center](#) and ice arena, WSSC's campus is a popular visiting spot for people looking to engage in recreational activities like exercise, swimming, or skating. Annual events like College for Kids and the Muddy Fox Trot also help to bring large groups of young kids and families to campus. WSSC also brings educational offerings to communities that need them. Courses have been offered in Manistee County by partnering with the local hospital for classroom space, in Oceana County by using classroom space within the County Services Building, and within a significant number of regional high schools. The college also houses an art gallery with rotating exhibits, hosts [business and community education courses](#) that are open to the public, and maintains a popular performing arts series that often draws large crowds to the campus.

The [WSSC Performing Arts Series](#) interweaves both curricular and co-curricular production opportunities and features an array of performing arts events highlighting the talents of regional and world-renowned artists. The college takes pride in not only bringing high-quality multi-cultural performances, lectures, and exhibits to the college's campus but also surrounding communities and K-12 schools. The WSSC Performing Arts Series serves as a cultural liaison to the surrounding communities, hosting 18 to 20 events in an academic year. Events are purposely varied, encompassing vocal and instrumental music, dance, theater, and audio production. Collaboration is the key to the WSSC Performing Arts Series. The program has cultivated collaborative relationships

and has produced programming with Michigan State University, Western Michigan University, Central Michigan University, Ferris State University, West Michigan Strings, White Lake Arts Council, Ludington Center for the Arts, Hart Performing Arts Series, and the Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts. For example, each year Michigan State University identifies WSCC as a performance hub – one of only a few in the State of Michigan – by holding a mini two-day residency that brings the entire Michigan State University Jazz Program to WSCC’s campus for jazz band clinics, private instruction, and two performances (one on campus and one in downtown Ludington). As a point of interest, WSCC’s two largest performing arts events to date happened this past academic year. In December, WSCC Performing Arts, in collaboration with Edgar Struble (Kenny Rogers’ 20-year music director and composer for the American Music Awards), brought a Nashville Family Christmas to our area. This event took over a year to produce, enlisting the talents of nine of some of the world’s finest country musicians. WSCC’s team produced two sold-out performances with 1,500 people in attendance. The second event was WSCC’s theater department’s production of the Broadway musical Mamma Mia! This ten-show run sold out to audiences from all across WSCC’s service district.

Sources

- Academic Report Minutes from Board
- Auxiliary Services Losses
- Board Governance Policy
- Board Policy 1001 - Board of Trustees
- Board Policy 1002 - Elections and Terms
- Board Policy 3001 - Student Success
- Fall 2017 community ed
- Full Resolution to Certify Tax Levy
- Performing Arts Series Brochure
- Rec Center Brochure

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

The mission of WSCC is broad and community-focused in nature. The college is focused not only on providing its students with a quality educational experience but also with positively transforming its communities. The mission has been refined through multiple collaborative processes involving cross-functional teams of internal and external constituents, and the programs offered by the college all align with its goal of making West Michigan a better place to learn, live, work, and prosper. The college communicates its mission publicly in numerous ways, but most importantly, tries to embody the mission in its activities and decisions. While the mission is clearly articulated on the college's website and within its strategic plan, one opportunity for improvement that was noted while completing this section is the development of a public-facing document that has the specific purpose of communicating the college's mission, vision, and values and describes the full breadth of the college's activities as they relate to those statements. The marketing department has been informed of this opportunity and has committed to developing such a document in the near future.

A strength of the college is found in its embrace of multiculturalism, which is most evident through the performances, lectures, and exhibits it brings to the community. Board policies and the strategic plan espouse diversity and inclusiveness, but ongoing initiatives like the Humankind series actually demonstrate the college's commitment to these values. Actions such as not assessing the full millage during a time of financial strife due to the pandemic further illustrate the college's true commitment to the betterment of the community, not solely the college and its balance sheets. WSCC is proud of its role in the community as a cultural hub, a social advocate and steward for those in need, and a leader in the betterment of human lives.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Argument

One of WSCC's core values is integrity, which is defined within the [strategic plan](#) as operating with transparency and mutual respect. Transparency is achieved by maintaining a page on the college's website that includes copies of the last three years' worth of financial statements and audits, annual budgets, projected revenue, facility master plans, reports to the state on the institution's strategic value resolution, collective bargaining agreements, and more. A separate page contains all Board of Trustees meeting notices, agendas, and minutes. Transparency is also achieved by operating with veracity within public forums, such as by providing the Board with [monthly financial reports](#), including those for the college's [auxiliary functions](#), and by operating under [Robert's Rules of Order](#) and in compliance with the [Open Meetings Act](#).

The college also maintains numerous policies to communicate and enforce expectations for ethical behavior on the part of its employees and board. These include a governance policy for the board that outlines general expectations and conflict of interest policies for both the [board](#) and [college employees](#). The college also ensures ethical behavior within its internal processes by setting up a series of checks and balances whenever possible. The signatures on the new curriculum forms, for example, ensure that curriculum additions and modifications have the full support of relevant individuals and meet all college standards (described fully in 3.B and 4.A) before they are ultimately approved by the Board of Trustees. Likewise, supervisor signatures are required for [expense reimbursements](#), along with a requirement that employees submit receipts for all expenses. Individuals who are authorized to use a college purchasing card must sign an [agreement](#) that outlines the terms of the card's use, must follow the processes outlined in the [p-card procedures guide](#), and must comply with [end-of-billing-cycle processes](#) to protect against fraud.

The college has an excellent record when it comes to audit results, which also helps to demonstrate the college's use of ethical behavior. Audit results from [2019](#), [2018](#), and [2017](#) have all come back with no findings. These include the college's financial statements, financial aid, and personnel records.

The college also maintains [grievance procedures](#) with the full-time faculty association to provide a mechanism for resolving any contractual disputes, as well as [grievance procedures for students](#) to resolve academic conduct violations (discussed fully in 2.E).

Sources

- Audit - 2017
- Audit - 2017 (page number 12)
- Audit - 2018
- Audit - 2018 (page number 12)
- Audit - 2019
- Audit - 2019 (page number 12)
- Board Governance Policy
- Board of Trustees Meeting - June 2020
- Board of Trustees Meeting - June 2020 (page number 9)
- Board of Trustees Meeting - June 2020 (page number 10)
- Board Policy 1008 - Conflicts of Interest
- Board Policy 1020 - Meeting to be Public
- Board Policy 1022 - Rules of Order
- Board Policy 2003 - Conflicts of Interest
- Card Program Procedure Guide
- End of Billing Cycle Process for P-Cards
- Expense Reimbursement Form
- Grievance Procedures from Instructional Agreement
- Purchasing Card User Agreement
- Strategic Plan.pdf
- Strategic Plan.pdf (page number 1)
- Student Grievance Procedure

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Argument

WSCC utilizes its website and the my.westshore.edu portal to communicate important information about the institution to students, the community, and other stakeholders. The college believes in transparency of information and subscribes to the notion that making information easy to find will help students to more successfully navigate the institution and create organizational efficiencies. One simple example of this transparency is the college's [Budget Transparency webpage](#), which contains a collection of college financial statements, facility master plans, past audit results, descriptions of employee healthcare benefits, and copies of current collective bargaining agreements.

Most of the information that students will be looking for can be found in the online [Course Catalog](#). This includes academic policies, a description of available support services, a full listing of all programs of study and the courses that comprise them, and a written description of each course offered. The catalog also contains a copy of the academic calendar, requirements for admission and graduation, information on paying for college, and a summary of the college's general education requirements. In order to make this wealth of information accessible, the catalog is digitally indexed with links to each specific section, listed by topic, along the left side of the page. A text-based search feature is also available.

In order to provide more than one source for the information contained in the catalog, individual webpages for each topic are also available. For example, a copy of the academic calendar, complete with a listing of upcoming events and important deadlines, can be found with just a single click from the homepage. Similarly, all degree programs are listed online with links to more information about each one. A *Paying for College* webpage gives students up-to-date information about financial aid processes, current tuition and fee rates, a link to the Net Price Calculator, information about how to apply for scholarships, and a link to obtain textbook prices. Lastly, pages located under the *Admissions* heading on any WSCC webpage provide detailed information about advising and registration, placement exams, military and veterans services, transferring into and out of the institution, applying for the nursing program, and how to get started with things like dual enrollment.

Information regarding WSCC's accreditation status is available on the [Accreditation page](#). This page contains information about the Open Pathway, an institutional point of contact for anyone with more questions about the college's accreditation, and historical copies of accreditation documents like systems portfolios, comprehensive quality reviews, and required interim reports. Any academic programs that hold their own accreditation status have information about that programmatic accreditation on their specific program's webpage. An example of this is the nursing program, which holds initial accreditation status through the National League for Nursing's Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation.

In terms of WSCC governance and control, a webpage has been dedicated to the Board of Trustees.

Because community colleges in Michigan are independent, there is no statewide system or larger governing structure to be described. Consequently, the *Board of Trustees* page describes how the Board adopts policies for the governance of the college as provided state statute. This page also contains a full listing of upcoming board meetings, minutes of past meetings, and a link to learn more about the individual board members.

Finally, in order to make college employees easy to contact, a full directory of employee names, titles, and contact information is made available ([Faculty Roster](#)). This directory includes all faculty, both full- and part-time, as well as all staff and administrative positions.

Sources

- Accreditation Page
- Budget Transparency Webpage

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

2.C.1 - The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

The Board of Trustees has shown a commitment to preserve and enhance the institution by providing modern facilities, balanced budgets, and a robust financial position. Annual board actions on facilities, budgets, and the audit are evidence that preserving and enhancing the institution is not just a physical and financial matter. The recent pandemic has shown the Board also is concerned with preserving and enhancing the role of the college in the community. A [March 17th memo from the president](#) to the chairman of the Board references the board discussions the previous night. The president's action to protect employee compensation at the start of the pandemic as a result of the Board's deliberation was performed to preserve the institution by protecting its most valuable asset: the employees. The pandemic lasted much longer than envisioned in that memo, but the Board has continued to protect the college's employees. The college has had no lay-offs or furloughs of employees during the pandemic. During the budget approvals in June 2020, the Board approved a balanced budget with revenue uncertainties. The Board deliberated and agreed with the president's recommendation to preserve the college operations during this period of uncertainty to best be able to serve students and the communities at a point when they may need the college the most. By prioritizing the building of financial reserves to preserve the college, the Board of Trustees has enabled the college to protect employees and maintain services throughout the pandemic.

Another example of board deliberation is a [discussion on partnerships and collaborations](#) for economic development. Through these partnerships, the college's operations are enhanced, while also benefiting other partners and the local communities. The college is also better positioned in the long-term as the local economies are strengthened.

2.C.2 - The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

[Board Policy 3000: Educational Philosophy and General Education Program](#) states that the college

“shall be committed to providing high-quality learning opportunities that focus on student success and strengthening of our communities.” This statement includes both an internal focus on student success, while also recognizing the importance of external community strength. A [Board resolution](#) illustrates board discussion and deliberation on the support of local communities through economic development and business partnerships, educational partnerships, and community services. A recent example is the purchase of a [building in Manistee](#) in May 2019. As the president wrote in the memo for board deliberation, this project will not only meet the academic mission of the college but also assist with the economic development, educational partnerships, and community service pieces of the mission.

2.C.3 - The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.

WSCC is a public community college governed by a [Board of Trustees](#) elected by people of the district. Seven trustees are [elected at large on a nonpartisan basis](#). Each trustee takes and subscribes to the following oath: “I do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of this state, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of member of the Board of Trustees according to the best of my ability,” as dictated by [Board Policy 1005: Oath of Office](#). Board policy also provides clear guidance that board members should avoid any [conflict of interest](#) that may adversely affect the college’s reputation or the public confidence in its integrity.

2.C.4 - The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

The Board of Trustees [delegates executive responsibility](#) for administering board policies to the president. The president also has the power to act when there is no governing board policy. To carry out the activities of the institution, the president delegates powers and duties as appropriate. The Board of Trustees also has a policy indicating that faculty, along with the president and administration, have the responsibility for [developing and implementing the curriculum](#). To achieve this expectation, [Board Policy 3030: Employee Participation](#) communicates an expectation that employees are to participate in activities such as serving on college teams. Faculty involvement in teams is also specified in the [Instructional Agreement](#).

Sources

- Best Practices Resolution
- Board Policy 1001 - Board of Trustees
- Board Policy 1002 - Board Elections
- Board Policy 1005 - Oath of Office
- Board Policy 1008 - Conflicts of Interest
- Board Policy 2201 - President as Executive Officer
- Board Policy 3030 - Employee Participation
- COVID-19 Memo

- Curriculum Policy
- Economic Development
- Educational Philosophy Policy
- Faculty Responsibilities from Instructional Agreement
- Faculty Responsibilities from Instructional Agreement (page number 1)
- Purchase of Manistee Building

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

The college's formal commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth is registered in the [Instructional Agreement](#) with faculty, which stipulates that "all faculty members shall have the freedom to report the truth as they see it, both in classroom situations and in associated publication. There shall be no restraints which unreasonably impair the faculty's ability to present subject matter in this context". Furthermore, [Board Policy 3010: Academic Freedom and Integrity](#) states, "The Board, administration, and faculty of West Shore Community College will uphold the principles of academic freedom, thus ensuring an environment of academic integrity and mutual respect".

The college has defended the rights of faculty to responsibly present their own and others' scientific or artistic ideas, including ideas that may, at times, be considered controversial by some audiences. Furthermore, the college avoids impinging on academic freedom by guaranteeing that research results and other forms of expression not explicitly contracted by the college belong entirely to their faculty authors. This is once again evidenced within the Instructional Agreement, with clear agreements on ownership of content included within [Article X: Intellectual Property](#). Even when the college and faculty decide to share in the ownership of intellectual property, faculty nevertheless have the right to "decide when, how, and in what form" their work may be disseminated, thus ensuring that they are not chained to syllabi, course materials, and other forms of expression that they deem obsolete. Finally, the college does not attempt to surveil or constrain the type or direction of research that faculty and students take up. This indirectly supports an openness in the pursuit of truth that applies to face-to-face exchanges, email, the use of library resources in all forms, digital media, and web-based forms of research.

Sources

- Academic Freedom from Instructional Agreement
- Board Policy 3010 - Academic Freedom and Integrity
- Intellectual Property from Instructional Agreement

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

2.E.1 - The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.

Being a two-year community college, WSCC does not have a focus on primary research as part of its mission. That being said, the faculty of WSCC have all of the necessary credentials to conduct such research and frequently engage in informal research activities. For example, the associate professor of sociology conducted a course-by-arrangement with two students during the fall 2019 semester to research student success trends at WSCC. In these instances, WSCC provides adequate levels of oversight and support to ensure the integrity of that research. One way in which this is done is to provide faculty with sabbaticals to complete their research, thus ensuring they are able to dedicate sufficient time and attention to properly designing and conducting their study. The professor of speech and communications recently completed such a [sabbatical](#) in the winter of 2020 to study the proliferation and importance of speech instruction across the curriculum. In other instances, faculty design research studies for their students, such as when the professor of psychology created a social experiment for her students to study the bystander effect. Because WSCC does not have the research volume to justify the creation and maintenance of a formal institutional review board to consider research proposals, the vice president of academics and student services requires faculty to draft detailed [research proposals](#) that include information about the study's scope, risks, precautions taken, and benefits to participants. Some instructors have further involved their students by then asking them to draft a [research results brief](#) as a group project.

Another way that WSCC provides support to scholarly activities is through the Writing Center, which is described fully in the response to 3.D.1. In addition to the services it provides to students, Writing Center staff will often provide writing resources and workshops directly to faculty. Lastly, the college employs a full-time director of institutional research, who not only pulls data and creates reports on the success of various internal college initiatives but also frequently provides research support and data to faculty and administrators who are conducting research separate from that of the institutional research department.

2.E.2 - Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.

One of the most important topics students are taught at WSCC regarding the ethical use of information resources is how to properly cite the source of their information and avoid plagiarism.

Students are introduced to the college's academic integrity policy through their course syllabi, such as those in [Introduction to Business](#), [Introduction to Early Childhood Education](#), and [Introduction to Sociology](#), among many others. Students are expected to use MLA, APA, or Chicago styles in formal assignments, such as the [Speech to Persuade](#) in Principles of Speaking. In less formal assignments, such as the [Current Events Discussion Forums](#) in American National Government, students are still expected to cite their sources, although they are not required to follow a specific citation style.

Faculty use various types of classroom exercises and tools to teach students how to use these styles to cite sources effectively and prevent plagiarism. One professor shows students how they can upload their drafts to Turnitin throughout the revising process. Another professor models the same steps but with the Grammarly software. Students are also taught about citation styles and plagiarism in the Writing Center. The Writing Center director and peer tutors review students' Turnitin reports with them. They also walk through integrating sources with the student's writing using a [handout](#) to help them choose when to use quotes, when and how to paraphrase instead, and to ensure that their citations are correct.

The college also informs its students about the ethical and responsible use of information technology resources on campus. Within the college's electronic catalog is an [acceptable use policy](#) that describes user responsibilities and acceptable uses of college computer networks. Many of the college's online courses also describe netiquette, or proper etiquette for interacting with others in a formal online course.

2.E.3 - The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Two board policies provide the regulatory framework for the establishment of academic integrity at WSCC. [Board Policy 3010: Academic Freedom and Integrity](#) confirms the college's commitment to upholding the principles of academic freedom and ensuring academic integrity and mutual respect. Board Policy 3010 endows the president of the college with the power to establish procedures to address academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating. [Board Policy 4050: Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) specifies that students enrolled at WSCC are responsible for abiding by the laws governing the college. The student services office holds responsibility for implementing procedures regarding student misconduct and student grievances.

The [Faculty Handbook](#) defines academic misconduct and specifies the procedures that instructors should follow when they suspect academic misconduct has occurred. The processes outlined in the Faculty Handbook grant faculty discretion on how to handle instances of academic misconduct. Academic misconduct should first be addressed between the faculty member and the student. If the faculty member determines the incident to be a teachable moment, then they may ask the student to revise and resubmit the assignment addressing the particular academic concern. However, if a faculty member deems the academic misconduct to be more serious, they are instructed to report the incident to the chair of their division, describing the fault and providing evidence of the infraction. Instances of academic misconduct are tracked and sanctions imposed on guilty students increase with repeated offenses. The college catalog details the [academic violations process](#) from the student perspective. This section of the catalog includes a description of common types of academic violations, procedures for bringing alleged violations to the Academic Misconduct Board, and the due process for hearing cases. Some individual programs also have specific policies addressing academic misconduct that align with these broader processes and procedures, such as [nursing](#). Faculty are encouraged to include [academic misconduct policies](#) and procedures related to their course within their syllabi.

Sources

- Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement Example
- Board Policy 3010 - Academic Freedom and Integrity
- Board Policy 4050 - Student Rights and Responsibilities
- Current Events Discussion Forums
- Early Childhood Syllabus
- Early Childhood Syllabus (page number 2)
- Faculty Handbook - Academic Integrity Section
- Intro to Business Syllabus
- Intro to Business Syllabus (page number 4)
- Nursing Handbook Academic Integrity Statement
- Research Proposal - Bystander Effect
- Research Results - Bystander Effect
- Sabbatical Memo for Jennifer Lundberg Anders
- Sociology Syllabus
- Sociology Syllabus (page number 8)
- SPE 101 Persuasive Speech
- Student Academic Violations
- Student Computer Acceptable Use Policy
- Writing Center Integrating Sources Handout

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

One of WSCC's core values is integrity, which the organization models in many ways. Perhaps the most important is through transparency. The college uses its website to communicate information about its Board of Trustees, its financial position, and its degree programs and their cost. The college encourages public participation in its public meetings, yet ensures the Board has operational autonomy that is free from conflicts of interest. WSCC also maintains policies and procedures that create a system of checks and balances internally and has an excellent audit record, indicating that these processes are working effectively.

The college not only models behaviors of integrity but also educates and supports others to do the same. Students are taught how to ethically use information resources, such as through the proper citing of their source materials, and the college has well-established processes for addressing academic integrity violations. Numerous protections are in place to ensure that faculty have freedom of expression and to pursue the truth in teaching and learning. The college also has a history of supporting faculty research and scholarship, such as through the granting of sabbaticals. Overall, *Criterion 2: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct* is a particular strength of WSCC. While there is always room for improvement in every category, WSCC administrators and faculty did not note any glaring deficiencies while completing this section.

Sources

There are no sources.

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

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

3.A.1 - Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.

All of the associate's degrees offered by WSCC require a minimum of 60 credit hours, which is a standard held by the HLC. While WSCC's occupational divisions attempt to limit the required credit hours to as close to 60 as possible, there are some Associates of Applied Arts and Sciences (AAAS) degrees that have surpassed this total in order to include all learning outcomes required by industry standards. The highest credit total of an AAAS degree is 70 and the average is 64. The Associate of Arts (AA) degree requires 62 credit hours, while the Associate of Science (AS) and the Associate of General Studies (AGS) require 60 credit hours. All AA and AS programs of study embed the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) general education course structure within them, as is more thoroughly described in the response to 3.B.1.

The college's courses and programs are also guided by the needs of external constituents like transfer institutions and workforce partners. WSCC has many articulation agreements in place with four-year colleges and universities, including [nursing progression programs](#). Whenever possible, WSCC aligns a degree's required course sequence with the needs of transfer partners, thus ensuring that students are taking classes that will prepare them for junior- and senior-level studies and that will be accepted by the university. Other curriculum changes often come as a result of recommendations from advisory councils comprised of business and industry representatives, alumni, current students, faculty within the division, and individuals representing special populations. An example of a new course presented to the Curriculum Team because of the recommendation of an advisory council is the [Phlebotomy](#) course, which was added for the 2020-2021 academic year. At the October 29, 2018, joint advisory council meeting between WSCC's nursing program and the West Shore Educational Service District's Career and Technical Education program, students expressed an interest in a phlebotomy course being offered at WSCC. Then, at the February 22, 2019, medical assistant advisory council meeting, a survey completed by advisory members identified adding phlebotomy as

one of the top two recommendations. This course was subsequently developed and presented for approval at the Curriculum Team meeting on January 30, 2020. Listening to the needs of the local workforce and responding to them assures the relevancy of WSCC's degree and certificate programs.

WSCC must also adhere to strict accrediting and licensing agency standards in occupational programs. For instance, the law enforcement program must follow the curriculum requirements of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards. Likewise, the Michigan Sheriff's Coordinating & Training Council provides standards that must be met to offer the local corrections academy. The early childhood education, nursing, and medical assistant programs also must follow the standards of their respective programmatic accrediting agencies. By balancing the requirements of the HLC, external partners, licensing and accrediting agencies, and the college's internal standards, the relevancy of programs and levels of performance required by students are kept under a strict series of checks and balances.

3.A.2 - The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.

As a public, two-year community college, WSCC does not offer baccalaureate, graduate, or post-graduate degrees. Instead, the college offers one-year certificate and associate degrees, with many of those degrees articulated to university programs for students who are interested in transferring to further their studies. Many of the one-year certificate programs are equivalent to the first year of a related associate's degree program, so the credentials are differentiated by the level of the courses students are required to take. An example for the sake of evidence is presented in the form of the nursing program. The [one-year licensed practical nursing certificate](#) requires students to take up through NUR 171 – Obstetrics and Pediatric Clinical. Students can choose to exit the college with this certificate and enter the workforce, or they can resume their studies by taking NUR 220 – Mental Health Nursing Theory and the following set of courses contained with the [Associate Degree Nursing](#). These higher-level courses contain more advanced learning outcomes than the prior courses, which are communicated to students through the college's registration system and course syllabi. This is a typical relationship between a certificate and an associate's degree at WSCC, thereby differentiating the learning goals between the two credentials.

As faculty complete curriculum maps for their disciplines, they design program learning outcomes for the associate's degree, thus encompassing all of the discipline's courses. Because WSCC maps learning outcomes on a course-by-course basis using the informational, reinforced knowledge, and synthesized designators described in 4.B.1, the learning goals for a certificate program can easily be differentiated from those of the associate's degree simply by looking at the courses contained within the certificate on the curriculum map. Whereas many second-year courses within an associate's degree will reach the synthesis level of learning, most certificate programs only reach the reinforced-knowledge level.

3.A.3 - The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

WSCC makes no distinction between program quality nor learning goals across all modes and

locations of delivery. Once a course's learning outcomes are set via the curriculum approval process, those goals apply to all methods by which the course is offered. For the sake of evidence, the syllabi for two sections of Introduction to Business are included: one for a [face-to-face section](#) and another for an [online section](#). As can be seen, the two sections of the course are identical apart from the modality in which they are offered. The same is true of courses that are offered within local high schools or at another satellite location of the college. Likewise, the faculty qualifications required to teach a course are independent of modality or location.

In terms of program quality, the college ensures that it only offers courses remotely for which it can provide a quality experience. By way of example, when science courses were forced to move to remote learning as a result of the pandemic, geology kits containing various specimens of rocks were put together to send home with students, while other courses purchased licenses to Labster software to provide online science lab simulations. For the upcoming fall semester, new wet chemistry kits have been developed so that online sections of chemistry courses can be offered. Other courses, such as welding, waited to resume instruction until such time as they could offer training face-to-face again since there was no reasonable way to teach someone the tactical component of welding remotely. WSCC takes pride in the quality of education it offers, so it makes all reasonable efforts to ensure that the same high quality is consistently applied to all forms of the college's educational offerings.

Sources

- Associate Degree Nursing
- BUS 100 FTF Syllabus
- BUS 100 Online Syllabus
- Nursing Progression Program
- Phlebotomy Curriculum
- Practical Nursing Certificate

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Argument

WSCC has a strong history of promoting intellectual inquiry on the part of enrolled students, current faculty and staff, and community members. The types of offerings and policies that accomplish this objective take many forms, ranging from broad general education requirements for enrolled students, to a learning series for the public that focuses on understanding different cultures and the commonalities we all share as humans. The college has also been a strong supporter of extra-curricular learning opportunities, such as through internships for students, sabbaticals for faculty, and professional development for administrators and staff. Each of these offerings is an effort to help the college achieve its mission of making our community a better place to learn, live, work, and prosper.

3.B.1 - The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.

The core of WSCC's efforts to provide students with a diverse and enlightening learning experience is its selection of general education courses. As can be seen by viewing the [general education map](#), the college's general education offerings are categorized into communications, mathematics, science, social sciences, and humanities and fine arts. For students pursuing an associate of science (AS) or an associate of arts (AA), which are typically taken by students intending to transfer to a university, there are requirements to take a minimum of 38-40 general education credits, which must be spread out across these categories. For students pursuing an associate of applied arts and sciences (AAAS), which are typically viewed as degrees that prepare students to enter the workforce, the general education requirement is 18 credits from a combination of each of these categories. The specific breakdown of how many courses must be taken from each category varies based on the specific

degree being pursued, the program of study, and the requirements of the transfer institution. All programs have a page in the college catalog, as well as a web page, that details its specific requirements. See the attached program sheets for the [AA in Communications](#) and the [AAAS in Accounting](#) for a sample of these degree plans. The information from these catalog pages is also available on the web by navigating to the electronic version of the [college catalog](#) and choosing the Programs of Study link.

Through a recent process of continuous improvement, the Academic Leadership Team (ALT) at WSCC realized that some students were unable to complete all of the courses they needed for transfer into certain specialized degree programs, such as engineering. This was primarily due to some of the constraints placed on which general education categories these students were required to take courses from in order to earn their specific degree. For example, AS students had to take three humanities and fine arts offerings, which prevented them from being able to fit an introductory engineering course into their program of study. This was resulting in students having to essentially start from the beginning of the sequence once they reached their transfer institution. Simultaneously, Michigan has recently undertaken a statewide effort to create common articulation agreements between the state's community colleges and universities. Known as the Michigan Transfer Pathways, these articulation agreements built upon previous work that is known as the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA). The MTA provides specific general education requirements that are essentially guaranteed to transfer to all participating institutions. To align with this statewide effort, as well as to address the problem of WSCC's general education requirements potentially causing delays in degree completion for students after they transfer, the college has recently modified its general education requirements for both the AA and AS degrees. The new model largely matches that of the MTA and will greatly simplify how WSCC's general education requirements are structured, thus making the navigation of these requirements much easier for students. Specifically, all of the subcategories under areas like humanities and fine arts will no longer be in existence. Instead, students can simply choose two courses from different disciplines within this grouping of courses. For illustrative purposes, a [modified general education map](#) has been attached that shows the improvement and simplification this change will bring. Please note that this modified map is currently in draft form and will not take full effect until the 2020-2021 academic year.

3.B.2 – The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.

Above each of the categories within the modified general education map, WSCC has also articulated its goal for what students will learn and gain from taking courses within that group. For example, the college's goal for requiring students to take two courses from the science category is that they will "acquire knowledge of ourselves and the natural world around us." Each of these learning goals derives from the college's three stated Core Abilities: (1) effective communication, (2) critical thinking, and (3) professionalism. These three Core Abilities are embedded within all of the college's offerings and are considered institution-wide learning outcomes that prepare students for success in life, school, and work. Furthermore, the goals of each general education category drive the specific learning outcomes associated with that category, which the college uses for assessment purposes.

As is fully explained in section 4.B, the college is currently in year two of participation in the HLC's

Assessment Academy. As part of its efforts within this Academy, WSCC has completely revised its assessment model and has required each program and general education category to develop a curriculum map that identifies the learning outcomes for that program, specific indicators that comprise that broader outcome, and specific metrics that will be used to obtain data for those indicators. Due to this college-wide assessment effort, each general education category has developed its own set of program-level outcomes, which are based on the college's stated learning goal for that category. As an example of one of these curriculum maps, complete with the program-level learning outcomes for that general education category, please see the attached [Communications Curriculum Map](#). Furthermore, as is fully described in section 4.A, each general education category is also conducting a thorough program review. These program reviews include all available aforementioned assessment data, but also incorporate a thorough analysis of student success data, course transferability, needed equipment and resources, and much more. By way of example, a copy of the recently completed [Mathematics program review](#) is attached.

3.B.3 – Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

Beyond the general education requirements of WSCC, each degree program attempts to engage students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments. Each of these skills, which are taken directly from the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation, are closely aligned with the aforementioned WSCC Core Abilities of effective communication, critical thinking, and professionalism. One way in which this is accomplished is by encouraging students to participate in an internship whenever possible. A total of 10 internships were taken by students during the 2017-2018 academic year, 17 during 2018-2019, and 12 during 2019-2020. Of these, the most popular fields where internships were taken during this three-year timeframe include criminal justice (10), accounting (7), computer networking (6), and office information systems (5). Students who do elect to take an internship must work closely with the employer to identify a list of learning objectives and their overall goals for the internship. A copy of the [Internship Manual and Agreement](#) is included for further information.

The college also has a newly revised curriculum approval process to ensure that all programs meet WSCC standards and requirements. To serve as evidence of this process, copies have been provided of the [Curriculum Submission Process](#), the [New Program Form](#), and the [New Course Form](#). This revised process includes several signatures that must be obtained before the curriculum is brought to the full Curriculum Team for review and approval. Each individual who signs the form has a [checklist](#) for tasks they must perform or verifications they must make. Note that considerations like transfer opportunities, curriculum mapping, program/course budgets, and program learning outcomes are now being identified and verified before any piece of curriculum will be considered for approval. While WSCC always had a process for reviewing and approving curriculum before it was submitted to the Board, this newly revised process has led to more fully refined curriculum submissions at the point of committee review. Whereas WSCC used to have a Curriculum and Academic Planning Team that handled all curriculum submissions in addition to serving as the primary leadership team for academics, the college has now split these duties into separate teams. The Curriculum Team is solely charged with managing the curriculum process and approving submissions, while the Academic Leadership Team is now dedicated solely to serving as a cross-functional group focused on

advancing academic quality at WSCC. This separation of duties has allowed for a much greater focus on each task. A copy of some recent [Curriculum Team](#) and [Academic Leadership Team minutes](#) have been provided as evidence of the work being performed by these teams. These minutes, as well as meeting agendas and other forms of documentation, are available to all WSCC employees through the institution's SharePoint intranet.

3.B.4 – The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.

Another aspect of WSCC's efforts to encourage intellectual inquiry is through valuing and recognizing the human and cultural diversity of the world, and by creating learning opportunities to enhance our students' and local community's knowledge of this diversity. This commitment is best illustrated by WSCC's HumanKind Series. The HumanKind Series is an ongoing educational initiative that examines the cultural, social, and political parallels between the United States and a particular region of the world. Each academic year, faculty and staff select a region of study and organize a series of lectures, exhibits, texts, activities, and performances to provide a diverse perspective of our world to students and the broader community. Faculty are also encouraged to incorporate HumanKind events and materials into their course offerings. The HumanKind Series began in the 2017-2018 academic year with an exploration of West Africa. Since then, the HumanKind series has explored the Middle East and Cuba. Given its success and positive evaluations by students and community members, WSCC plans to organize the HumanKind Series for an additional four academic years. The HumanKind series webpage, Facebook page, and a [brochure](#) all provide more information about these events.

In addition to this co-curricular learning series, the college also offers a wide range of general education courses that recognize the human and cultural diversity of the world. Many courses incorporate elements of diversity within them, while others are focused almost entirely on the topic of diversity. The following selections fit this latter category and are taken from the divisions of social science and humanities and fine arts:

- Introduction to Anthropology
- Native Peoples and Cultures
- World Regional Geography
- Western Civilization
- Introduction to Psychology
- Introduction to Sociology
- Art History
- Art Appreciation
- Music Appreciation
- History of Popular American Music
- World Literature
- World Religions
- various language courses

3.B.5 - The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Lastly, the ongoing production of scholarship and creative works by faculty and students provide further evidence of WSCC's commitment to intellectual inquiry. The college has a long history of supporting faculty sabbaticals for the advancement of their knowledge and the development of creative and intellectual works relating to their profession. For example, WSCC's Professor of History and Political Science used a sabbatical to write and publish a book on a significant local historical figure by the name of Justus Stearns. Other sabbaticals have been granted for faculty to take graduate-level courses, and most recently, to research how communication skills could be effectively embedded across both general education and occupational curriculum. WSCC also recently supported the creation and offering of an off-campus writer's retreat for both high school and college students. The inaugural event was held in October of 2019 and was attended by a total of 20 students. Thanks to the support of two visiting authors, WSCC faculty, and some volunteers from the local forest service, students were able to immerse themselves in nature and spend time writing and sharing creative works. A [sample of student writing](#) from the event is included as evidence. A communications faculty member from the college also collaborated with students to revise the college's online literary magazine, *Dark Matter*, which contains a selection of student creative works. While these are just a few examples, they help to demonstrate WSCC's commitment to intellectual inquiry and the types of events the college offers to cultivate scholarship and creativity.

Sources

- AA in Communications
- AAAS in Accounting
- Academic Leadership Team Minutes - 112619
- Communications Curriculum Map
- Curriculum Submission Process
- Curriculum Team Minutes - 110719
- General Education Map
- Humankind Brochure
- Internship Manual and Agreement
- Mathematics Program Review
- Modified General Education Map
- New Course Form
- New Course Form (page number 4)
- New Program Form
- Writers Workshop Brochure
- Writers Workshop Poem

3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Argument

3.C.1 – The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.

Faculty members play a crucial role at WSCC in not only delivering classroom instruction but also carrying out a wide range of additional duties. As [Article IX of the Instructional Agreement](#) makes clear, faculty members have responsibilities relating to curriculum development, professional development, committee work, filing reports, assessment, budgeting, providing office hours, attending meetings and events, and more. Several faculty members serve as the chair of the committee on which they serve, and every committee has faculty representatives on it, including the President's Leadership Team. To ensure there is a sufficient number of faculty to carry out these duties, the WSCC administration regularly monitors the number of full-time faculty employed and their respective workloads. Currently, the college employs 26 full-time faculty, which is slightly higher than in recent years. In 2019, full-time faculty accounted for 66% of all contact hours taught at WSCC. This number has risen steadily since 2016 when full-time faculty accounted for just 40% of contact hours taught. Faculty members have a standard [teaching load](#) of 15 credits per semester and are paid an overload rate of \$1,000 per contact hour for every hour they teach beyond that. Faculty may voluntarily choose to take on a load of up to 20 hours without administrative approval, assuming disciplinary proceedings are not in place, and faculty and administration can mutually agree to exceed this limit when a higher teaching load is beneficial to both parties.

Faculty longevity is also important since the continuity of faculty adds experience to the organization and provides a source of organizational history and knowledge. Of the 26 full-time faculty, 16 of

them have been with WSCC for more than five years, 12 of them have been with WSCC for more than ten years, and seven of them have been with the college for more than 20 years. The average number of years that the full-time faculty have been employed at WSCC currently stands at 11.91 years, while the longest-tenured faculty member has been in place for 29 years!

Certain faculty members are given additional responsibilities relating to the operations of their division. These [division chairs](#) provide coordinating services like communication, course schedule recommendations, faculty assignment recommendations, hiring and evaluation of adjunct faculty, and handling student complaints within the division. Division chairs are given three credits of release time each semester to ensure they have sufficient time to carry out these duties. There are currently six division chair positions at WSCC, plus other divisions have full-time directors to help them carry out administrative tasks (e.g. nursing). Faculty occasionally are also given release time for special projects, such as recent contracts that were given for [coordinating the introduction of First-Year Seminar courses](#) within area high schools and for [leading the college's implementation of its new assessment model](#).

3.C.2 – All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.

WSCC takes the qualifications of its faculty seriously and follows the HLC guidelines closely. When the HLC reaffirmed its guidelines several years ago, the college undertook a significant effort to thoroughly document its faculty qualifications for each course. A [Faculty Qualifications Guidelines](#) document was created at that time and has been updated regularly ever since. Generally speaking, courses that are part of a transfer program (e.g. general education courses) require a minimum of a master's degree, while courses that are primarily intended for immediate entry into the workforce require a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Alternative credentialing based on tested experience is used when appropriate and is often documented within the faculty qualifications table, although not all possible alternative credentialing scenarios can be reasonably captured. Whenever credentialing deviates from the published minimum, the vice president of academics and student services must approve the hire and always consults with relevant faculty, the academic dean, and the director of human resources. As new courses are approved by the Curriculum Team, faculty qualifications to teach the course are established and added to the Faculty Qualifications Guidelines document. Likewise, whenever a new faculty member is hired, whether full-time or part-time, the courses they are qualified to teach are identified and documented on a [Faculty Credentials Form](#) as part of their hiring paperwork.

Qualifications to teach within dual-credit, contractual, and consortial programs are identical to those for traditional courses. No distinction is made between a section taught on the college's campus and one that is taught, for instance, within a high school. All instructors of the course must have the minimum qualifications as described above.

3.C.3 – Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.

The [full details of the faculty evaluation process](#) are provided in the Instructional Agreement. Faculty participate in an annual evaluation process at WSCC and begin the academic year by developing an

individual annual plan with their dean that is aimed at carrying out the contractual responsibilities of a faculty member (e.g. professional development, increasing disciplinary proficiency, researching and implementing new practices in teaching and learning). During the academic year, deans complete classroom observations, and students are asked to complete course evaluations in which results and anonymous feedback are shared with the faculty member. Toward the end of the academic year, faculty then submit a year-end review to measure and reflect on what was accomplished. Supervisors then meet with individual faculty to discuss all pieces of the evaluation and [document whether or not performance was satisfactory](#) or if improvement is needed, and also what was achieved during the year and what they plan to do next year.

Another option that is made available to faculty who have received continuing appointment status (i.e. WSCC's version of tenure) is to participate in a teaching-learning circle. These circles, involving two or more faculty approved by the administrative supervisor, include discussions and at least one peer observation in any modality, rotating modalities at least every two years, if applicable. Teaching-learning circles will generally stand in place of class observations by the supervisor, although the supervisor may observe classes. For faculty choosing this option, their year-end review consists of an analysis of the perceived impact of the teaching-learning circle and reflections on being observed by and observing peers.

3.C.4 – The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.

Professional development is an important part of WSCC's culture, and faculty are active participants in any classes, events, or programs that are offered. Frequently, employees of the college provide ad hoc training courses directed primarily at faculty, as evidenced by a [recent email](#) describing training that will be provided to new instructors on how to use the college's learning management system. WSCC also maintains a subscription to LinkedIn Learning, so faculty can take any courses from that training repository without any additional cost. Regular professional development opportunities are also offered, such as those that are part of the two in-service sessions per year. The [Instructional Agreement](#) allows the college to offer up to seven professional development days per year. Four of these days are typically offered before the [fall semester](#) as in-service and three before the [winter semester](#). These days are full of updates from college employees, workshops to accomplish tasks like developing assessment maps or program pathways, and training sessions from external participants. For example, during the 2020 winter in-service, an expert on designing accessible online content was brought in from Northwestern Michigan College to provide a one-hour training session to WSCC faculty and answer their questions.

WSCC also has a strong history of granting faculty sabbatical requests, the details of which are outlined in the [Instructional Agreement](#). These sabbaticals always result in professional development for the faculty member in some form. Some faculty have chosen to take courses towards advanced degrees, while others have worked on projects that might benefit their teaching, such as [writing a book](#). The most recent sabbatical at WSCC was taken by the full-time speech faculty member to [research the importance of speech and communication across the curriculum](#).

Faculty also have a [contractual responsibility](#) to remain current in their field and to utilize regular professional development to accomplish this objective. The college frequently authorizes the use of departmental funds to allow faculty to attend professional development events or purchase learning materials of their choosing. Other sources of funds, such as that obtained from Carl D. Perkins, are

also allocated towards faculty professional development. Faculty frequently choose to attend conferences and workshops like InstructureCon by the makers of Canvas, the Student Success Summit put on by the Michigan Center for Student Success, and many others that are discipline-specific.

3.C.5 – Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

At a fundamental level, students are guaranteed access to instructors by the [Instructional Agreement](#) which requires faculty to provide “reasonable accessibility to students via multiple modalities (e.g., in-person, phone, or email).” The Agreement further requires faculty to hold office hours (on-campus or online) and to “sustain a campus presence separate from teaching hours” to ensure that students have broad and convenient access to their instructors. By long-established college policy, faculty are required to hold a minimum of one office hour per week for each of their courses. In practice, however, faculty typically make themselves available to students whenever they are not otherwise teaching or in committee meetings—upwards of approximately 20 hours per week. In addition, almost all faculty respond to students in the evenings and on weekends. Faculty have also responded well to the pandemic-related migration of the college’s courses to online delivery by increasing their knowledge and use of digital tools like document cameras, Zoom, and other video chat platforms to help their students succeed.

3.C.6 – Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

WSCC’s hiring process begins by having the vacant position’s supervisor, the director of human resources, and usually a vice president level position draft a position profile that outlines the job duties of that position. The nature of those duties then informs the required qualifications for that position, thus ensuring that any eventual hire possesses at least the minimum qualifications required for that specific position. WSCC recognizes that regular professional development is required to maintain the necessary skills of the job, however, as well as to keep skills current with changes to technology and processes. Therefore, WSCC invests heavily in its employees’ professional development in myriad ways. First and foremost, the professional development of employees is part of the college’s [strategic plan](#) and is articulated as having 100% of employees participate in professional development annually. This is tracked by the Professional Development Team, which is a cross-functional group of administrators and faculty who assist with providing professional development events on campus and implementing best practices learned from prior training. As was described in 3.C.4, the college subscribes to LinkedIn Learning and regularly sends employees to conferences relating to their discipline. Each student support services department also has distinctive methods for obtaining professional development for their employees related to their area of work.

For example, the financial aid department relies heavily on email listserves and webinars. The department’s staff attends as many workshops, conferences, and webinars each year as possible that are financial aid and military- and veteran-related. They also frequently utilize the Federal Student Aid Handbook and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) AskRegs for guidance. The department subscribes to the daily NASFAA Today’s News emails, as well as listservs for national, regional, and state financial aid associations; federal and state

organizations for military and veterans; PowerFAIDS (i.e. WSCC's financial aid software); and Jenzabar EX (i.e. WSCC's student information system). The director also subscribes to the listserv for Michigan community college financial aid directors.

Within the advising department, the director of advising and registrar, as well as the director of student access and engagement, are members of the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO). This statewide group regularly broadcasts informational updates, options for webinars, and conference notices related to registration and advising topics. All advisors meet every other week to discuss advising program changes, improvements to advising, or information obtained from one of the aforementioned sources. Advisors also attend student services full staff meetings every other week to stay connected to other changes within the college.

Within the departments of tutoring and testing, the full-time support staff is required to complete at least eight hours of training per year, but typically at least 20 hours are completed. Many vendors also require mandatory initial and annual recertifications, such as Pearson VUE, Accuplacer, and Certipoint. Similar to other student support departments, employees within the tutoring and testing centers are encouraged to join national associations, such as the National Collegiate Testing Association and the College Readiness and Learning Association. Peer tutors are also required to show proof of earning at least a B grade in any course in which they are providing tutoring, and they are paired with a senior counterpart for at least a week until the supervisor and mentor agree they are competent in the subject area.

Finally, the peer coaches in the Writing Center are WSCC students from a range of disciplines who are hired based on a combination of factors, including faculty recommendations, strong academic standing, writing samples, and personal interviews. They receive extensive training from the faculty member who directs the Writing Center before they begin tutoring, and their training and professional development continue throughout their employment. They complete academic readings and activities connected to writing center theory and scholarship, co-tutor, and are mentored regularly by the director.

Sources

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- Faculty Responsibilities from Instructional Agreement
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- Strategic Plan.pdf
- Strategic Plan.pdf (page number 4)
- Teaching Load from Instructional Agreement
- Winter In-Service 2020

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Argument

3.D.1 – The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.

WSCC offers a wide array of student support services to help students succeed academically and overcome life challenges that threaten their likelihood of success in college and beyond. These supports include staffing a [director of student access and resources](#), contracting with a licensed counselor, and housing departments like a writing center and tutoring center. The student services office on WSCC's campus provides a convenient place for students to seek out assistance with anything from financial aid to connecting with peers to mental health. The college has recently partnered with the local United Way to fund a [resource navigator position](#) on WSCC's campus that helps students find social services in the area that are available to them, and another hiring is imminent for an early alert coordinator and retention specialist. All of these services are offered to the students free of charge. Thanks to the work of the college's foundation, generous financial support is also available to students to help them overcome the financial barrier of attending college.

The college also has a committee on campus known as the Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation (CARE) Team. The CARE Team assists students with a wide variety of personal and academic issues that can sometimes become barriers to student success. The CARE Team is made up of licensed counselors, members of student services, faculty members, and the United Way resource navigator. Each team member engages in student outreach within his or her area of specialization. For example, the United Way resource navigator connects students to various community resources such as local food banks. Faculty, staff, and students may request help from the CARE Team on behalf of any student for whom they are concerned. Students may also request help for themselves. During the 2019-2020 academic year, the CARE Team received 182 requests for assistance. Some requests reported a single issue, while others reported multiple issues. About 33% of the CARE Team reports contained a mental health component, while approximately 14% of the reports contained a request for financial assistance.

WSCC's Tutoring Center offers one-on-one and small group study sessions, as well as drop-in labs in

both face-to-face and remote formats for students and potential applicants. Available tutors include peers, tutoring professionals, instructors, retirees, community members, and recent graduates. While the Tutoring Center maintains regular business hours during the week, WSCC has partnered with NetTutor to assist all enrolled students remotely at any time. Services include individual tutoring sessions, question drop-offs, or writing center submissions. The Tutoring Center works closely with the director of student access and resources to support students in need of accommodations. Accommodations offered by the Tutoring Center include extended-time testing, individual study/testing rooms, reading assistance, and scribe duties. The Tutoring Center also offers a variety of adaptive technologies to assist students with disabilities. Activity during the 2019-2020 school year totaled 2,413 hours of face-to-face tutoring, 4,803 hours of online tutoring, and 508 accommodated tests administered.

Another student support service the college offers is a Writing Center to provide free writing support to students, faculty, and staff across campus. Peer writing coaches work alongside the Writing Center Director, a full-time English faculty member, to guide writers on projects from across the disciplines as well as things like scholarship essays and career documents. Writing Center staff work to engage in authentic dialogue with writers of all skill levels, meeting them wherever they happen to be in the writing process to provide thoughtful feedback and teach general strategies for becoming stronger writers overall. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the Writing Center conducted 604 sessions with 267 students, totaling over 500 hours of support for the year. Support was also offered to eight different faculty members across the disciplines, including math, chemistry, geography, English/composition, speech/communications, history, and sociology. Tutoring was primarily offered on a drop-in basis, with appointments and online options offered upon request to best accommodate students' needs. Most recently, online drop-in hours were offered and further efforts are being made to expand online offerings in the coming year. Each semester the Writing Center also conducts brief outreach presentations in many courses across the disciplines that include writing assignments. During such a presentation, Writing Center staff members explain how the Writing Center can help students as they work on course papers and encourage students to take advantage of this resource. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 19 such presentations were given. Lastly, the Writing Center encourages faculty to arrange full-class workshops in the Writing Center space. These workshops are specifically designed to assist students and faculty with specific writing projects for a given course. Eight such workshops were held during the 2019-2020 academic year.

WSCC's Learning and Testing Center (LTC) provides secure, onsite testing to applicants, students, workforce professionals, and the community that adheres to the National College Testing Association's guidelines. Convenient weekday hours are offered throughout the year. Facilities include two computer testing labs with 15-20 seats each, a paper testing room with 30 desks, and a 20-station computer commons with specialized software access and printing capabilities. The LTC can accommodate entire class sections at once, individuals over an instructor-specified timeframe, and makeup tests as needed. Community offerings include proctoring services for non-WSCC students, industry certification exams, national testing, and workforce testing. Remote proctoring utilizing Zoom is the LTC's newest offering. Examples of testing that are routinely offered include Accuplacer, ACT, Certipoint, CLEP, GED, HESI, NOCTI, ETS, Pearson VUE, and WorkKeys. During the 2018-2019 school year, the LTC proctored a total of 8,563 tests.

Finally, [counseling services](#) are also provided to assist students with both their academic endeavors and their personal and social lives. Counseling offers an opportunity to explore feelings, learn new coping skills, and feel supported amid challenges. WSCC offers a safe environment in which to discuss any nature of concern at no cost to students. The duration of counseling is mostly short-term;

however, any long-term needs are identified and addressed as well. The [utilization of counseling services](#) increased in the 2019-2020 academic year by over 17%, much of which was actually before the COVID-19 crisis. With a total of 109 visits (September 2019-June 2020), only 39 occurred during the fall semester. The winter semester resulted in 59 visits and summer had 11. February 2020 was the busiest month in recent years with an average of 5 students seen per 14-hour week. Of the 70 visits since January 2020, only 27 have been post-COVID.

3.D.2 - The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.

Because significant numbers of WSCC students have traditionally been underprepared for college-level academic work, the college has deliberately taken steps to help acclimate them. In many cases, these efforts have occurred before the students have graduated high school. Building relationships with area high schools is crucial in this effort, so the college has partnered with a local [promise zone](#) to offer its First-Year Seminar (FYS) course to high school students. This course helps prepare future students for college and acts as a sort of pathway or orientation before they step foot onto a college campus. The curriculum not only supports students as they walk through the often confusing onboarding process but also helps them to develop the skills necessary for academic success at a post-secondary level before they are enrolled in college courses. Traditional sections of FYS are also offered to students who are unable to take the course while in high school so that they have support as they navigate their first semester. A copy of an [FYS syllabus](#) has been included to provide more detail about the content of this course.

Once students are accepted to WSCC, they are asked to complete an online [New Student Orientation](#) course that introduces them to frequently-used online tools and student supports, such as tutoring, the Writing Center, mental health counseling, the Learning & Testing Center, Disability Access Services, and academic advising. Once they complete the New Student Orientation and a second online course that teaches them how to register for courses, students are ready to enroll in classes. WSCC utilizes multiple measures to ensure students are accurately placed in the best courses for their current skill set. In addition to ACT, SAT, Compass, and Accuplacer tests, the college recently added students' high school GPA as another placement tool. This move was made largely in response to data that indicated a higher level of success in Composition I if students maintained a cumulative HS GPA of 2.8 or above, regardless of their placement test scores. The attached [Course Sequences and Placement flowchart](#) was developed to communicate placement score criteria to students and WSCC's high school partners. To further facilitate placement and student scheduling during the pandemic, WSCC also recently authorized high school counselors to place students using the criteria contained in this flowchart without any additional involvement from college personnel.

Whereas students once had to take a developmental sequence if they did not test into college-level work, the college now places almost all students who are not able to be placed directly into Composition I into an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) course called [Writing Essentials](#). Consistent with the tenets of the ALP model, students are also concurrently placed into Composition I so as not to delay their progression through the Communications sequence. While the move to this model occurred some time ago, it was based on a data analysis that showed students who took ALP were just as successful as non-ALP-takers without forcing them to take an additional semester that could lead to them stopping out. Writing Essentials operates as an effective lab space in which students can get much more direct personal attention from their Composition I instructor, as well as

benefit from better peer support and utilization of college resources like the Writing Center. The course enrollment is capped at 11 students, ensuring that the students can focus on their work in an intimate setting to develop effective college-level communication skills.

3.D.3 – The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.

WSCC provides academic advising through the student services department, utilizing a team of four directors with part-time advising responsibilities, as well as two part-time individuals whose sole responsibility is advising. All students are permitted to meet with any of the advisors to discuss programs, careers, transfer options, and to assist with registering for classes, regardless of their academic status or program of study. Students are required to complete an online New Student Orientation via Canvas once admitted to the college. Once the orientation is complete, all degree-seeking students must also complete a New Student Registration (NSR) session. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, these NSR sessions were held on campus in a group setting, with several of the advisors assisting with program selection, course placement, and registration. Faced with the inability to hold these face-to-face sessions, staff acted quickly to convert the information typically covered into an additional Canvas course that students can access remotely. Students are then permitted to either proceed on their own with course registration or set up a meeting with an advisor for further assistance.

Student advising appointments are set up through [SignUp Genius](#), a newly created process as a response to the pandemic. Once the NSR is complete, students are directed to the [link for the sign-up](#), which is posted at the top of WSCC's student portal. Appointment times are spread throughout the week and allow students to choose between two virtual options: a Zoom video conference or a phone conference. Due to the overwhelmingly positive response from students for providing this previously unavailable option, the intention is to continue to allow virtual appointments as an alternative for the unforeseeable future.

The academic advisors use a variety of tools to assist students with choosing the career path, program, and courses that are right for them. Due to COVID-19, a much greater emphasis has been placed on utilizing and developing digital resources. Just over three years ago, the college implemented a digital catalog solution known as Acalog to publish the annual catalog, which can now be found on the college's website. Students and advisors can download a degree planner for any of the degrees or certificates and can easily search for course descriptions. Additionally, students can utilize the online Degree Audit tool to check on their degree progress and find courses to meet requirements. Advisors can also utilize this tool through the Advising function on the college intranet to further guide students toward degree completion. Many paper forms were converted to electronic or fillable PDF documents to allow for digital access and completion and are stored on another secure intranet site for advisor and staff access. Examples of such forms are the Satisfactory Academic Progress Plan, Withdrawal Form, Course Substitution/Waiver Form, Change of Information Form, and Third Party Release of Information Form.

WSCC is also a participant in the state and nationwide Guided Pathways initiative, which has increased the focus on aligning programs and courses with a student's area of interest. WSCC's eight pathways are Arts and Humanities, Business, Communications, Computer Science, Health-Related, Manufacturing, Science and Math, and Social Science. Students begin in a general pathway and then can determine a more granular program within a pathway. The next step is to align advising with

pathways, with advisors partnering with program directors and faculty to become experts in a particular pathway, and developing a faculty advising model for students beyond the first year of courses. This content specialization would also allow for a caseload-based advising model, which would have the additional benefit of helping students to create a personal relationship with an advisor knowledgeable about their chosen career path.

After participating in a lean processing initiative in the fall of 2018, the college had intended to move to a fully online student onboarding process to remove potential barriers and to better accommodate students who live a distance from the college or have transportation challenges. The recent pandemic accelerated those efforts and, proudly, the college was able to quickly respond by offering virtual advising and online orientation sessions. As the assessment of the current process continues, it is anticipated that the college will continue to improve this virtual process to enhance the student experience, while also returning to traditional face-to-face advising for those who prefer it.

3.D.4 – The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the college’s offerings).

WSCC is blessed to be able to provide outstanding facilities and resources to support effective teaching and learning. The college campus includes a chemistry lab, plant biology lab with an attached greenhouse, an anatomy and physiology/biology lab with an attached cadaver lab, a computer networking lab, a welding lab with a separate fabrication lab, a 257-seat performance amphitheater with dressing rooms and backstage space for set design, music and choir rooms, a large art lab, recently designed nursing simulation labs with high-fidelity manikins and equipment that mirrors that found at local hospitals, an early childhood lab outfitted with children’s furniture and equipment, a mechatronics/robotics lab connected to a separate machine tool lab, numerous computer labs, and much more. The college also recently purchased and renovated a facility specifically for public safety programs like law enforcement, corrections, and emergency medical services. This new off-campus facility, known as the [Riemer Regional Public Safety Training Center](#), even houses a live-fire shooting range in the basement and two firearms simulator systems.

Technological and classroom equipment is maintained through a combination of capital outlay, operational, and Carl D. Perkins funds. As is described in the responses to 5.A.1 and 5.A.5, [capital millage funds are frequently used to purchase instructional equipment](#) like welders, microscopes, nursing simulators, emergency medical services equipment, and classroom furniture. Through the process used to determine equipment needs and find an appropriate funding source (described in 5.A.5), all faculty equipment requests were accommodated this year. The college also employs a full IT department that provides technical support to students and faculty, evaluates and implements software and computing requests, and provides learning management system support. The college employs a full-time [learning management systems analyst](#) and was in the process of hiring an instructional designer until the pandemic forced the college to postpone several new positions. Finally, a Campus Technology Team, which reports to the Institutional Effectiveness Team within the college’s committee hierarchy, also helps to evaluate learning technology needs and manage their implementation. About half of this team is made up of full-time faculty, with the director of IT, IT staff members, and other administrators making up the rest of the team. This year, the Campus Technology Team assisted with the release of a new WSCC mobile app, evaluated digital signage displays, and considered faculty ideas for technological upgrades.

3.D.5 – The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Information is provided to students about [source evaluation](#), [source types](#), and the [research process](#) through handouts that are available in print in the library and also on the library's website. Students are introduced to available resources during new student orientations, FYS courses, and nursing student orientations. They are also introduced to library staff and methods of contacting them, which include phone, email, and instant messaging.

Research is part of student learning outcomes in several key courses, such as [English Composition I](#) and [English Composition II](#). Even when it is not a part of student learning outcomes, research is required in assignments in many classes, such as [Fundamentals of Nursing Practice](#), [Interpersonal Communication](#), [Principles of Speaking](#), and [U.S. History to 1877](#), among others.

The college has also placed modules in the learning management system, Canvas, that can easily be embedded in courses to help students gain skills in the effective use of research and information resources. There are modules on source evaluation and source types, each of which also includes assessments. Another instructional method is through face-to-face, assignment-specific sessions that give students a chance to conduct research firsthand and receive guidance from the professor and library director as they work. Lastly, students can request appointments with the library director for one-on-one research assistance and can also visit the previously described Writing Center.

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- Counseling Service Statistics
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- Course Sequences and Placement Scores
- Director of Student Access and Resources Position Profile
- ENG 111 Learning Outcomes
- ENG 112 Learning Outcomes
- First-Year Seminar Syllabus
- HIS 145 Research Paper
- Information Sources
- Learning Management Systems Analyst
- Mason County Promise
- New Student Orientation Slides
- NUR 110 Professional Issues Paper
- Research Packet
- Source Evaluation
- SPE 101 Persuasive Speech
- SPE 110 Final Paper

- United Way Resource Navigator
- Writing Essentials Syllabus

3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Argument

3.E.1 – Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.

The college offers a wide variety of co-curricular opportunities to enrich the educational experience of its students and contribute to the college's mission of making the "community a better place in which to learn, live, work, and prosper". These include art exhibits, the Performing Arts Series described in 1.D.3, internships, the Humankind series (described in 3.B.4), facilities like the recreation center and ice arena, and a long list of [student clubs](#) to connect individuals with shared interests. WSCC employs a holistic view of student development which includes not only providing them with quality educational opportunities but also providing experiences that broaden their perspectives and connect them with new people and opportunities. The college produces a [monthly newsletter](#) for employees that often highlights these efforts and encourages participation at upcoming events.

An example of how this is achieved through a program like the Performing Arts Series is by giving students opportunities to connect with alternative forms of music or to become part of a theater production. Considering WSCC's relatively small size, the number of programs available is considerable, each of which has grown over the past decade. WSCC is home to a 100-member wind ensemble, chamber winds ensemble, brass ensemble, saxophone ensemble, percussion ensemble, two choirs, two jazz bands, and a music business and entertainment program with Ferris State University. Within the above-mentioned groups, 30 WSCC students are on scholarship. Students are recruited as early as 8th grade and make a natural decision to attend WSCC if a university is not in their plan. Students have a pathway through the college's fine arts program and often say they have a "home" at WSCC. Many students who are not music majors also find opportunities to get involved in the ancillary activities surrounding music and theater productions. In total, the performing groups are home to over 300 WSCC students, dual-enrolled students, non-dual-enrolled high school students, lifelong learners/community members, and professional artists. Through programs like this, WSCC students have the ability to enhance their education by keeping the arts a part of their lives both while they are attending WSCC and after.

3.E.2 - The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement,

service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

WSCC's mission is broad and can encompass all aspects of a student's life. The institution does not make any specific claims about contributing to an individual's research, community engagement, or religious purpose, for example, but all of these can implicitly be found within the college's mission. WSCC wants each person with whom it interacts to find and develop their own interests for the betterment of their individual life. The activities mentioned within the response above and in 1.A.2 provide numerous opportunities for individuals to do just that. For example, many community members interact with the college through events like the Muddy Fox Trot or by frequenting the recreation center. Younger children engage with WSCC through College for Kids, school visits to the campus, or community events like an Easter egg hunt. Current students become involved in Student Senate, join a student club, or participate in Performing Arts Series events. The college also has a member of the Student Senate sit on the President's Leadership Team and on numerous other committees across campus, thus giving students an opportunity to influence their experience, while simultaneously teaching them about leadership activities within a higher education context. Quite often, students bring forth ideas for new events or campus enhancements, such as the recent successful proposal to ban all forms of smoking and tobacco on WSCC's campus and the group's offering of a community-focused [family fun night](#). Initiatives and events like these clearly go beyond involving students in the college's mission through the use of co-curricular experiences; they enhance the college's mission and help to see it achieved. Internship experiences built into occupational programs also frequently turn into jobs for students, thus providing them with a co-curricular experience that may directly jumpstart their careers.

Sources

- Employee_Newsletter_Shorelines Feb_2020
- Student Organizations List (2019)
- Student Senate Family Fun Night

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

WSSC offers a variety of certificates and associate's degrees in both occupational and liberal arts programs. This allows students to complete a one- or two-year credential and enter the workforce or take advantage of one of the many articulation agreements that WSSC has established with partner universities. The learning goals for each of these programs are clearly articulated within the college's curriculum maps, with student learning outcomes for each course communicated to students via the syllabi and registration system. The college also ensures consistency of quality regardless of course modality and delivery location.

WSSC's general education program provides an extensive list of offerings to students with clear guidelines as to how these general education requirements can be met. Recently, the work of the Academic Leadership Team has simplified this model even further by better aligning the associate of arts and associate of science degrees with the Michigan Transfer Agreement and eliminating numerous complicated subcategories of requirements. The college also espouses three primary core abilities, which drive the general education requirements of the school and are integrated throughout the curriculum.

WSSC is especially proud of its work promoting diversity and the understanding of shared human conditions. This is accomplished not only through its traditional courses, but also through the popular Humankind series, which brings culturally-themed lectures, art exhibits, and musical performances to campus throughout the year. The college's faculty are significant contributors to this effort, especially considering many of them serve on the Academic Projects team that drives the Humankind events. They also make contributions to scholarship and research within the academic community, thanks in large part to the sabbatical support provided by WSSC. The college has sufficient faculty to carry out their many roles and is blessed with longevity within the faculty ranks. The procedures used to ensure faculty possess the necessary qualifications have been refined over the years and are now a natural part of the hiring process. The Faculty Qualifications Guidelines document serves as a quick reference and an important piece of institutional documentation, while the faculty hiring form provides an initial place to document the courses each individual is qualified to teach upon their hire. The college's faculty evaluation process also has sufficient dean involvement as to communicate and correct any performance deficiencies, while also allowing faculty the freedom to participate in peer-based teaching circles. Faculty are especially good at making themselves available for students and engaging in professional development activities.

Lastly, WSSC provides a wide variety of student support services to help students succeed. These include a cross-functional CARE Team to respond to student emergencies and concerning behaviors, a tutoring and testing center, a writing center, counseling services, and various personnel to assist students with navigating the attainment of available resources. The college helps prepare students for college by offering a First-Year Seminar course, various orientations, personal advising, and, if necessary, placement into an ALP-based English Composition course or developmental math course. WSSC also provides a robust set of co-curricular options for students and to the public to fulfill its

mission of making the community a better place to learn, live, work, and prosper.

In reflecting upon WSCC's performance in the above category, each topic discussed has abundant resources available. No areas contained significant weaknesses, and in many cases, WSCC is serving as a leader in the community (i.e. partnering with the United Way to staff a resource navigator within WSCC's student services department). Therefore, *Category 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support* is seen as a particular strength of WSCC.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

WSCC has always taken great pride in the quality of its educational programming. Since its inception, the institution has maintained a focus on providing a mix of occupational and liberal arts programs, thus ensuring options for students with both transfer and workforce goals. The college has a history of employing faculty with superb credentials and providing students with a wealth of academic support options to give them the greatest opportunity for success. Furthermore, in recent years the college has taken on numerous initiatives and implemented significant procedural changes to increase the quality of its educational offerings even further.

One of the most recent examples of this positive change has been the creation of the Academic Leadership Team (ALT) and a separate dedicated Curriculum Team. This move was part of a larger team restructuring effort that is detailed in the response to 5.B. Before these changes, all curriculum approval and academic leadership functions were handled by a single Curriculum and Academic Policy Team (CAPT). Given the limited amount of time this team was able to meet, most meetings were dominated by curriculum approval functions, leaving little time for weighty discussions on

student success and educational improvement. The separation of these functions into two distinct teams starting with the 2019-2020 academic year allowed for considerably more attention in each area, resulting in significant improvements to the curriculum submission/approval process and numerous processes surrounding academics.

As was briefly described in the response to 3.B, curriculum submissions were previously provided to the CAPT with inconsistent levels of prior oversight and collaboration. This resulted in some ill-prepared submissions and a significant number of editing and revision cycles that consumed the valuable time of the team's meetings and its members. With the implementation of the new, dedicated Curriculum Team, new submission forms (provided in 3.B) were created that ensured a series of approvals were granted by both faculty and administrators before the application was received and reviewed by the actual Curriculum Team. This created a much greater opportunity for cross-functional collaboration in the initial development of the curriculum and a significantly more thorough review before the Curriculum Team gave its final review and approval. The new curriculum forms also included a [space for program learning outcomes](#) and a [checkbox for the chair/director to ensure that the course had been incorporated into the appropriate assessment map](#), thus ensuring that any new courses aligned with existing assessment efforts and prudently built the development of assessment mechanisms into the initial development of a class. The WSCC Board of Trustees also maintains a [Curriculum policy](#) and approves all new curriculum each year. The curriculum first goes to the President, then is sent to the Board Policy and Personnel Committee, and then is finally approved by the full Board. In addition to the creation of separate teams for curriculum and academic leadership, a revitalized Student Success Team was also created. The details of this team and some of its initiatives are described in the response to 4.C.

4.A.1 – The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

One of the major initiatives taken on by the ALT during the past year was the continued improvement of the college's program review process. WSCC was admittedly weak in this area in the past, prompting the need for "a monitoring report to ensure the institution develops consistent, transparent processes for program review." This [monitoring report](#) was submitted on May 4, 2018, and [HLC reviewer feedback](#) found that the evidence provided demonstrated adequate progress. WSCC has continued to make improvements to this process based on its initial experience. For example, when using the original template to complete the Mathematics program review in 2019, many sections were found to be inapplicable to general education categories. Thus, faculty completing the review had to make numerous judgment calls as to which sections could safely be disregarded. The formatting of the template also made it difficult to complete without creating awkward page breaks or having portions of text cut off from view, which led Mathematics faculty to design a new format to meet their needs. Version 2.0 of the program review template addressed these issues by having separate forms for [occupational programs](#) and [general education categories](#), as well as a redesign that utilizes some of Microsoft Word's advanced features like fillable fields, heading styles, and paragraph spacing parameters.

A schedule for program reviews was also completed that clarified which programs and general education categories were required to complete a review. During the college's first attempt at establishing a program review schedule, certain groups of courses like Speech were listed as requiring a program review. WSCC only offers four Speech courses and there is no degree focused specifically on that discipline. Furthermore, by including all disciplines like Speech, the list of required program reviews was immense, since every small discipline that had two or more courses

was listed as needing a program review. This was simplified through a combined effort of the ALT and the Assessment Team during 2018-2019 when they clearly defined a list of occupational programs and general education categories that require a program review and assessment map. A [document containing the full list of programs and a schedule for program review completion](#) was created and published on the college's intranet.

All academic programs and general education categories are on a five-year rotation for conducting a program review, with annual updates to ensure that progress is being made towards implementing recommendations. Unfortunately, the recent Coronavirus pandemic did have an impact on finalizing two of the scheduled program reviews this year. Significant progress has been made on both the medical assistant and welding program review documents, but faculty were not able to finalize and present these documents before the end of the academic year. These will be presented at the beginning of fall semester. However, both the [humanities](#) and [network services](#) program reviews were completed and presented to a combined audience of the ALT and the President's Leadership Team through online video conferencing software on April 27, 2020. Both of these program reviews are attached as evidence, as well as the [accounting](#) and [mathematics](#) program reviews that were completed in 2019. Through the continued efforts of the ALT and many people across WSCC, these documents have reached a point of looking very professional and contain information that is already leading to improvements within these programs. For example, after conducting the program review in accounting, it was discovered that a greater emphasis was needed on dual-enrollment in that discipline. Every discipline that has finished their program review so far has also identified needs for changes to course scheduling/modality or pedagogy surrounding specific topics. While the bulk of the process described in the monitoring report is still valid as it relates to the overall method of conducting program reviews at WSCC, these improvements to the definition of programs and the template show that the college is developing a continuous quality improvement mindset and has firmly established the program review process as part of its regular operations.

4.A.2 – The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.

WSCC also demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs by evaluating all of the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for prior learning. The WSCC Board of Trustees maintains an [Earning Credit policy](#) that lists the various ways in which a student can earn credit at the college beyond taking courses directly. These options include transferring credit from another college or university, by completing approved examinations with course equivalencies (e.g. test-outs), by obtaining certain approved industry examinations, by taking articulated high school courses, or by completing other formal education and training, such as that which is obtained through the military.

Various procedures and agreements have been developed for handling the details of how this credit is awarded. For example, the Student Services procedure for [Evaluating Credit and/or High School Transcript for Equivalency of a "C" or Better Grade](#) describes how WSCC's grades are calculated based on alternative grading scales used by high schools or other institutions of higher education. Numerous articulation agreements with area high schools and career and technical education centers have also been developed and are regularly maintained to provide a full listing of the credits that may be earned and the rules surrounding the granting of that credit. Two such agreements, one with the [West Shore Educational Service District](#) and one with the [Wexford Missaukee Career Technical](#)

[Center](#), have been provided as evidence of these agreements. WSCC also allows students to receive credit by earning a score of three or better on Advanced Placement exams completed in high school. The [full listing of these opportunities](#) is available on the college website.

Students with military training may request an official Joint Services Transcript, which contains all training received and an American Council on Education recommendation on the type of credit they should receive. This almost always results in the awarding of credits relating to physical education, first aid, and general occupational coursework, although more specific training (e.g. hospital corpsman, electrical) can result in additional credits depending on the judgments of the registrar and appropriate faculty members. Finally, credits are awarded for certain industry-recognized credentials. The most common programs where this occurs are early childhood education and nursing, but opportunities also exist in fields like network services.

4.A.3 – The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

WSCC also maintains a variety of policies and procedures relating to the transferring of credits from other institutions of higher education and the articulation of credits from the high school level. The college believes there is value in creating institutional partnerships that provide new opportunities for students, so an [Articulation and Partnerships board policy](#) has been established. The Board of Trustees then maintains a separate [transfer policy](#) that allows for the general acceptance of transfer credit, while a Student Services procedure titled [Transfer of Credits Towards West Shore Certificates and Degrees](#) provides a more detailed listing of nine rules for accepting transfer credit from other colleges and universities. The [college's website also includes a page](#) specifically for transfer students with rules, resources, and information about how to begin the process of having transfer credit applied to their WSCC transcript.

To facilitate more transfer opportunities for students, Michigan colleges and universities have undertaken a significant collaborative effort over the past several years to create common transfer equivalencies. Given that Michigan lacks a uniform state system of higher education, each institution is free to design their own curriculum. While this has the benefit of autonomy and customization to a college's specific needs, it also leads to disparities between similar courses at each institution. In the past, this has created transfer barriers for students, since each college or university would evaluate transfer credit slightly differently. Thanks to the efforts of the Michigan Transfer Network and the Michigan Center for Student Success, however, faculty and registrars from Michigan's colleges and universities have come together to create common transfer pathways with consistent course equivalencies across Michigan's institutions. WSCC has participated in this effort since the beginning and continues to send representatives to statewide meetings, signing agreements for new programs as they are developed by the consortium. Similarly, the Michigan Transfer Agreement has simplified the transferring of general education courses for students by allowing up to 30 credits of eligible general education coursework to be transferred as a block into WSCC or the receiving institution of choice. Information on these programs is made available to students in Student Services and on the web.

4.A.4 – The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or

programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

Other aspects of demonstrating responsibility for ensuring quality education are maintaining and exercising authority over prerequisites for courses, the rigor of courses, and expectations of student learning. Prerequisites and corequisites are managed through the curriculum approval process described earlier in this response, which is guided by a [board policy](#) dictating that all prerequisites and corequisites be based on principles of student success. [Spaces are provided on the curriculum forms for identifying prerequisite and corequisite courses](#), and any future changes must be approved through the Curriculum Team. Historically, WSCC has defined a corequisite course to mean any class that must be taken either before or simultaneously with another course. However, the ALT has added a discussion regarding that definition to its agenda for the upcoming academic year to debate whether corequisite courses should be limited specifically to courses that must be taken concurrently with another. This is another example of how WSCC continues to question its practices and engage in collaborative conversations to ensure continuous improvement and clarity for students.

The rigor of courses and expectations of student learning are established through the use of student learning outcomes, which are also developed and approved through the curriculum process. This process allows faculty peers and administrators to ensure that student learning outcomes are appropriate to the level of a course. The annual faculty evaluation process, which is described in the response to criterion 4.B, provides another level of assurance that instructors are teaching to these learning standards. Student learning outcomes are communicated to students at the beginning of every course via the [syllabus](#) and are available to students before they register for courses through a [link in the college's registration system](#).

Providing students with access to learning resources is another important part of WSCC's efforts to ensure a quality educational experience. The college offers a fully-stocked library with a sufficient annual budget to keep its materials relevant, as ensured by a [Board of Trustees policy](#). In addition to traditional text-based materials, the library also houses study rooms, computers, audiobooks, and copies of popular textbooks. A Tutoring Center and Writing Center are also available to students, each of which provides valuable services to help students master content in a supportive environment. In 2018-2019, the college partnered with NetTutor to offer online tutoring services for after-hours or remote students. This partnership has been well utilized by students. During the fall 2019 semester, there were 102 NetTutor sessions totaling 1,577 minutes of tutoring. This significantly increased during the winter semester with 136 sessions totaling 3,078 minutes. The increase was likely a result of more students moving online due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Writing Center is also well-supported by the college. A full-time communications faculty member is given 15 hours of release time each academic year to supervise the center, while numerous student workers are hired to provide peer support. Lastly, the college hosts a [Testing Center](#) to give students an on-campus opportunity to take certification exams, as well as to provide proctored testing services. WSCC has met the standards for Pearson Vue testing, so it can offer a wide variety of tests and certifications in fields such as academia, industry, government, and healthcare.

As is fully described within the response to 3.C.2, faculty qualifications at WSCC follow the guidelines issued by the HLC and are published in a course-by-course format within a [Faculty Qualifications Guidelines](#) document. Whenever a new instructor is hired, whether full- or part-time, the courses they are qualified to teach are identified and documented on their hiring paperwork.

Lastly, all dual-credit courses and high school programs have identical learning outcomes and levels of achievement as traditional courses. No distinction is made between a course that is offered at a

high school and those that are offered on the campus. They are simply two sections of the same class offered in different locations, so the faculty qualifications, learning outcomes, and expected levels of student performance are identical.

4.A.5 – The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

WSSC pursues programmatic accreditation when it feels it would benefit both the institution and its students. While few programs have pursued specialized accreditation in the past, three programs are now nearly finished with the process of becoming accredited. These include nursing, medical assistant, and early childhood education. Unfortunately, both nursing and medical assistant had initial accreditation site visits scheduled for shortly after the coronavirus pandemic shut down such travel. Therefore, the accreditation site visits for both of these programs have been rescheduled for October. [Nursing currently holds pre-accreditation status](#) with the National League for Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation, and their site visit is now scheduled for October 28-30. The [medical assistant program is pursuing accreditation](#) with the Medical Assisting Education Review Board, and their site visit is now scheduled for October 5-6. The [early childhood education program has recently received accreditation](#) with no conditions from the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs.

4.A.6 - The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and AmeriCorps).

Obtaining detailed employment data on graduates is an extremely difficult task in the State of Michigan, where wage data that would typically be available from state offices is not shared with colleges. Despite this obstacle, WSSC takes many steps to ensure that the college and its programs are adequately preparing students for future success. Like most institutions, WSSC conducts a graduate follow-up survey to get information directly from former students. This survey was previously conducted by faculty members, but concerns about bias led the college to partner with a third-party to conduct the survey. The college now uses Management Decisions, Inc. (MDI), which is a cost-effective solution at \$1,600 per year. All 179 graduates from the 18-19 academic year were selected for participation in the follow-up survey, and MDI was successful in getting 67 responses (37% response rate). This is down slightly from the 17-18 academic year when they obtained 88 responses from 218 grads (40% response). The 16-17 and 15-16 follow-up surveys had a 31% and a 36% response rate, respectively. The benefit of using MDI is that it improves the validity of WSSC's data, but this comes at the cost of not getting large numbers of occupational graduates compared to when faculty were making direct calls.

Results from these surveys indicate that graduates generally feel satisfied with the education they received at WSSC. In the [2019 survey](#), 34 graduates said they were very satisfied with the education/training they received and 32 said they were satisfied, meaning that only a single graduate

said he or she was dissatisfied. Similarly, all but one graduate said they would recommend WSCC to others. When asked to rate how well their WSCC experience prepared them for their future studies at a university, 32.4% gave a five rating (exceptionally well), 45.9% gave a four rating, and 18.9% gave a three rating (well). Again, only one student was dissatisfied. Lastly, when asked how well their WSCC experience prepared them for employment, only five students responded, but all of them gave a rating of four or above.

Another method that WSCC uses to informally measure the success of its graduates is by including employers and former students on its occupational program advisory boards. These employer partners not only can inform the content of the college's curriculum to ensure it is relevant to their needs but can also keep college administrators and faculty apprised of how well graduates who are now employed at their companies generally perform. Having former students on the advisory boards is also valuable since they can discuss aspects of their education that were particularly relevant and aspects of their current jobs that they feel could have used more attention in the curriculum.

A few other methods utilized by WSCC to measure graduate success are end-of-program exams from the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI), employer evaluations of students who complete internships, and the results of industry certification exams. Results from the NOCTI exams are monitored annually by faculty members in relevant programs and are also included within the program review and assessment maps. Students generally perform well on these exams, as evidenced by the recent [program review from accounting](#), which showed that students consistently performed better than the state average and at or above the national average. However, when certain topics cause problems for students, faculty members then know that pedagogical or curricular adjustments are needed. Another example of this from the accounting program is when NOCTI results showed that students tended to struggle with posting, cash and banking procedures, and merchandise inventory. Adjustments in the curriculum included changing the homework problems that are selected to allow for more practice on the posting and banking procedures, as well as focusing more curriculum on the inventory methods that are more relevant to current practices. After making these adjustments, student performance on these question categories improved in future years.

As was briefly described in the response to 3.B, students completing internships must work closely with faculty and their employer to develop a list of learning outcomes. At the end of the internship experience, employers have an opportunity to evaluate the student and supply the faculty with a summary of their performance. These [evaluations](#) are monitored regularly by faculty to ensure that students are able to perform the work of the employer, and if consistent deficiencies are noted, to make adjustments to the curriculum.

Lastly, the results of industry certification exams are another source of graduate performance measurement. Select occupational programs offer these exams, such as nursing, law enforcement, and network services. Areas like nursing and law enforcement require licensure exams in order for people to enter the field, so monitoring the results of these tests have been part of WSCC's practices for a long time. As a result, WSCC students tend to do very well. For example, for each of the last four years, all students completing the WSCC police academy have taken the licensing exam from the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES), and each year every student has successfully passed the exam (35/35 total). The nursing program has had similar success, as evidenced by the [data they collect on their graduates](#). The first-time pass rate for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for licensed practical nurses (LPN) has been 100% for each of the past three years (55/55 total). First-time pass rates for the NCLEX at the registered nurse

(RN) level was 96% in 2018 (27/28) and 83% in 2017 (24/29). WSCC also learns from its results that are not as positive, however. For example, the first-time NCLEX pass rate for the RN level dropped to 69% in 2019 (18/26) when it was discovered that a group of students had been cheating on the tests within their courses, which left them ill-prepared for the national licensure exam. Nursing administrators and faculty are responding by developing a remediation plan that includes redesigning all of the tests to ensure that no group of students have an advance copy of the answers.

Other areas, such as network services, have only recently started to offer these exams and are adjusting their curriculum to help students achieve success. For example, [industry certification data](#) shows that the 2019 cohort of network services students performed well on the Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA): Introduction to Programming Using HTML and CSS exam; all four students who attempted it earned a passing grade. Likewise, four out of five students passed the MTA: Introduction of Programming Using Python exam. However, only one out of six students passed the MTA: Networking Fundamentals exam, and none of the ten students who attempted the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA): A+ exam passed. Rather than lament at these initial results, the faculty completing the program review added a [recommendation that additional program learning outcomes be added](#) to better align with industry certification standards. This focus on continuous improvement is a large part of WSCC's culture and is truly the epitome of what it means to demonstrate responsibility for the quality of the institution's educational programs. The college strives to always provide quality programming but is quick to learn from its mistakes and makes adjustments when it identifies an opportunity for improvement through the use of data.

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- Early Childhood Accreditation Letter
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- Nursing Graduate Data
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- Prerequisites and Co-requisites Board Policy
- Program Review List and Schedule
- Program Review Template - General Education Category
- Program Review Template - Occupational Programs
- Student Learning Outcomes Link
- Transfer Credits Policy
- Transfer Webpage
- West Shore ESD Articulated Credit Agreement
- Wexford Missaukee CTC Credit Agreement
- WSCC Grad Survey - 2019.pdf

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

A Comprehensive Quality Review (CQR) Team site visit in 2016 determined that gaps existed in consistent and continuous assessment of program learning outcomes at WSCC. Faculty and administrators at the college banded together to develop a comprehensive plan to fill these gaps and build a foundation upon which future ongoing assessment efforts would rest. After a considerable amount of college-wide planning under the leadership of a new president in 2017, an [interim monitoring report](#) was submitted on May 31, 2018. The [HLC staff analysis](#) of that institutional report indicated that “the institution has established the foundation of a sustainable learning outcomes assessment system. However, there are still assessment and assessment-related areas that need attention on the part of the institution.” For the sake of context, the reviewer went on to say, “It isn’t clear, for example, how learning outcomes assessment results at the course or program level are part of a broader, more centralized system of gathering and analyzing data and employing those data for the purposes of improvement.” The staff analysis concluded that “evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.”

Based on this feedback, which WSCC received on September 24, 2018, the college’s leadership recognized that more effort needed to be placed on developing a comprehensive assessment program that was both systemic and systematic. In other words, assessment needed to become a natural part of how every academic program operated and needed to follow a set process to ensure consistency, regularity, and accountability. A new vice president of academics and student services had recently been hired on July 1, 2018, partially in recognition that the vacancy in the chief academic officer position had been passively harming the college’s ability to manage complex processes like assessment. Faculty and administrators alike also recognized the need for additional professional development on effective assessment practices and for that knowledge to be shared throughout the organization.

Since receiving that feedback report, WSCC has made significant positive steps toward improving and bolstering its institutional capacity for the assessment of student learning. To name a few, the college has joined the HLC Assessment Academy, formed an Assessment Team that meets regularly and reports to the Academic Leadership Team, has spent time at several in-service events communicating assessment best practices and allowing faculty to work on the development of curriculum maps, and has recently created an annual process that will provide much-needed structure

and consistency for the organization's assessment efforts.

The HLC Assessment Academy, which WSCC joined in October 2018, has already been an important resource for obtaining professional development on the topic of assessment. WSCC's participation also helps to create structure for the college's development of assessment processes, including the collection and analysis of data. The national experts and network of peer institutions that are available as part of Academy participation have proven extremely valuable as WSCC has drafted curriculum maps and developed its assessment processes. At the time of its initial participation, WSCC was struggling with (1) defining which disciplines were considered "programs" and should, therefore, conduct assessment, (2) determining how to assess general education outcomes and the institution's overarching core abilities, (3) ensuring that all programs had clearly defined and published learning goals, (4) developing consistent curriculum maps that showed the translation from learning goals into assessment mechanisms, and (5) developing a comprehensive and regular assessment process that provides administrators and faculty with clear, annual tasks for completing their required assessment activities. While WSCC still has work to do to fully develop and implement its assessment processes, significant improvements have been made to all of these prior challenges. A summary of this work, as well as a description of the ongoing efforts that will be carried out in the coming year, are included in the subsections below.

4.B.1 – The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.

Through the efforts of the Assessment Team, a subset of which attended the Assessment Academy Kick-off in October 2018, a set of clearly defined programs was developed in the fall of 2018 to clarify which disciplines should be grouped for assessment purposes. Certain degree programs appear separate in the catalog but share a common purpose, such as the licensed practical nurse and registered nurse programs that are part of the overall nursing discipline. Likewise, certain disciplines within the college's general education framework only offer a few courses but have a distinct course designator, such as foreign language. Previous to the college's participation in the Assessment Academy, each of these subdisciplines had been identified as needing to complete independent assessment activities and program reviews. Grouping related disciplines into a single program makes much more sense. The learning goals of related occupational programs are typically part of the same set, perhaps with certificates having the learning goals equivalent to the first half of an associate's degree. Similarly, for general education categories, common learning goals can be created that encompass all of the subdisciplines contained within. For example, a learning goal of "students can develop effective, original messages" can just as easily apply to composition courses as it can to those focused on speech. Therefore, a revised list of programs was developed to clarify which disciplines should be completing assessment activities and a program review, and it was decided that the college would assess its general education coursework in alignment with the categories from which students are required to take credits. In other words, students must take a certain number of credits from the general education categories of communications, mathematics, social sciences, humanities and fine arts, and science. These then became the basis for the assessment of general education at WSCC, thus solving the first two challenges identified above. The Assessment Team has since published the [full list of programs and general education categories](#) requiring assessment on a college-wide Canvas site.

Having settled this debate, the college was then able to focus on the third and fourth challenges, which were to ensure that all programs had clearly defined and published learning goals and to develop consistent curriculum maps that showed how program learning outcomes (PLOs) translated

into assessment activities. The Assessment Team began by developing a [framework for assessment](#) that included a hierarchy of PLOs, indicators, and assessment mechanisms. The PLOs are the highest level learning goals for a program. Each program generally has two to four PLOs, such as “demonstrate organizational management practices” for the marketing/management program. Each PLO is then broken into two or more indicators, which are more specific aspects of that broader PLO. For example, the aforementioned marketing/management PLO has indicators of “recognize appropriate management functions” and “apply strategic business management planning methods.” These indicators are then assessed using multiple assessment mechanisms or metrics throughout each program. Metrics typically consist of a set of test questions, an assignment, or a practical skill assessment that measures a student’s knowledge or ability on a given indicator. Consistent with recommendations from the Assessment Academy, WSCC created three different levels of metrics: informational, reinforced knowledge, and synthesis. Informational-level skills are those that are low on Bloom’s taxonomy, so an informational-level assessment is one that assesses a student’s basic knowledge of a topic. Reinforced knowledge-level assessments are higher on Bloom’s taxonomy and usually assess whether a student can apply knowledge to new situations and contexts. Finally, a synthesis-level assessment is one that shows mastery of a topic and is related to the evaluation of others’ work related to the topic or the creation of new content within a topic area.

To communicate all of this college-wide and provide faculty with a way to build their assessment plans under this revised framework, a new template for curriculum maps was developed. This Excel-based template begins with an [instructions page](#) to assist faculty with completing the template and explains the basic concepts of the assessment framework. A [program information page](#) is then used to record information about the program’s courses, PLOs, and indicators. Information entered into this page automatically propagates to the other pages of the curriculum map template. Faculty then enter their metrics into the [curriculum map](#) by selecting the appropriate indicator and course, selecting whether they will conduct an informational, reinforced knowledge, or synthesis-level assessment, and then entering some basic information about the specific assessment metric (e.g. test #4 questions 3-6). The last page of the curriculum map template is a series of [data collection tables](#) to assist faculty with recording their assessment results. During the [winter in-service on January 9, 2019](#), a college-wide group of full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and administrators spent a total of four hours working on completing these maps. The vice president of academics and student services first described the experience of the Assessment Academy Kick-Off team and what they had learned, then [shared the framework](#) that WSCC would be using to conduct assessment. Faculty were then split into their respective disciplines and, depending on the current status of their program, either began developing PLOs and indicators or started filling in the curriculum maps with their specific assessment metrics.

Since that time, WSCC has continued to work with faculty to revise their PLOs, indicators, and assessment metrics as needed. Most programs at WSCC completed this initial work by the winter 2019 semester, but some of the more challenging areas, such as the humanities and fine arts general education category, with its wide range of course topics, took longer to complete. Thanks to this revised framework and the widespread efforts of faculty and administrators across WSCC, each program now has clearly stated goals for student learning in the form of PLOs and indicators, as well as a process for conducting assessment and recording results. Copies of the curriculum maps for [accounting](#), [communications](#), [marketing/management](#), [network services](#), and [welding](#) are included as evidence.

4.B.2 – The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

With the completion of the framework described above, WSCC created a solid foundation on which to begin conducting assessment and collecting data during the 2019-2020 academic year. Based on feedback from the Assessment Academy, the Assessment Team identified a limited number of programs that would begin collecting data in earnest. This approach had been recommended so as not to overwhelm the institution and to allow it to make improvements to its practices as needed. The response to the new assessment model was positive and met with a dedication to see this process implemented, however, so more programs collected data than had originally been identified.

One of the first programs to collect data was the communications general education category. They created an [assessment results report](#) at the end of the fall semester to see how their students initially performed on the indicators they had established. Pleasantly, the students performed at greater than the 75% competency benchmark on all indicators. By taking a closer look at the passing scores, however, they realized that typically 30% - 40% of passing students were barely scoring at the competent level with scores of between 75 and 79. While having so many students score above 75% was an initial positive result, more work was needed to boost students' scores so that they were not in imminent danger of falling below the competency threshold. This report was followed up by an [aggregate results chart](#) in the winter to ensure that students were still meeting the benchmark. Once again, students averaged significantly better than the benchmark on all indicators. Furthermore, one can see by analyzing the individual student scores that improvement was made regarding how many students scored close to the threshold with 25% - 34% scoring between 75 and 79 across all indicators.

The network services program also conducted its first round of assessment data collection, which was included in its program review by using the curriculum map data collection template. [As these results show](#), students did very well on the indicators relating to *PLO #1: Carry out troubleshooting strategies for resolving an identified end-user IT problem*. Students also did quite well on most indicators for *PLO #2: Carry out basic computer network troubleshooting techniques* and *PLO #3: Differentiate among various techniques for making a computer network secure*. However, in both of these cases, there was one assessment metric that greatly tripped up the students. Only three out of six students passed the first assessment metric for PLO #2 Indicator #1, and only one out of six students passed the first assessment metric for PLO #3 Indicator #1. Students did much better on the second assessment metrics for these indicators, however, so it appears that they were able to gain the requisite knowledge and abilities as they progressed through the program.

Another example of assessment data collected this year comes from the [practical nursing program](#). Some of their planned data collection was interrupted by the pandemic, but they still managed to collect a significant amount of data during their first year. Once again, students generally performed very well on the assessment metrics, but a notable exception occurred on several of the metrics assessed in the NUR 110 course. The first assessment metric for PLO #2 Indicator #1 had just a 13% pass rate, but students passed at 100% rates by the third and fourth assessment metrics for this indicator. Similarly, only 38% of students passed the first assessment metric for PLO #4 Indicator #4, but performance improved significantly by the time they were assessed again in later courses.

One final example of ongoing assessment is the early childhood education program, which has aligned its assessment model with that of its programmatic accrediting body, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The NAEYC has six standards for accreditation, each of which includes several key elements that must be assessed multiple times

through the use of six key assessments. This model aligns nicely with that which WSCC has adopted since the standards are essentially the same as WSCC's program learning outcomes and the key elements are similar to WSCC's indicators. So, thanks to its accreditation work, the early childhood education program has been conducting assessment for several years. In each annual report, the program must report the details of the data it has collected for one standard and provide an analysis of that data. Without going into the details of each standard and key assessment, [the most recent version of this report](#) is provided as evidence of this ongoing assessment data collection. All of the reported data relates to the indicators underneath standard two, which is *Building Family and Community Relationships*. As is evident from a glance at the data, WSCC students fared very well. Very few students did not meet each key element (indicator) and many of them exceeded the minimum skill level.

There is still a lot of work to do at WSCC to make assessment data collection a systemic and systematic process, but the past year has been an excellent start under the new framework. More programs collected assessment data this year than anticipated, which, coupled with the college's participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, shows that the institution has strong momentum towards building a sustainable assessment process. In the coming year, every program will collect assessment data as part of the college's new annual assessment process. This process is further described below as part of the response to 4.B.4.

4.B.3 – The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

Although WSCC is in the early stages of implementing its new assessment model, there are many examples of how information gained from assessment has been used to improve student learning. Some of these come from before the college participated in the HLC Assessment Academy and adopted its current assessment practices. While assessment was admittedly too informal and inconsistent in those days, WSCC faculty were nonetheless adept at making necessary programmatic changes when they were presented with evidence that students were performing poorly on a particular topic. One example that was previously shared as part of the response to 4.A.6 is when the accounting program noticed that students' NOCTI results showed that they tended to struggle with posting, cash and banking procedures, and merchandise inventory. Faculty correspondingly made adjustments to the curriculum and the assigned homework problems to positively influence students' scores in future iterations of that end-of-program assessment.

The early childhood education program also made several changes in response to its past assessment results. For example, the full-time faculty in that program area noticed several students did not attempt progressive projects/assignments, such as completing the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) assessment with three- or four-year-olds. Students were supposed to take the results of those assessments and complete a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis based on them. After seeing the lack of participation in this activity, the full-time faculty member changed the way she conducted that assignment. Now she has each step of the process graded and gives feedback to the students. Then, she has each student do a practice SWOT analysis in Google Docs with their peers offering feedback. The key to improving both the participation and skill level of students was to provide new opportunities for them to practice and receive feedback. The early childhood education program full-time faculty has also changed how she explains key elements for the assignments as a result of assessment, and now includes step-by-step instructions and direct links to resource aids for students. Lastly, she has changed the textbook resources for her classes. After noticing that students were not citing resources in-depth, she moved to the use of only three resources

that focus on child development, teaching strategies and theory, and the learning environment. This allowed students to more fully immerse themselves in these materials and to focus more deeply on foundational practices. Further examples of assessment analysis from the early childhood education program can be seen in the responses to the Data Analysis Questions section of the [programmatic accreditation report](#).

The communications division also has a history of using assessment data to make improvements. In its 2016 program review, an entire [section was dedicated to faculty interpretations](#) of student performance in Composition I classes. One of their findings from that time was a lack of data to work with for future planning. This has been vastly improved with the use of outcomes rubrics in Canvas. Later in the report were sections for [assessment considerations and understanding data](#) they had previously collected. Based on the data relating to the accelerated learning program (ALP) in English, they made improvements to ensure that both full-time and part-time faculty are fully trained to teach ALP sections (which is accomplished through a teaching circle) and that there is always a significant full-time faculty instructional presence in the ALP program. Lastly, within the college's interim report on assessment, the [communication's division mentioned that students were not achieving "mastery" in information literacy](#), which is now referred to as digital literacy in our curriculum. Communications faculty have tried to correct this by emphasizing fact-checking skills and web research skills in composition courses. For example, starting with work done by the librarian, one faculty member developed an intensive module using a combination of videos, lectures, and in-class practice and quizzes that ask students to fact-check news articles, images, and videos. Winter 2020 assessment data indicates that 83% of students are now at the mastery level of achievement in digital literacy, so these changes seem to have had a positive impact.

Some final examples of how WSCC programs use assessment data to make improvements can be found in the [programmatic accreditation report for nursing](#). When it was discovered that 75% of students who were unsuccessful in the first semester of the nursing program were also unsuccessful in taking science courses, extra points were awarded in the competitive entry process for prior success in Anatomy and Physiology or Microbiology. A change was also made to the benchmark completion rates for both the practical nursing and the associate's degree in nursing. Since students were consistently scoring above the 80% threshold, faculty decided to move the benchmark to 85% to ensure they were adequately challenging themselves and the students. Data analysis has also shown that pass rates on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) are directly tied to students' completion of the preparation trainer tests and data bank questions. Unsurprisingly, students who practice more in advance do better on the NCLEX. Therefore, a requirement that students complete these exercises was reimplemented in the winter 2020 semester. The nursing program also makes improvements based on advisory board or student feedback. In the past, this has resulted in moving more nursing courses online and the building of simulation labs containing high-fidelity manikins.

As with the collection of assessment data, WSCC acknowledges that it still has room to improve in its analysis processes, but significant improvements have occurred over the past two years and steps have already been taken to grow this practice year after year. Under the new assessment model, a proposed annual assessment process was created by the Assessment Team (and is described in the next section) that includes the completion of an [annual reflection form](#). This reflection form provides space for faculty to consider the strengths and weaknesses of their data collection process, identify the trends and success rates of their students in meeting assessment benchmarks, propose changes to future years' data collection processes, and propose pedagogical or curricular changes to address concerns identified through the analysis of student data. This annual requirement will help to

advance the efforts of WSCC's HLC Assessment Academy project, will provide clearer guidance to faculty regarding the reporting of their assessment results analysis, and will help to ensure WSCC's assessment process is part of a "broader, more centralized system of gathering and analyzing data and employing those data for the purposes of improvement."

4.B.4 – The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

As is evident from the prior responses, WSCC has made great strides over the past two years towards developing and implementing processes and methodologies relating to the collection and analysis of assessment data. These practices will ultimately lead to greater student success, and already the college is seeing some of the benefits of this work. With the recent developments spearheaded by the Assessment Team, improvements to WSCC's assessment processes will be even greater in the coming years.

One of the reasons why the new model has been an initial success is because of how faculty involvement has been incorporated into this work from the beginning. Several faculty members were on the team that traveled to the kick-off of the HLC Assessment Academy and four current members of the Assessment Team are faculty. The college has also held numerous assessment workshops during the semi-annual in-service days, which involve all of the institution's full-time faculty and many of its adjuncts. Furthermore, beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year, the college [transitioned the chair of the Assessment Team to a faculty member](#) and gave him a total of nine credits of release time (three in 2019-2020 and six in 2020-2021) so that he could dedicate more time towards working with faculty individually. The college recognized that faculty involvement is a critical aspect of an effective assessment process, so placing a faculty member in charge of this team and providing him with release time helps to ensure that faculty are not only participating but also helping to guide the overall institutional effort. Erwin Selimos, an associate professor of sociology and the new Assessment Team chair, prepared for the position by spending the Fall 2019 semester consulting with other faculty members on their needs and concerns regarding assessment on campus. Consultation with faculty revealed the need for clear guidelines and procedures of student assessment. In response, the Assessment Team developed an updated set of [assessment procedures and guidelines](#) for the evaluation of student learning during the winter 2020 semester.

These newly developed assessment processes and methodologies reflect best practices in the field (Diamond, 2008, *Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula*) and provide a detailed timeline to faculty for all annual assessment activities. The process begins during the fall in-service (the week before the start of classes) with faculty reviewing their curriculum maps and participating in training/refresher workshops hosted by the Assessment Team. Data is then collected for the fall term per each program's curriculum map, then faculty check-in with the Assessment Team during another in-service workshop before the winter semester. Faculty will also review their fall data at this time and discuss any mid-year improvements that should be made. Just before the end of the academic year, programs will be asked to complete a final review of their assessment data, including the completion of the aforementioned reflection form. An end-of-year meeting will also be held, conducted by the Assessment Team, to answer faculty questions and assist them with making improvement plans for the coming year. The entire process will then repeat each successive year. An [email was sent to all faculty on April 26, 2020](#), to provide them with copies of these documents and prepare them for the upcoming year's activities.

The Assessment Team will continue to meet regularly throughout the academic year, generally one or two times per month. In addition to being chaired by a faculty member, three other faculty sit on the team alongside the vice president of academics and student services, the director of institutional research, the dean of occupational programs, the dean of arts and sciences, the director of nursing, and the learning management systems analyst. Within WSCC's team structure, the Assessment Team reports to the Academic Leadership Team, so regular assessment updates are given to this group of faculty and administrative leaders. Lastly, a page has been developed in Canvas, the college's learning management system, to provide forms, agendas/minutes, best practices resources, and copies of HLC Assessment Academy documents to the full college. This site is also being used to store copies of all curriculum maps and data reports and, in the future, reflection forms.

WSCC is proud of the advancements it has made in its assessment processes over the last four years, and especially since the submission of its interim monitoring report two years ago. While the institution recognizes that its current momentum of improvement must be sustained for several more years to come to truly systematize its new assessment model, the initial results and current leadership and team structure provide reasons for great optimism that WSCC will build on its current practices to soon become a model for assessment for other colleges.

Sources

- 1374 20180601 Interim Report - Institutional Report
- 1374 20180601 Interim Report - Institutional Report (page number 35)
- 1374 20180924 Interim Report - Reviewer Analysis
- Accounting Curriculum Map
- Additional Communications Assessment Findings from 2016 Program Review
- Alternative Assignment Contract for Assessment Team Chair
- Assessment Email to Faculty
- Assessment Results for Early Childhood Education
- Assessment Results from Network Services
- Communications Assessment Analysis from 2016 Program Review
- Communications Assessment Results
- Communications Assessment Results (page number 6)
- Communications Curriculum Map
- Curriculum Map Data Collection Template
- Curriculum Map Instructions
- Curriculum Map Program Information
- Curriculum Map Sample
- End-of-Year Assessment Reflection Form Draft
- Marketing and Management Curriculum Map
- Network Services Curriculum Map
- Nursing Changes Due to Assessment from the Programmatic Accreditation Report
- Overview of Assessment Procedures for 2020-21
- Practical Nursing Curriculum Map with Assessment Results
- Program List for Assessment
- Update to Campus after Assessment Academy
- Update to Campus after Assessment Academy (page number 8)
- Welding Curriculum Map
- Winter In-Service Agenda - 2019

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

WSCC is committed to addressing student retention, persistence, and completion as part of its overall mission and regularly does so in numerous ways. The college has established a Student Success Team, which is one of the top four committees within the [organization's team hierarchy](#), specifically to identify opportunities and implement initiatives to improve student success metrics like retention, persistence, and completion. Many of these initiatives are described below in the response to 4.C.3. WSCC also routinely collects data from various sources to monitor its student progress and ensure it meets acceptable levels of performance, which is further described within 4.C.2's response.

4.C.1 – The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.

In terms of setting goals, as part of its [strategic plan](#), WSCC set a challenging, yet attainable, goal of 70% for fall to fall persistence. Whenever discussing the terminology of retention and persistence, WSCC has found that it is important to provide clear definitions, since each college and higher education research center seems to treat them differently. For WSCC's purposes, retention is defined as students who remain enrolled at the college or have graduated from the fall semester to the winter semester. Persistence is defined as the percentage of students who remain enrolled or have graduated from the fall semester to the subsequent fall. Unfortunately, obtaining reliable transfer data is virtually impossible in Michigan, since state agencies are generally unwilling to share student-level data with institutions. Therefore, these metrics do not account for students who may be successfully persisting at a partner university, but who did not earn a credential from WSCC. A persistence rate of 70%, as WSCC defines it, would significantly place the college above the national average of approximately 48.9%, as reported by the [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center \(NSCRC\)](#) in 2019 for the Fall 2017 entering cohort. Note that the definition of retention for the NSCRC is

equivalent to WSCC's definition of persistence. While this is an ambitious goal, improving the college's persistence rate fulfills the college's commitment as an educational institution to the principles of inclusivity and community development and, as suggested by the HLC, is an ambitious but attainable goal appropriate to the college's mission and student population.

Unfortunately, WSCC has not set explicit goals for retention and completion, although these metrics are discussed regularly and acted upon. For example, the graphic contained on the [third page of WSCC's strategic plan document](#) includes a box for the strategic focus area titled *Foster Student Success*. The description for this category is to "improve the rate of enrollment, retention, and graduation." Therefore, WSCC has explicitly identified that improving both retention and graduation rates is an area of strategic focus for the institution. Furthermore, the college's president frequently espouses the value of these metrics and takes action to address them. One example of this is by the organization's participation in the MI-BEST program (described 4.C.3 below). The president gave an in-service speech about improving retention, persistence, and completion by addressing student life issues like food, housing, transportation, and childcare insecurities, which led to the college's involvement in MI-BEST. Still, WSCC recognizes that setting specific targets is an opportunity for improvement, so interim goals will be developed through a combined effort of the President's Leadership Team and the Institutional Effectiveness Team until the college's full strategic plan is amended and these metrics can be officially included.

4.C.2 – The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.

Data on retention, persistence, and completion are routinely collected and analyzed at WSCC. Most recently, these metrics were presented as part of a [data update](#) that was reviewed by the President's Leadership Team on February 25, 2020. The director of institutional research plays an important role in monitoring this data and reporting it to key stakeholders, but the director of enrollment and student engagement also [tracks data on student success and enrollment trends](#) every semester as part of her regular work duties. Program-level data is also included within WSCC's [program review](#) process, thus ensuring that faculty are regularly reviewing and analyzing student success rates within their courses and programs.

In terms of the college's goal of achieving 70% fall-to-fall persistence, historical rates have hovered around 60%. The college experienced a 61.3% persistence rate from fall 2015 to fall 2016 but then fell to a 55.7% persistence rate from fall 2016 to fall 2017. Two new community initiatives have college leadership optimistic about increasing these rates, however. The first initiative is the [Mason County Promise](#). This program was first established in April 2018 and essentially pays all WSCC tuition and fees for any graduate of a Mason County high school. Similarly, the Manistee Commitment Scholar program provides higher education funding to graduates of Manistee County high schools. Whereas the Mason County Promise reclaims a percentage of local property tax revenue to cover student costs at WSCC (in addition to private donations), the Manistee Commitment Scholar program is a limited-time program that is entirely privately funded. These two programs have already had a [positive impact on WSCC's enrollment](#) since their inception, and with their potential to significantly reduce the financial barrier associated with persistence in college, they may play an important role in helping WSCC meet its ambitious persistence target.

WSCC's fall-to-winter retention is typically between 76% and 80%. From fall 2017 to winter 2018, retention reached a high of 79.9%. More recently, however, retention fell to 76.8% between fall 2019

and winter 2020. While retention seems to be a logical leading indicator of persistence, there does not seem to be a direct correlation between final results. For example, for the fall 2017 cohort, retention to winter was 79.9% and persistence to fall was 59.4%. However, for the fall 2018 cohort, retention dropped to 78.5% while persistence increased to 60.0%. These minor fluctuations are to be expected, but what WSCC is hoping to achieve is a meaningful, long-term shift in these metrics as a result of the many initiatives that have been put in place in recent years (see 4.C.3 below).

Completion rates at WSCC are generally between 25% and 35% using the definitions of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Of the 2013 cohort of first-time, full-time students, 35% earned a credential within 200% of the typical time to completion. This performance appears to be above average compared to what other community colleges in Michigan are achieving. For example, according to data obtained from the [IPEDS Statistical Tables tool](#), the graduation rate at other Michigan community colleges averaged 23% over the last four reporting years.

4.C.3 – The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

Given WSCC's strong culture of continuous quality improvement, the institution is in a constant state of change in an effort to improve student outcomes. One of the primary groups on campus that leads this effort is the Student Success Team. This cross-functional group of faculty and administrators is tasked with implementing various student retention and persistence initiatives. The group collaborates with multiple stakeholders, especially student services personnel, to review existing student retention data and intervene with specific programs and interventions. The following is a list of significant efforts WSCC has undertaken to improve student retention, persistence, and completion over just the last two years:

Guided Pathways Revisions: WSCC has been a long-time participant in the statewide and nationwide Guided Pathways initiative, but during the 2019-2020 academic year, faculty substantially revised program pathways to help students navigate the college's degrees. Founded on the Guided Pathways concept of meta-majors, program pathways are being designed so that students can choose a broad category of study during their first semester or two, then make a firm decision regarding their major once they have more course experience. By designing the pathways so that the first semester or two includes only common courses between multiple degrees, students can be sure that classes they take will apply towards their eventual choice of major. The goal of this effort is to increase fall-to-fall persistence by protecting students from taking courses that don't apply towards their degree and by not putting so much pressure on them to make a career choice during their first semester of college. In their revision efforts, faculty ensured that a high percentage of courses were compatible with the Michigan Transfer Agreement (described in 3.B.1). As part of these Guided Pathways revisions, WSCC also revised its Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degree programs to ensure compatibility with MTA. The college's [Guided Pathways Workplan](#) is included to provide additional evidence.

First-Year Seminar in High School Pilot: First-Year Seminar (FYS) is a course that incoming first-year students take to equip themselves with the skills and knowledge needed for success at WSCC, and thus represents one of the institution's important student retention initiatives. Under the guidance of the director of enrollment and student engagement, WSCC is piloting the offering of FYS in high schools within the college's region. One of the goals of FYS is to improve student engagement by connecting with students earlier and delivering them content that will help them to

succeed before they have fallen behind in their regular studies. Furthermore, the college hopes to help students who might not otherwise consider going to college, or would be less likely to succeed, and thereby bolster retention.

Ferris State Connections Program: To assist students with becoming engaged with their college experience and to facilitate their eventual transfer, WSCC initiated a unique partnership during the 2019-2020 academic year with Ferris State University (FSU). Through this program, students are immediately presented with an FSU student identification upon their enrollment at WSCC. This gives them all of the rights of a typical FSU student, such as access to the library and gym on FSU's campus, access to counseling services, and invitations to student-only events. During the program's first year, WSCC successfully enrolled 87 students and took two trips to FSU, one in the fall 2019 semester to attend a football game and another in the winter 2020 semester to attend a hockey game. FSU is geographically the closest university to WSCC. The goal is to help students transition to the university by creating early connections with FSU faculty, staff, students, and facilities, all while bolstering WSCC's persistence and completion rates. Students are not required to attend FSU by enrolling in the program, so it also presents an opportunity for students to explore one potential option for their bachelors-level studies. With the program having just been started this past year, it remains to be seen whether participation in the FSU Connections Program encourages student persistence and completion.

Director of Student Access and Resources: In the winter 2020 semester, WSCC hired a director of student access and resources. This position modified what was formerly the director of student access. The director of student access and resources works directly with students who are considered high-risk, such as those with identified learning disabilities or those who enroll in developmental coursework. The new position plays an important role on the college's CARE Team (described in 3.D.1) and works in coordination with the new United Way resource navigator (also described in 3.D.1).

Substantial Revisions to New Student Orientation and Student Registration Procedures: As was described in 3.D.3, the student services department developed a new student orientation over the past academic year to enhance the knowledge of campus services among incoming students. Also, WSCC has begun developing the entire academic year's schedule in advance, rather than developing and releasing one semester at a time. This yearlong advising schedule provides students with the ability to plan their academic year better, thus reducing conflicts and improving retention.

MI-BEST Participation: WSCC is participating in a new initiative of the Michigan Center for Student Success known as Michigan - Building Economic Stability Today, or MI-BEST. This statewide effort focuses on improving student completion and success by addressing economic instability among students including access to food, housing, transportation, childcare, and other basic needs. While WSCC does not receive any direct funding, MI-BEST is funded by a grant from ECMC Foundation as part of its Basic Needs Initiative, designed to address and alleviate basic needs insecurity among students. The MI-BEST initiative will assist colleges in developing a systematic strategy to address the non-academic needs of their students at scale – that is, for all students in all programs of study. The MI-BEST initiative provides community colleges with the technical support needed for them to move from understanding the non-academic needs of their students to partnering with their surrounding community and public benefits to address student needs. WSCC will be administering a student survey in the fall to better understand the college's student needs as a way to initiate this effort.

In addition to the above initiatives, WSCC has plans to hire a [director of advising and retention](#) and

to purchase and implement Jenzabar's early alert module. The director of advising and retention will manage the early alert system and coordinate the college's responses to identified student needs. The college is also considering the adoption of a cohort advising structure to develop closer advising relationships with students and provide them with advisors who are more knowledgeable about their chosen program of study.

4.C.4 – The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

WSCC's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing data reflect good practice. The college has used Jenzabar as its student information system for many years and has well-established data-entry processes and standards in place. Individual offices across campus have the necessary credentials to enter student information within their functional area (i.e. admissions, financial aid, testing center). WSCC's institutional research (IR) office, however, has access to campus-wide data to facilitate the pulling and analysis of data. The IR office creates and maintains standard SQL data extraction code used to produce the standard IPEDs reports for retention, persistence, and completion metrics. This practice ensures the accuracy and consistency of year-to-year data reporting. In addition to the federally mandated IPEDS reporting, WSCC participates in the Voluntary Framework for Accountability (VFA). Unlike most IPEDS surveys, the VFA includes part-time students in all of its measures, which more accurately reflects the student body at WSCC. The IR office also routinely responds to faculty and administrator data requests that arise in the course of daily operations. Additionally, the IR office is a member of the Michigan Community College Collaborative for Accountability (MCCCARE). MCCCARE exists to foster collaboration among Michigan's 28 community colleges, specifically in the areas of institutional research, accountability, and compliance reporting. MCCCARE members meet quarterly, where best practices are discussed along with changes to the data reporting structure. State agencies are also often invited to these meetings to provide status updates on relevant data collection topics and pending legislation.

Sources

- Draft Position Profile for Director of Advising and Retention
- Enrollment Increases News Article
- Guided Pathways Workplan
- IPEDS Graduation Rates from Other Colleges
- Mason County Promise
- National Retention and Persistence Figures
- Network Services Program Review - 2019-20.pdf
- Network Services Program Review - 2019-20.pdf (page number 7)
- Retention and Persistence Overview from PLT
- Strategic Plan.pdf
- Strategic Plan.pdf (page number 3)
- Strategic Plan.pdf (page number 4)
- Student Data Tracking by Student Services

- Team Structure - 2019-20

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Summary

WSCC has a long history of offering quality educational programs, which have provided students with successful careers and abundant transfer opportunities. As a result of feedback obtained from the HLC, however, the college has recently made significant enhancements to its program review and assessment processes. The list of programs that must complete these activities has been finalized and a schedule of program review completion has been developed. After learning from the first round of program reviews under this model, the newly formed Academic Leadership Team made enhancements to the template and process to provide greater clarity to faculty completing the review and a better process for sharing the completed product throughout the organization. Likewise, assessment practices have recently undergone significant enhancements, especially since the college joined the HLC Assessment Academy in October 2018. All programs have now completed assessment maps and many of them have begun collecting assessment data in earnest. Templates have been developed for curriculum maps, data collection, and annual reflection on results. Several campus-wide workshops have also helped faculty to better understand assessment expectations and make cohesive progress towards achieving organizational goals. Most importantly, assessment has been incorporated into other institutional processes such as program reviews and curriculum development.

In addition to these two major initiatives, the college regularly takes initiative to impact the success of its students, especially in regard to their retention, persistence, and completion. The Student Success Team implemented an impressive number of new social support services and co-curricular programs in the 2019-2020 academic year, and the college has made further commitments to student success in the form of new positions on campus. Data results also show that WSCC typically outperforms its peer institutions.

Overall, the college has many strengths when it comes to the evaluation and improvement of its teaching and learning processes, but also several areas where it must make further improvements. Strengths include the wide range of policies supporting its academic operations, the resources made available to academic programs, the success of the college's graduates in their future endeavors, and the momentum the college currently has towards making significant improvements to processes like program reviews and assessment. However, WSCC recognizes that it must continue to implement its assessment processes until every program is regularly collecting data, analyzing it, and making improvements based on any insights gained, not just the initial group of volunteers. Furthermore, WSCC also recognizes that it must set explicit goals for retention and completion, in addition to what it has for persistence. These should be incorporated into the college's strategic plan. Furthermore, while the college regularly reviews its results from items on its strategic plan, building a balanced scorecard or a similar document that clearly shows historical results and trends would be extremely useful for easily tracking and communicating progress. WSCC is proud of the strides it has made towards improving its academic functions in recent years, but the organization's leadership

also commits to making these additional improvements in the coming months and years.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Argument

5.A.1 - The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

WSCC is well-positioned financially with [general fund reserves](#) as of June 30, 2019, of over 20% of the college's annual operating expenses. Part of the reason the general operating budget is healthy is the capital millage the College receives, which covers building construction and renovation, technology improvements, both infrastructure and equipment, and operational and instructional equipment. Personnel costs are approximately 80% of the general fund budget and are managed to be sustainable while ensuring sufficient support for programs.

WSCC has supported its mission through enhanced collaboration throughout the community by utilizing personnel from other agencies. Examples are using qualified high school teachers for dual enrollment; providing financial support to the Chamber of Commerce for a position aimed at advancing the college workforce, economic, and business development mission; and supporting the local college access networks in their efforts relating to student recruitment. In March of 2020, a [United Way resource navigator](#), funded by the college, was placed on the campus to align students with the various support services in the community, such as food, housing, transportation, and child care assistance. These cost-effective partnerships not only help support the college's operations but are also meeting the college's mission of serving our communities by helping to strengthen other community organizations.

Through the capital millage, WSCC has attained ample resources to maintain, remodel, and build facilities and improve technological infrastructure. These resources have had a significant positive impact on the support of college operations and academic programs. Energy efficiency projects are one example. All exterior lighting was changed to LED, resulting in an immediate savings of \$30K+ per year in the operating budget. Another example is the installation of a full-campus generator, which not only ensures continuous operation of the college during a power outage but also reduces the college energy bill by approximately \$14K per year. The capital millage also enables the purchase of equipment to allow employees to perform their tasks more efficiently. An example is a new set of floor scrubbers and shampooers for the maintenance team, which allowed the college to not replace a position that had opened up due to retirement so that funds could instead be directed to academics and student success.

Sufficient human resources is a top-of-mind issue when examining opportunities. When the college began looking at developing the [Riemer Regional Public Safety Training Center](#), staffing the facility was a consideration. Through the use of technology and re-allocating resources, the college was able to staff the facility without increasing personnel. However, the college is exploring increasing personnel to support the new academic programs the facility allows the college to offer. Similarly, in the fall of 2020, the college will open a new [downtown center in Manistee](#). Through collaboration with the Manistee Chamber of Commerce and MichiganWorks!, the college will not need to staff the facility for reception-type duties.

Through the use of capital funds, the college has been advantaged in sustaining personnel and adding and maintaining both physical and technological infrastructure. Through collaborations, the college has been able to extend the reach of programs and initiatives while simultaneously enhancing our community partners.

5.A.2 - The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.

As a public institution operating independently under the direction of a Board of Trustees, all revenues received by the college are maintained at the college since there is not a superordinate entity or system. Administration and Board of Trustees' decisions are made with the institution's educational purpose in mind, but also with a systems-wide understanding. WSCC understands that the educational purpose includes traditional degree and certificate curriculum, as well as community and continuing education in addition to cultural and performing arts. This systems-wide understanding also includes an understanding of the importance of both operating and capital millage revenue for the college to achieve its educational mission. To that end, the college allocates resources to serve both students and the general public for auxiliary units such as the ice arena and recreation center. These auxiliary units are mainly public-serving but provide community goodwill, helping the college maintain taxpayer support during millage renewals. The college also allocates funds to foodservice operations, to both provide students an on-campus option and to serve the public during both college-sponsored events and facility rentals.

While the college allocates funds to support auxiliary units, steering funds towards the educational mission has been paramount. The subsidies for auxiliary units has decreased from \$427K in FY18 to [\\$141K in FY19](#) and [\\$42K in FY20](#). These reductions were intentionally planned changes and included an extensive remodel of the bookstore and cafeteria in 2019 to serve students better and

reduce operating costs. Planned personnel shifts in the auxiliary units have also lowered expenses. Elective resource allocations, such as support to auxiliary units, are performed with the intent to sustain the college, enabling its primary educational purpose to persist.

5.A.3 - The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.

WSCC is blessed to have abundant financial resources due to a large property tax base, which not only helps the college keep its tuition low, but also enables it to realistically pursue its mission without fear of derailment due to decreased state funding or minor enrollment fluctuations. Because the college has managed its finances well in recent years, college leadership can focus more wholly on achieving the organization's educational and community-focused mission. Whereas other colleges around the country are experiencing massive layoffs as a result of the recent pandemic, WSCC did not have to layoff any employees and was able to extend a 2% raise to all employee groups. The college also appropriately staffs the necessary departments on campus to achieve its mission, such as full departments of employees for student services, academic administration, the business office, facilities and maintenance, information technology, and many more.

In the past, the college had a strategic plan that contained a total of [28 goals and strategies](#). Recognizing that this was more than the organization could reasonably focus on and achieve, the more recent iteration of the strategic plan pared that list down to [11 specific objectives](#), which are grouped into four areas of strategic focus. Each of these objectives was chosen because it addressed a recognized organizational weakness or area where further improvement was desired. For example, the college recognized that it had improvements to make in the proliferation of assessment activities within its academic programs, so an objective of 100% participation in assessment was set. Likewise, college leadership recognized that many processes around campus were holdovers of "the way we've always done things here," so the college engaged in process mapping training and exercises (described in 5.D.2) and set a strategic objective of achieving 20 process efficiencies per year. Each year, the college's president sends out a call to the entire campus for employees to submit examples of their achievements related to the strategic plan, which he then compiles into an [annual report](#) to the Board of Trustees. Due to this more manageable approach to strategic planning and the college's favorable financial and human resources position, the goals incorporated into the college's current strategic plan are realistic and attainable.

5.A.4 - The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.

WSCC takes great care to ensure that all of its employees are appropriately qualified for the positions they hold and are provided with frequent professional development throughout their time at the college. Whenever a position becomes available, the supervisor, the director of human resources, and often the vice president of academics and student services or president, develop a [position profile](#) that includes all of the job duties of that position. The nature of these job duties determines the qualifications for the position, such as the degree and level of experience required. The college uses a [compensation classification system](#) to then determine the pay grade for each position. Administrative and staff pay grades are determined by using seven factors, each of which is assigned a score based on the level of that particular skill set that is required. All qualifications for the position are then incorporated into the job posting, which is used as a first-level filter when reviewing

applications. Applicants who do not meet the minimum job qualifications are typically not even sent along to the hiring committee for review. Faculty hires, which are fully described in the response to 3.C.2, also have some [additional paperwork](#) to identify which courses they are qualified to teach according to the college's [Faculty Qualifications Guidelines](#). During the process of evaluating candidates for hire, the college uses NeoGov software to provide the hiring committee with all applicant materials, allow them to rate each candidate's qualifications, and see cumulative scores to help narrow the pool down to the top contenders.

Once individuals have officially been hired by the college, they are asked to complete at least eight hours of professional development per year, although most people do significantly more. This annual professional development by 100% of its employees is part of WSCC's [strategic plan](#). The college frequently supports employee travel to conferences and also subscribes to [LinkedIn Learning](#). Other steps that the college takes to ensure its employees are fully qualified are described in the response to 3.C.6.

5.A.5 - The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

WSCC has an efficient budgetary process that is fitting for a small institution. First and foremost, the personnel of the college is the key element of the budget; ensuring there are sufficient human resources to support the operations of the college is the main focus of the budget. Personnel changes as retirements and vacancies occur are reviewed by the administration, and new faculty positions are prioritized with input from faculty, division chairs, and deans. As personnel decisions are made, the rest of the budgeting process quickly falls into place. Personnel typically consumes about 80% of the [operating budget](#). Of the remaining 20%, approximately one-half is required non-negotiable elements, such as utilities and insurance. This leaves approximately 10% of the budget, or \$1.2M, for distribution to the departments. The limited budget available for departments is distributed based on previous years' experience and is adjusted for known increases when appropriate. To accommodate anomalies that arise throughout the year, contingency funds are provided to the deans, vice-president, and president to assist departments as needed. All departments across the college also have an opportunity to engage in the budgeting process, such as by requesting an increase for a particular project. For example, the information technology department works proactively in planning for the funding of IT initiatives, but also identifies opportunities where budget savings can be realized. Many IT negotiations and decisions for software and services have resulted in improvements while simultaneously saving thousands of dollars.

Although the general fund has limited departmental budgets, those limited budgets are advantaged by not having equipment expenses. [Equipment is purchased through the capital millage funds](#) and includes a variety of academic equipment such as microscopes, nursing simulators, and welders. The [capital millage funds](#) also provide furniture and computers, both for academic and administrative purposes. Because the library collection is considered a capital asset, the library collection is also funded from the capital budget. The capital budget process includes departments requesting equipment over several months, followed by a thorough review process of the requests, and then final determinations discussed with the appropriate constituents. For example, this year all of the faculty met simultaneously with the vice president of academics and student services, the deans, and administrators from the IT department to thoroughly describe their equipment requests and their level of importance. The vice president of academics and student services then met with the IT administrator who was assisting with the capital budget process and the college's director of finance

to make allocation recommendations, which were then sent to the president and the Board of Trustees for approval. This year, all equipment requests submitted by the faculty were able to be approved through either capital budget funds, departmental budgets, or Perkins funds.

In addition to the equipment, the capital budget is driven by the [Facilities Master Plan](#), a document that is submitted to the State of Michigan annually. The master plan is developed by the campus architect, a contracted position, through collaboration and discussion with administration and the Board of Trustees. Depending on changes or tentative projects in the Master Plan, wider input may be sought from students, faculty, and other constituents. That input may be directly related to the Master Plan as a whole, or often a specific element of the Master Plan, such as the remodeling of academic or student space. The Master Plan includes an analysis of deferred maintenance issues, which drive the maintenance portion of the capital budget.

As the budget is put together, the Board of Trustees is provided an overview for input during a budget workshop following a regularly scheduled board meeting. The Board Administrative Committee reviews the budget at their next meeting following the budget workshop. A [public budget hearing](#) is conducted in June and the Board of Trustees approves the budget in their regularly scheduled June meeting. The college budget is closely monitored at the department level and the institutional level. All levels of employees can use the college's intranet to monitor departmental budget status. Monthly, the college's administration reviews the budget and presents [year-to-date and monthly figures](#) to the Board of Trustees, who approves the expenditures that were incurred. The monthly report to the Board of Trustees includes a [variance analysis](#) that highlights where expenses or revenues are not tracking at expected levels or are differing from the previous year.

Sources

- 1374 20190509 Additional Location Confirmation - Institutional Report
- Board of Trustees Meeting - June 2020
- Board of Trustees Meeting - June 2020 (page number 7)
- Board of Trustees Meeting - June 2020 (page number 9)
- Draft Position Profile for Director of Advising and Retention
- Faculty Credentials Form
- Faculty Qualifications Guidelines.pdf
- Financial Statements Audit - 2019
- Financial Statements Audit - 2019 (page number 71)
- Financial Statements Audit - 2019 (page number 74)
- FY2020 Budgets
- FY2021 Budgets
- Job Classification Evaluation Categories
- LinkedIn Learning Email
- Manistee Project Summary
- Presidents Year in Review
- Public Budget Hearing
- Public Budget Hearing (page number 7)
- Public Budget Hearing (page number 8)
- Strategic Plan Priorities from 2008-2013
- Strategic Plan.pdf
- Strategic Plan.pdf (page number 4)

- United Way Resource Navigator
- WSCC Master Plan 10.2019

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Argument

5.B.1 – The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

The WSCC Board of Trustees is a seven-member group of elected officials who believe strongly in their governance role. As evidenced by the [Board of Trustees Governance policy](#), the WSCC trustees believe in serving as advocates for the community, establishing an effective climate for learning, and actively monitoring the effectiveness of the institution. The Board's influence on the institution occurs through evaluating the President, establishing standards for work through policies, and providing oversight to the college's financial management. Through regular monthly meetings, the Board also has an opportunity to learn about and provide input into other college operations, such as those pertaining to academics or student services. A copy of the [June 2019 Board of Trustees meeting minutes](#) is included to provide a sample of this work. As can be seen from these minutes, the Board is actively involved in college processes like financial management, construction projects, representation on Michigan Community College Association committees, policy revision, course fee changes, and curriculum changes. Furthermore, a copy of the [minutes from a Board budget hearing](#) is included to serve as additional evidence of the Board's oversight of college finances.

5.B.2 – The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.

The Board provides additional oversight and support through the use of three standing committees, which include a Policy and Personnel Committee, an Administrative Committee, and an Executive Committee. As is evidenced by the [Board Committees policy](#), the Policy and Personnel Committee has the responsibility to review proposed policy changes, curriculum changes, and personnel matters before they reach the full Board. The Administrative Committee primarily reviews finance and facility issues, while the Executive Committee is charged with reviewing the President's contract and making Board appointments. In order to make all of the policies set by the Board accessible to the

public and college employees, a web page has been established that is easily found from any college page. This includes a link to all approved Board policies, grouped by topic. Furthermore, a web page dedicated to additional information about the Board of Trustees is available that includes past meeting minutes, a calendar of upcoming meetings, and a link to learn more about the individual trustees. More information about engaging internal constituencies can be found in the response to 5.B.3 below.

5.B.3 – Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Daily college operations are carried out by a competent team of administrators, staff, and faculty. The title of each position employed by the college, as well as the reporting relationships between them, is detailed in the [organizational chart](#). The President serves as the head of the organization but is supported by a second level of leadership that includes the Vice President of Academics and Student Services, the Executive Director of College Relations, the Director of Finance, the Director of Human Resources, the Director of Facilities and Recreational Services, the Director of Institutional Research, and the Director of Procurement and Auxiliary Services. The college also employs two academic deans, a Dean of Student Services, a Director of Information Technology, and various other directors and managers to ensure consistent operation.

While each of these individual positions has an important role to play within the organization, it is the collaboration between these positions that results in the greatest benefit to the college and its mission. To foster this collaboration and ensure that a broad range of perspectives and talents are utilized, the college has developed a structure of organizational teams, which is detailed in the attached [Team Structure](#) document. As this diagram makes clear, the President's Leadership Team sits at the top of this structure to provide an executive-level forum by which to discuss strategic issues that typically impact the entire campus. Three other teams then make up the next level of the hierarchy, including the Academic Leadership Team, the Student Success Team, and the Institutional Effectiveness Team. Additional campus teams sit below these teams and report up to them on a regular basis, which in turn then report up to the President's Leadership Team. This team structure ensures that issues and decisions that occur on any team on campus eventually can make their way up through the hierarchy and, if necessary, to the President's Leadership Team for further consideration. The projects listed under each team on the first page of the [Team Structure](#) document are a sample of some of the projects currently being addressed by that team. Whenever a new project is introduced that requires broad campus input or effort, it is assigned to the team whose purpose best suits that particular project. A full list of [team memberships](#) is also distributed campus-wide at the beginning of each academic year. Note that, whenever possible, students are included on-campus teams.

In order to further facilitate communication from these teams to the rest of campus, a series of team sites have been created on the college's SharePoint site. SharePoint acts as one portion of the college's intranet, so a username and password are required to access it. However, a [screenshot](#) has been provided for visual reference. Along the left side of this image, you can see a listing of the pages this site contains, which correlate to the various teams on campus. Each team site includes a calendar of upcoming meetings, copies of past minutes, a copy of a project management worksheet being utilized to help manage ongoing projects, and any other relevant team documents. To provide an example of some of the documents contained on these team sites, a copy of the [Academic Leadership Team schedule](#) is attached, along with a [copy of minutes](#) from this team. Other college departments, such as the Business Office, also use SharePoint to make forms, documents, or copies of procedures

available to the rest of the campus.

In addition to the above-mentioned teams and structures, cross-functional teams are also employed whenever a new hire is made. These teams usually are comprised of administrative, hourly, and faculty positions and include individuals who have a formal working relationship to the position being hired and those who do not. The college also has a history of calling together additional ad hoc teams as needed to address a unique situation or problem. Lastly, the college has a very active Student Senate that meets regularly, brings issues forward from the student body, and organizes campus events. This group has been a tremendous resource for initiating change that originates from the desires of students. For example, WSCC recently went [smoke and tobacco-free in June 2019](#) as a result of student requests and efforts coming forward to the President's Leadership Team from Student Senate.

All of the many efforts supported by the organizational structure described above, from the Board of Trustees to the smallest of campus teams, ultimately relate back to the college's overall strategic plan and the needs of the community. To promote a breadth of experience within the organization, individuals are encouraged to change teams periodically, rather than becoming overly comfortable in the same role on the same team year after year. This team structure and the communication it facilitates allow WSCC to distribute leadership and project duties efficiently across the organization, and thus, fosters collaboration and effective support for fulfilling the college's mission.

Sources

- Academic Leadership Team Meeting Schedule - 2019-20
- Academic Leadership Team Minutes - 112619
- Board Budget Hearing Minutes - June 2019
- Board Committees Policy
- Board Governance Policy
- Board Minutes Sample - June 2019
- February 2019 Board Minutes - Tobacco Free
- February 2019 Board Minutes - Tobacco Free (page number 2)
- Organizational Chart - 2019-20
- Team Membership List - 2019-20
- Team Structure - 2019-20
- Teams Site on SharePoint

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Argument

5.C.1 – The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.

WSCC aligns its resources with its mission and priorities through numerous mechanisms. As was discussed in the response to 1.D, WSCC is a public community college without investors or a parent organization. This allows the college to focus solely on its mission of making the community a better place to learn, live, work, and prosper. During meetings of the President's Leadership Team, college leadership often discusses which course of action will have the greater academic or community benefit, rather than which will be more economically beneficial. For example, the college agreed to pay the full salary of the United Way resource navigator since the United Way did not have room in their budget, thus allowing the position to be created and to provide its services to students. Likewise, the college is in the process of hiring an early alert and retention specialist, along with purchasing early alert software to help identify students who are at risk. As was described in the response to 5.A.5, the college also has a process for purchasing academic equipment using capital millage funding, departmental funds, and the Perkins grant. Meanwhile, community services like the recreation center and ice arena are subsidized by the college through [transfers into their budgets](#). Even though these services ultimately lose money, they are recognized as providing a valued community service that is in alignment with the college's mission and priorities.

5.C.2 - The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

Although WSCC's official process for assessment of student learning has recently been developed and is still being fully implemented (see 4.B), the college has a long practice of linking the needs of its academic departments to evaluations, planning, and budgeting. Faculty insights gained from assessments like the NOCTI exams or from reviewing student performance in classes have often led to official requests for curriculum changes, new equipment, or additional faculty. The college's recent participation in process mapping (described in the response to 5.D.2) also led to numerous operational efficiencies and enhancements as a result of reflecting upon past organizational

performance. The best example of how the college integrates these various functions, however, is the strategic plan. This document has been referenced many times throughout this report due to its impact on so many aspects of the college's operations. The strategic areas of focus and the individual metrics are based on the collective input of a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders, as well as upon a review of past college performance in areas like online learning. The college has since allocated significant budgetary resources towards achieving the goals set out in the strategic plan, such as by partnering with Des Moines Area Community College to train WSCC employees on how to conduct process mapping, subscribing to LinkedIn Learning to help employees accomplish professional development goals, and developing plans to hire an instructional designer in the near future. The college is having Quality Matters offer online workshops for the upcoming fall in-service to further advance the college's efforts to utilize online best practices. These are just a few examples of how the college reviews its performance within both student learning and overall college operations, develops a plan to improve upon weaknesses, and budgets accordingly so that resources are available.

5.C.3 - The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

As was described in the response to 1.A.1, the college regularly updates its strategic plan through a process that includes both internal and external constituents. The last time the college engaged in a revision to its strategic plan, it contracted with a former community college president from a different Michigan institution to facilitate the strategic planning process. Faculty, administrators, and staff from across the institution were invited to participate in workshops and brainstorming sessions, as were external constituents from local public service agencies, K-12 schools, and employers. Planning also regularly takes place on a smaller scale than the strategic plan, but this too involves both internal and external constituents. By way of example, as was described in 1.C.2, the college president recently convened a meeting of community leaders in Baldwin to brainstorm ideas for positively impacting the community's education and poverty levels. When WSCC decided to participate in the MI-BEST grant described in 4.C.3, it did so by calling together representatives not only from across the campus, but also from the local college access network, United Way, and various social service providers. Lastly, the president recently invited members from Talent 2025 and local community organizations to meet about strategies for increasing the percentage of individuals within the region who possess a college degree. Rarely are WSCC employees alone at the table when planning is taking place. The culture of the institution demands that local and regional partners also be included, since the solutions being discussed are often much larger in scope than WSCC alone.

5.C.4 - The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.

As was described in the response to 5.A.3, prior to the current strategic plan, the college had a plan that contained a total of 28 goals and strategies. Recognizing that this was more than could reasonably be achieved, the most recent planning process pared this down to 11 specific targets. The current strategic plan, therefore, does a much better job of recognizing the organization's capacity. Beyond the strategic plan, the hierarchy of campus teams and the project management tools described in 5.D.2 help the organization to limit the number of projects it takes on. WSCC is aggressive in

pushing for change but listens to its employees regarding when they and their departments are operating at capacity.

Institutional planning also accounts for possible fluctuations in resources, which is evidenced by the [management discussion of economic factors](#) contained within each audit. Historically, WSCC has done very well in avoiding furloughs and layoffs during difficult times. Because the property tax revenue at the college is approximately three times higher than either state appropriations or tuition revenue, WSCC's budget is much less impacted by enrollment declines or state budget cuts than other colleges. Increasing property tax trends have greatly helped the college, but are closely watched. Thanks to a large number of second homes and waterfront properties in the college's service region, the tax basis tends to be stable even in poor economic times, including the recession of 2008 and the following years. Some of the college's financial stability is also due to its close management of unstable situations. By way of example, the college has recently temporarily frozen three planned hires as a result of uncertainties resulting from the pandemic. Whereas the college had planned to immediately hire an instructional designer, a full-time faculty for emergency medical services, and a full-time faculty for robotics and advanced manufacturing, these positions are now being delayed until the college can fully determine any financial implications it will experience. While the college still plans to hire each of these positions, the uncertainty of the current situation makes delaying the hires a prudent move to ensure college administration does not inadvertently over-extend the college's budgetary capacity.

5.C.5 - Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

One important example of how WSCC anticipates emerging factors, especially within the fast-moving world of technology, can be found within the planning processes of the college's information technology (IT) department. Charged with maintaining system and data security while ensuring fiscal responsibility, the [IT department's mission statement](#) focuses on researching, implementing, training, and supporting technological solutions that facilitate the goals and actions of the college's strategic plan in a manner that is time-compressed, comprehensive in scope, and integrated wherever possible. The research component of this mission involves examining emerging technologies, including suggesting, prototyping, and demonstrating technological advances that may lead the college toward new strategies, goals, and actions. By focusing on staff engagement within college teams, the IT staff works with faculty, students, and other staff to investigate, discuss, and drive college initiatives. Recent collaborations have focused on the evaluation of new instructional recording software, early alert software, mobile app development, open educational resources, e-text, and a review of employee onboarding and student onboarding.

Efforts to maintain and increase cybersecurity include ongoing end-user training for all full- and part-time employees, including student workers. Utilizing Sans resources, training modules are assigned twice per year, phishing email tests are executed about six times per year, and the IT department frequently provides updates and warning notifications related to cyber threats. Additionally, the IT department contracted with a third-party cybersecurity company to perform penetration testing and vulnerability scans on the internal, external, and wireless networks. These tests returned good results in most areas but also provided ideas for additional improvements to further strengthen WSCC's systems. These types of exercises are important tools to help WSCC stay on top of the latest technological trends, including cybersecurity threats, and respond appropriately as an organization.

In terms of demographic shifts and globalization, WSCC uses a wide variety of strategies to ensure it anticipates emerging factors. These have been described throughout this report and include advisory boards made up of employers, conferences for employees, the inclusion of local community leaders in college projects and meetings, and visits to employer facilities, to name a few. The college has a history of responding to these changing conditions, such as when WSCC began offering courses in Hart to accommodate the high Hispanic population in that region. Similarly, the college has increased the percentage of online courses it offers due to increased demand for this modality and has even begun offering some sections in which students can choose to attend synchronously from home or face-to-face for any given class session.

Sources

- Financial Statements Audit - 2019
- Financial Statements Audit - 2019 (page number 18)
- Financial Statements Audit - 2019 (page number 74)
- IT Strategic Plan
- IT Strategic Plan (page number 6)

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Argument

5.D.1 – The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.

WSCC has embraced a culture of continuous improvement, many examples of which have been documented throughout this Assurance Argument. The college has made significant process improvements relating to curriculum approval (described in 3.B.3 and 4.A), assessment (4.B), and program reviews (4.A). Each of these processes includes reflecting on past performance, both from a process and data results standpoint, to inform future improvements. For example, the vice president of academics and student services gave a presentation to faculty, administrators, and staff during the fall 2019 in-service that reviewed a significant number of [college-wide performance metrics](#), then handed each faculty specific data about their discipline for them to review and discuss at their tables. The college also utilizes a strategic plan to set goals for improvement, which are annually reviewed to ensure the college is achieving its mission. Institutional surveys like the [Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(CCSSE\)](#) are another method the college uses to measure its performance, benchmark itself against other institutions, and identify needed improvements, as are tools like the graduate follow-up survey and informal feedback collected from program advisory boards (4.A.6).

The WSCC performance appraisal process is another method the college uses to ensure its employees are actively and regularly provided with feedback regarding their performance, given an opportunity to discuss possible improvements or resources needed with their supervisor, and to develop a list of goals for the coming year. WSCC supervisors conduct administrator and educational support personnel [performance appraisals](#) near the end of each fiscal year to recap the year and plan for the next. Performance appraisals include an employee's self-evaluation and the [creation of SMART goals](#) (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely). This process ensures a specific and meaningful performance discussion between an employee and their supervisor, and it builds a similar understanding of performance expectations. Utilizing SMART goals also focuses the employee's efforts on meeting the college's strategic plan initiatives by having them tie their goal to a strategic plan item like professional development or process improvements.

5.D.2 – The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

A major operational performance improvement initiative in which the college has invested over the past couple of years is process mapping. WSCC partnered with Des Moines Area Community College's (DMAACC) Department of Business Resources to train a group of WSCC employees in the

principles of process mapping, which was then used to lead internal teams in the act of mapping college processes and implementing identified opportunities for improvement. DMACC offers a series of programs designed to train and assist employees in improving efficiencies that can lead to cost savings, improved customer service, and process improvements. The two DMACC programs chosen for WSCC were *Process Mapping: Train-the-Trainer* and *LAUNCH*. LAUNCH is a program that engages all employees involved in a work process to map that process while identifying inefficiencies and eliminating non-value-added activities, all while looking at the process through the eyes of their customers.

For the Train-the-Trainer program, four WSCC staff members participated in a two-day workshop led by DMACC trainers. After completion, the four WSCC employees understood and were able to teach the steps to set up a project, define a project's scope, map a simple work process, conduct process analysis, create an implementation plan, and electronically document projects. These employees then led a WSCC team through LAUNCH training with the support of facilitators from DMACC. Specifically, the employee onboarding process was chosen for the first mapping exercise. Eight employees across human resources, administration, and IT participated in this event.

After refining the project's focus to adjunct faculty onboarding, the team dove into the mapping exercise by first identifying the [current state](#) of the process, then brainstorming issues and potential solutions to form the [ideal future state](#) of the process. To lead the group towards this future state, the team created an [action register](#), which served as their "must-do" list of action items and included spaces for due dates, approvals, and the current status. As a result of this process, the college purchased employee application software, which led to improvements in application tracking and the elimination of several non-value-added steps in the application process. Intrinsic to the LAUNCH training is inter-departmental collaboration, understanding each others' roles, and learning how each person's work affects overall college processes. Student onboarding has been selected as the next LAUNCH project the team will undertake on campus. The four employee trainers will lead the process with the intent to continue working with departments across campus to streamline their administrative processes and eventually have additional employees trained as trainers.

In addition to this major initiative to improve institutional effectiveness, many college teams have also been using an Excel-based [project management sheet](#) to track workflows and employee responsibilities. Prior to using a tool like this, employees often reported feeling unsure of which decisions had been officially made during committee meetings and who was supposed to follow up on each task. Furthermore, the majority of tasks were consistently given to the same few individuals. By implementing even a simple tool like the project management spreadsheet across the campus, complex projects like opening the Riemer Regional Public Safety Training Center are more easily broken down into their component parts, assigned evenly to members of the appropriate team, and tracked through to completion. Each college team posts a current version of its project management sheet to its SharePoint team site and is supported by the college's Professional Development team.

Sources

- ccse2019_3610E4D2FE_bmrks_allstu
- Data from Fall 2019 In-Service
- Performance Appaisal Supervisor Form
- Process Mapping - Action Register
- Process Mapping - Current State

- Process Mapping - Ideal State
- Public Safety Building Project Management
- SMART Objective Worksheet

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Summary

WSCC is blessed to have a healthy financial position that protects it from economic instabilities more than other community colleges its size. This allows the institution to safely invest in the human resources, technological infrastructure, and facilities needed to support its mission. Still, the college has taken steps to reduce the number of strategic objectives it takes on at any one time to ensure it is operating within its capacity. The college has well-developed processes for hiring employees, ensuring they are qualified, and providing them with regular professional development. Likewise, the college has a budgeting process that responds to the changing needs of departments, funds a large amount of equipment out of the capital millage, and ensures expenses do not exceed the college's limits.

The college's Board of Trustees stays involved in the institution through regular, public board meetings and the use of three board committees. They keep a professional distance from the day-to-day operations of the college, however, designating the president and other employees as the administrators in charge of those activities. The college also has a history of engaging in systematic and integrated planning. The overall college strategic plan was updated in 2018 through a collaborative process involving both internal and external constituents and acts as a driver of college conversations and decisions. The team hierarchy at the college also serves as a day-to-day planning mechanism by allowing empowered faculty and administrators to manage projects and make decisions with the support of the teams above them. By utilizing the expertise of these team members and its external partners, the college also stays abreast of emerging factors such as technological threats and opportunities. Lastly, the college has a variety of mechanisms in place to monitor its performance and make improvements based on insights gained. By engaging in activities like process mapping, college employees have recently reflected heavily on some of its major processes and made numerous efficiency improvements.

Overall, WSCC performs very well in the area of managing resources, planning, and ensuring institutional effectiveness. This seems to be a strength of the institution. However, as was mentioned in the summary to Criterion Four, one identified improvement as a result of completing this assurance argument is to develop a balanced scorecard or dashboard that clearly lists the college's results on its strategic plan. While the college regularly tracks and reports on this data, such a tool would allow for quick visual reference on college performance and would help to drive further conversations around its strategic priorities. Otherwise, WSCC believes its planning and resource management processes are functioning well and helping the college to achieve its mission within the community.

Sources

There are no sources.