

# **Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report**

**Northwest Indian College**

**Bellingham, Washington**

**April 22-24, 2014**

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

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### **Northwest Indian College**

**Bellingham, WA**

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## INTRODUCTION

Northwest Indian College is a tribally controlled College chartered by the Lummi Nation. Its primary goal is to serve the educational and training needs of the Pacific Northwest Tribes and their people. The main campus is located on the Lummi Reservation near Bellingham, Washington, with sites and learning centers situated throughout the service area.

In August 2010 NWIC was granted full accreditation at the baccalaureate level and was reaffirmed accreditation at the associate degree level. A seven member Board of Trustees governs the College.

The majority of NWIC students are first-generation. First-Year Experience and Indigenous Service Learning co-curricular programs are provided to support success among the approximate 2,200 students.

## ASSESSMENT OF THE SELF-EVALUATION AND SUPPORT MATERIALS

NWIC addressed recent institutional changes since the institution's last report. The College hired a new president July, 2012. Additionally, the College received approval to offer two new Bachelor of Arts degrees. Native Studies Leadership was offered in 2012 and Tribal Governance and Business Management began in 2013. The College also initiated a "teach out" process and subsequent elimination of the former Native American Studies Associate of Arts and Sciences degree and certificate.

New institutional outcomes include the following: **Native Leadership, Inherent Rights, Ways of Knowing, and Community-Minded** (signifying "NWIC"). These outcomes align with foundational courses so that courses support the College Mission to promote Indigenous Self-Determination and Knowledge.

The College's Year Three Self-Evaluation Report contained responses to previous recommendations. Panel Evaluators reviewed those recommendations and added information on the institutional progress in the Standard 2, **Resources and Capacity** section of this report.

The required documents were delivered to the Panel in a timely and accurate manner. Information in the hard copy document was concise and organized. College employees were helpful in providing support documents by email, on the College website, or pointing out where the information could be easily accessed. Before and during the off-site evaluation, the Panel found the College to be cooperative and helpful.

In response to NWIC's **Spring 2010 Comprehensive Evaluation**, the Commission requested that the College address two recommendations in its Year Three Self Evaluation Report. The College's Year Three Self-Evaluation Report did respond to those recommendations.

**“The Evaluation Committee recommends that Northwest Indian College periodically and systematically evaluates the appropriateness, adequacy, and utilization of student services and programs and uses the results of the evaluation as a basis for change.” (3.B.6) Spring 2010 Comprehensive Report**

Since this 2010 recommendations, the Panel found the College has developed and implemented multiple measurements to meet this recommendations. For example, the College has implemented the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey. Across the College departments have created and implemented feedback and measurement strategies. Three departments have submitted assessment reports. Additional steps are currently underway to support the assessment plan for student support programs.

**“The Evaluation Committee recommends that Northwest Indian College complete the process of publishing the expected learning outcomes for each of its degrees and certificate programs. The Committee further recommends that the College regularly and systematically demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes by students who complete their programs.” (2.B.2) Spring 2010 Comprehensive Report**

Program outcomes have been completed at this time for all bachelor-level programs of study and all active associate-level programs of study. This would answer the request. The outcomes have been completed. While all program outcomes were published in the Catalog, it remained difficult for the Panel to easily locate this information on the website. A new web manager may help the College so that without question students can easily find this information.

The College has also developed Curriculum Maps and Outcomes Rubrics. They recognize that the seven certificate programs will need to have published outcomes. The institution plans to create a set of outcomes based on student competency.

The College continues to work on this recommendation, but it demonstrates the knowledge and commitment to complete and publish all expected outcomes for all programs.

**“The Commission recommends that the College clarify what indicators are going to be used to assess achievement of the objectives of each core theme, and also indicate what constitutes a minimum acceptable threshold of what indicators of each objective of the core themes. It is difficult to understand exactly what is being measured, what the expectations are, and how the results will be used to make improvements.” (1.B.2) Spring 2011 Year One**

Northwest Indian College has addressed this recommendation. Each of the four Core Themes can be measured by objectives and indicators. A minimum acceptable threshold has also been established for all objectives.

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Northwest Indian College demonstrates the potential to fulfill its mission, accomplish its core theme objectives, and achieve the intended outcomes of its programs and services. The College has an understanding of its responsibility in meeting the needs of its students, as well as its obligation to meet all Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities Eligibility Requirements. Panel members reviewed the scope of those requirements in each section of this peer review. In summary, Northwest Indian College meets the expectations for the Eligibility Requirements.

## **MISSION, CORE THEMES AND EXPECTATIONS**

### **MISSION**

Northwest Indian College has widely published its Mission Statement. The statement was approved by its governing board in July 2004. The Mission is endorsed, usually with passion, by all members of the community.

**“Through education, Northwest Indian College promotes indigenous self-determination and knowledge.”**

The Panel found that this goal permeates the institution. Students can identify the statement and its relevance, especially since it guides learning outcomes, core themes, and academic programs. The Mission is unique to this institution, but it also reflects a comprehensive planning process, which also provides the distribution of resources for faculty, students, and community. The Mission is rooted in tribal identity. It cannot be separated nor understood apart from the institutional values and core beliefs.

The values and beliefs behind the statement include the following:

- **Sela-lexw:** Our strength comes from the old people. From them we receive our teachings and knowledge and the advice we need for our daily lives.
- **Schtengexwen:** We are responsible to protect our territory. This means that we care for our land and water and everything that is on it and in it.
- **Xwemi-chosen:** Our culture is our language. We should strengthen and maintain our language.
- **Len-e-sot:** We take care of ourselves, watch out for ourselves and love and take care of one another.

## **CORE THEMES**

The College has identified four Core Themes with goals and objectives for each core theme.

1. **CORE THEME ONE:** Engage Indigenous Knowledge
2. **CORE THEME TWO:** Commitment to Student Success
3. **CORE THEME THREE:** Access to Higher Education Opportunities At All Levels For Tribal Communities
4. **CORE THEME FOUR:** Advance Place-Based Community Education and Outreach

NWIC has identified measurable objectives and indicators for each of its Core Themes. The rationale behind each Objective and Indicators addresses the measurement used in determining whether the institution has met its goal. During the Self-Evaluation process the College broke into teams centered on each of the Core Themes. This allowed an exploration of each section of Standard Two through the lens of the respective Core Theme.

The Panel found the College to have the available resources to measure the objectives for each Core Theme. One exception to successful measurement may be the duplication of effort that may take place in the survey or assessment of students, student learning outcomes, or student satisfaction. Without one primary center to coordinate the collection of all data, the institution takes the risk of gathering the information that it needs to complete its assessment without the coordination to interpret the results and effectively use the results for continuous improvement. This can also result in over-surveying or assessing the students, which can also result in low return rates, and student “assessment” burn out.

A coordinated and systematic assessment plan may reduce unnecessary burdens on already understaffed college departments. Improvements have been made in the amount of college resources, both financial and human, that have been directed to the assessment of services, instruction, and learning outcomes. The College has an assessment plan in place. Coordination will support the success of the plan.

The President, the administration, the faculty, the staff, and the students are committed to all College Core Themes. The themes support and compliment the Mission and the College.

## **RESOURCES AND CAPACITY**

### **GOVERNANCE**

The NWIC Board of Trustees provides oversight for all college operations through regular meetings and updates, and through the adoption of the institution's policies, strategic plan, programs of study, and budget. Off-site interviews with members of the Board made it clear that Board members have an excellent understanding of their role of oversight. They are supportive of the President. They understand that the day-to-day activities of the College are the direct responsibility of the President. Evaluation and discussions of performance occur on an annual basis, usually during a planned retreat. The current President is relatively new, but this process was in existence before his appointment. It appears that systematic review of the president, as well as self-evaluation of the Board's performance are both effective and efficient.

Communication procedures are in place so that students, faculty, and staff can participate in discussions and decisions that determine the direction of the College. Not long after the President was hired, he established an Executive Team, consisting of the President and four Vice Presidents. Two other administrative committees, the Administrative Team and the Leadership Team work with the Executive Team to coordinate governance at the College.

The list of standing committees is extensive. Students are included in the meetings of the Leadership Team. The President also holds a quarterly student luncheon. All students are invited to join the President to discuss concerns and issues of importance. Extended campus students can also attend over ITV on a different day to make sure their concerns are communicated directly to the President.

Members of the College Community expressed confidence in the NWIC leadership. The executive and administrative teams are respected by students, faculty, staff, and members of the Board. It is clear that respect for and to these teams also reflects the respect that is given to others by members of those teams. This is consistent with the College Mission and its interpretation of mission fulfillment.

Students both understand and support the College Mission. They also understand the clarity of roles within the faculty and administration. Members of both groups were described as caring, committed, and knowledgeable. A constant theme during off-site interviews was the understanding that "NWIC students are first." Students and faculty believe this philosophy is supported by the current President. The President expresses respect and appreciation for his entire College Team.

Leaders are well qualified by their educational credentials and experience. Without question, most departments on campus feel they could use additional staffing, but they agree that decisions

were systematically made based on student need and the availability of resources. The committees that are in place at NWIC appropriately represent multiple areas of the College. Feedback from the committees is used in making priorities and policy. The fact that the institution is small makes it necessary for employees to serve on multiple committees, but each committee has a specific role in recommendations. Serving on multiple committees also has the advantage of promoting understanding and cross training.

Policies related to teaching, service, scholarship, research and artistic creation are printed in the Faculty Handbook, which is both available in hard copy and online. While all faculty are expected to take an active interest in the life of the Tribal Community and to remain current in their field, there is no formal requirement that faculty be involved in research of academic scholarship.

“A team of committed and caring individuals, who operate with respect and concern for one another,” was mentioned to members of this Evaluation Panel a number of times during the off-site evaluation. Respect appears to be given in all directions. This is a positive reflection on the leadership of the Board, the President, and all members of the College.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

NWIC’s Human Resources policies and procedures are contained in its Personnel Policies Manual. The manual is reviewed on a regular basis by the College’s Personnel Policy Committee, which includes representatives from each of the institution’s job classification groups, and which helps to ensure that personnel policies are applied fairly and consistently. Recommended changes proposed by the committee are vetted by the senior-level Administrative Team and ultimately approved by the College’s governing board. The current (2007) version of the Personnel Policies Manual has been modified with updates in 2010, 2012, and 2014. A cover-to-cover review of the manual is currently underway, and a new version is expected to be promulgated by the end of 2014.

The College apprises employees, in writing, of their work assignments/job descriptions, and responsibilities/expectations. Employees are also apprised of NWIC’s evaluation policies and procedures and are made aware of the promotion, termination, and other human resources processes which are described in detail in the Personnel Policies Manual.

NWIC maintains security over its employees’ human resources records, the majority of which are paper records. The College adheres to a policy whereby personnel records do not leave the Human Resources office area. HIPAA-related medical records are maintained in a separate filing system.

As described above, personnel selection procedures and criteria are publicly stated in the NWIC Personnel Policies Manual, and job descriptions and responsibilities for employees are also clearly stated. Instructional operations are carried out by approximately 25 full-time and 46 part-time faculty members, with part-time faculty members carrying out the majority of teaching duties at NWIC's six extended site locations. Support staffing is relatively lean—some support services are contracted-out when day-to-day workload would not merit full-time specialists on the staff.

All NWIC administrators, staff, and faculty are evaluated with regard to job performance annually. The College's evaluation policies include provisions for supervisors, employees, and Human Resources staff to develop performance development plans and, as necessary, performance improvement plans.

Professional development opportunities for NWIC employees include workshops, seminars, conferences, and orientation sessions targeted toward employees' job responsibilities. A noteworthy aspect of NWIC's professional development approach is its "growing our own" approach, which permeates the institution's culture and encourages progressive development of the College's human capital. Mentorship programs are available for faculty and non-instructional staff.

The College employs an adequate number of qualified faculty members to carry out its mission. At present, the ratio of part-time to full-time faculty members is approximately two-to-one. The current level of part-time faculty usage is driven, in part, by recent financial pressures that have necessitated austerity measures. The faculty consists of "instructors" NWIC does not utilize "professor, associate professor, or assistant professor" ranks. The institution does not utilize a tenure system for faculty members. Faculty qualifications are appropriate for the mission of the College, and a key emphasis area in faculty development is Indigenous Knowledge and Service. Faculty are trained and qualified to deliver course content in traditional classroom, interactive video, and asynchronous distance-delivery modes. The average salary of College instructors (based on the IPEDS Data Feedback Report for 2013) is \$35,460—this is approximately \$5,000 below the average of the 32 Tribal Colleges in NWIC's IPEDS-selected peer group. NWIC's board of trustees has not increased the institution's baseline salary schedules since 2011, but annual step increases have provided additional compensation, and faculty and staff turnover rates have remained manageable.

Faculty workloads and responsibilities are commensurate with NWIC's mission. Full-time faculty members are expected to teach 15 credit hours per quarter. Faculty responsibilities have recently been expanded to include advising and service in addition to instructional duties.

NWIC faculty members are evaluated on their performance annually, as defined in the College's Faculty Evaluation Process documented in the Personnel Policy Manual. Comprehensive Evaluations are conducted during the first year of teaching and every third year thereafter. Faculty are evaluated using multiple indices of performance including, course evaluations, peer evaluations, and self-evaluations. The College has embarked on an effort to overhaul its student course evaluation process, to include gathering of comparative data to enable longitudinal assessment of courses and faculty members over time.

## **EDUCATION RESOURCES**

The Northwest Indian College is a small Tribal College, serving several Indigenous Native American populations in Washington, Idaho and Oregon. The campuses they have are quite spread out, providing access to Lummi, Muckleshoot, Nez Perce, Nisqually, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Swinomish and Tulalip. Values and Mission drive the institution and its great passion for providing higher education opportunities for its student population.

Being an institution with approximately 21 full time and 47 part-time faculty, and 2,200 students, it is possible for all faculty to come together for weekly activities, and the faculty easily know the students. Collegiality, while perhaps easier because of size, is evident at NWIC. The institution demonstrates many methods of sharing information and best practices, problems and challenges, through discussions on continuous improvement. The College provides the time and money to create these collegial activities, and faculty members are required to be on campus an admirable 35 hours a week.

The policies at NWIC, regarding academics, library access and use, and transfer credit are fairly easy to locate in the general Catalog, the Faculty Handbook and the Student Handbook. The Human Resources division seems to be the place to locate all Board-approved policies such as travel and personnel.

Regarding faculty, the workload provisions include teaching, advising, curriculum review and development, assessment, professional development, and in-service participation. How these six elements get specifically rated within an evaluation is not clear, but it is clear that faculty dedicate a lot of time supporting the students and working on their behalf. Service and scholarship are not required, but there are ongoing discussions about how to include that as a component of faculty workloads. Full-time faculty spend approximately 3 hours a week advising students with 45 or more credits, to make sure a pathway is laid out that will get them to graduation in the most direct manner. Each faculty member typically advises 10 students on average.

Professional development for the faculty is designed uniquely for each person, and funded either by College money, grant money or Title III funding. Requests are prioritized, and must link to a

core theme from the strategic plan. The College seems to take this aspect very seriously and supports this activity suitably.

The Evaluator found it a bit difficult to find the information on service through leadership clubs and organizations for students, but eventually it was located in a couple of places other than what was mentioned in the report.

With the Indigenous characteristics of honesty, trust, respect and honor, the clearly-stated values embodied at NWIC carry over into the area of academic freedom as it relates to sharing opinions, beliefs and perspectives. It is a conscious and active process used to treat each other appropriately mindful, with respect for all. This is in addition to the traditional AAUP statement on academic freedom that was adopted by NWIC. This is a great philosophy that permeates operations at the College.

Using a detailed 7-step process, the content, rigor, course and program outcomes for new courses/programs are all determined and vetted by faculty, and outside experts typically from the community. Stipends are given most of the time, and the amount differs based on the time commitment required.

In an effort to locate course outcomes for NWIC's programs and general education courses, the Evaluator found some problems locating all materials on the website. As required, these outcomes need to be easily available to students. The institute may benefit from a qualified website manager who could review, upload necessary data and update the institutional website. How to best use the program outcomes to measure if graduates achieve the abilities stated in program and degree outcomes is being worked on by faculty and administrators at this time.

Currently, 25 of the total 90 quarter credits need to be earned from NWIC to get an NWIC an associate's level degree, but when the foundational courses become a required portion of the associate's degrees, that may requirement may rise.

The level of faculty involvement in curriculum creation, revision, and assessment is positive. In addition, the hiring process includes a lot of faculty input into the job descriptions, interviewing and ranking. The top-scoring candidates also do presentations, which are open to students and faculty, which works for getting to know the candidate better. NWIC's hiring practices have been improved, along with their timelines for hiring, so that they don't typically go into the summer for interviews, necessitating the need to get only those faculty members to participate who are offered a summer contract. They now get their hiring done in the traditional academic year when all faculty are around and available.

There are many ways for faculty to collaborate at NWIC. Faculty participate in continuous improvement with the faculty inquiry groups such as working group discussing continuous improvement, or faculty interests, the faculty roundtable meetings, which meet once a month to discuss how things are going, curriculum, teaching & learning, initiatives, the inclusion of part-

timers, speakers, best practices, typically 3 days and lots of participation), and the Indigenous Service Learning Department to designate courses with opportunities for Service Learning as a retention tool, as well as a partnerships for faculty and students. As one Indigenous Service-Learning example, it was shared with the Evaluator that Earth Day was the day of this interview, and a faculty member took his class outside to study the native plants as a way to commemorate and celebrate the day.

Regarding the integration of library use into the learning process, the Library Director sits on the curriculum committee. The Library offers tours, but they have not incorporated face-to-face library workshops, credit classes on library resources, or any online library module accessible by their students. The college is exploring the possibility of ITV for disseminating information. The College has good interlibrary loan agreements with local public libraries and other institutions in the area. Two of five members of the Library Advisory Board are faculty.

Pathways are provided to students on how to complete an associate's degree in 2 years or a bachelor's degree in 4 years. It is unclear if there is a commitment for classes to always be available to a student who is following that path. It is accomplished in an informal way. The College is small and the students and employees work together well. Still, formalization may improve an understanding and protect both students and the institution if it describes how the institution will support students who are close to graduating.

It was difficult to locate the course outcomes for all the general education components of every baccalaureate degree and transfer associate degree programs on the designated course outcomes web page. It was explained to the Panel that the College needs a new website manager to help update and populate the data they already have so that it is available in the locations where it needs to be. The Panel was able to review some of the required documents, but the documents need to be easily available to students.

The continuing education courses are compatible with the institution's Mission and Goals, and the College as a whole wholeheartedly supports the Core Themes dealing with Indigenous Knowledge (Core Theme 1), Access to all levels of higher education (Core Theme 3) and Place-based community education (Core Theme 4).

Faculty teaching the non-credit continuing education courses are held to the same quality standards and level of involvement as the credit courses. Rave reviews are received about the community focus of the classes provided to the communities they serve, and the variety that are offered. Oversight is well coordinated between the Director of Outreach and Community Education, the Dean of Academics and Distance Learning, and the Enrollment Office to ensure that guidelines are followed. Interviews found that no negative complaints had been filed about the non-credit types of classes; typically they receive positive comments about the quality and variety. And the process for recording credits and CEUs seems efficient and appropriate.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT RESOURCES**

Northwest Indian College publishes information about students' rights and responsibilities, including information about academic standards, grievances, and disability accommodations in a variety of media, including the Student Handbook, the General Catalog, and the college's web site. Students can access these media readily, but are issued a Student Handbook during the College's mandatory student orientation program, thus assuring that all students are given the information. Students play an active role in the governance of Northwest Indian College, including participation in meetings with the college's trustees thereby keeping student rights and responsibilities as a source of regular conversation and review.

The College is an open-enrollment institution and students must show proof of high school graduation or GED completion to be admitted to the college. Students are required to take the COMPASS test to determine placement in classes. Students' placement scores and previous academic records, including transfer transcripts if applicable, are reviewed with the students by an academic advisor. A schedule of courses is then identified. The college's policies regarding continuation in a program are described as "non-punitive" by the institution. Students who earn a significant number of below average or failing grades are given intensive counseling and possibly external referrals to other agencies as a condition of continued enrollment.

Northwest Indian College includes a Student Executive Board, which is a student governance structure. The college has integrated this board with its function and management. Students are involved in many committees and meet regularly with the college's senior administration and trustees.

The College's menu of student services is appropriate given the College's size and mission. These services include academic advising, tutoring, and financial aid. Northwest Indian College serves a significant number of students who pursue their degrees online. The College extends its services to these students as well via required comprehensive orientation programs (offered live and online) and site coordinators who liaise with the main campus to provide services when needs arise. The institution's published primary goal is "to serve the educational and training needs of the Pacific Northwest Tribes and their people." To this end the College focuses recruitment efforts on Native American, Alaska Native, and Canadian First Nations students.

The College publishes its federally required disclosures and other reports on its web site. College staff made the decision not to provide this information via a central directory but, instead, placed the reports on web pages where students would most likely look for them (e.g., financial aid policies are available via a link on the financial aid web page). The College has a published policy and procedure for permitting students to complete their programs in the event that substantial changes are made to those programs or in the event that they are eliminated altogether.

The College's General Catalog is published in both hard copy and electronically (i.e., on the web site). The catalog includes all standard and required information. In addition, the college publishes program flyers and, in the case of the Certified Nursing Assistant and Chemical Dependency programs, includes information about licensure requirements.

Northwest Indian College publishes its FERPA policy in a variety of media including the General Catalog. Student data are housed in a secure database, which is routinely backed up and secured. The college has developed a disaster recovery plan in the event that data in the primary database are corrupted or deleted.

The college has a strong menu of financial aid programs available to its students. All parameters for this aid, including eligibility requirements, are made available on the College's website and through a College-published Financial Aid Handbook. Students are directly informed about the Financial Aid Handbook during the mandatory student orientation program and upon receiving a financial aid award letter from the college. Northwest Indian College does not participate in any loan programs but does offer services related to loan management and resolving default issues for students who borrowed money to attend another post-secondary institution prior to enrolling.

Academic advising is a key element in the College's student support programs. Students meet with an advisor to select a schedule of courses and to review program and college graduation requirements. An Advising Handbook is issued to academic advisors and documents the college's myriad policies and procedures governing advising. Advisor training is provided to all new advisors. Faculty advisors are updated on advising protocols as a routine part of their in-service training programs.

The College offers a co-curricular program including student clubs, student government (the Student Executive Board), and a modest athletics program. The College's athletic program are open to full-time students who have not previously received compensation to play in a sport. Student clubs are developed to complement instructional program or to cater to students' interests in culture or the arts. Members of the Student Executive Board are active participants in the governance of the institution and are provided regular access to the college's administration as well as the Board of Trustees to ensure that the collective student voice is heard when developing policies and procedures.

Auxiliary services at Northwest Indian College include a bookstore, student housing, the Early Learning Center (childcare) and food services. The College supports these enterprises in varying degrees including providing space or some fiscal resources. These services represent various student needs (e.g., the College's typical student, according to the General Catalog, is a 29 year-old with a dependent thereby demonstrating a need for childcare facilities) and students are given

opportunities through formal surveys and dialogues with campus leadership to modify the services where and when needed.

The College's distance learning population is provided services commensurate with those provided to students taking courses on the main campus. Student identities are verified in all cases and a students' unique institutional identification numbers are used as a primary means of demonstrating proof of students' identities. Students who conduct business with the college over the phone or via email are asked several questions in order to verify their identity.

## **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES**

Northwest Indian College's library, which also serves as a public library, contains between 30,000 and 35,000 volumes. Students are provided with library instruction as an extension of mandatory orientation programs and via both a student success class and an English composition class. A library advisory board, which includes representation from college faculty as well as former students, meets routinely to discuss all matters related to the operation of the library including needed academic resources (books, databases, etc.). Library usage is measured with low-tech methodology, and is difficult to differentiate between public and student use. The library is available to online students 24/7 and regular surveys are issued to the campus community in order to identify potential improvements to the library operation.

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

NWIC's cash flow and reserves are sufficient to support its current programs and operations. Two factors which have presented recent financial challenges to the institution are 1) the reporting adjustment made by the College in 2013 to exclude students enrolled in General Education Equivalency (GED) programming from NWIC's Indian Student Count (ISC), upon which federal Tribally Controlled College (TCC) funds are based; and 2) the impact of sequestration on federal ISC and other grant funding. It is noteworthy that the College acted promptly and vigorously to address these revenue reductions. The College's responses included a 6% reduction in the institution's FY2013 operating budget, a two-year increase in tuition, and a 55% reduction in employer-provided family health benefits.

Other examples of NWIC's realistic budgeting and resource planning include the College's increased emphasis on student retention, based on the assumption that earlier quarter-to-quarter loss rates for students are unsustainable for the longer term. The College is also determined to address its growing unpaid tuition receivable balance (stemming, in part, from institution's policy of not initiating administrative withdrawal for unpaid tuition). Through sound planning,

the College used a timely, one-time operating budget reduction to establish a carry-over reserve. The College is cognizant of the possibility that, should federal funding levels continue to decrease, financial pressure on its students would increase, as NWIC does not participate in federal student loan programs.

The College's financial planning and budget development process is described in the NWIC Financial Manual. College personnel from across the institution participate in the budget development process from the departmental level, through senior administration, to the Board of Trustees. A noteworthy ongoing initiative is NWIC's "Program Prioritization" effort, based on the approach pioneered by Robert Dickeson, which engages all elements of the College in an evaluation of current programs, based on ten selected criteria that support better-informed decisions on both programs and the allocation of resources.

The College uses the "Jenzabar" software system as a financial information system, which serves managers at all institutional levels. Adequate internal controls are in place, including tight control of signing authority and use of frequent individual fund reports.

NWIC's \$48 million capital campaign (which is estimated to conclude successfully within two years) has already resulted in significant improvements to main campus facilities. Also noteworthy is the integration of capital equipment, furnishings, and technology infrastructure within the overall capital campaign—as well as provision for increased staffing to support the College's growth in baccalaureate programs and extended-site operations. Long-term debt for the College is minimal (consisting primarily of one USDA loan of less than \$50,000). The College also maintains an effective line of credit agreement for short-term needs.

NWIC has no auxiliary enterprises, per se. The College operates its bookstore, early learning (childcare) center, and residence life center. It has established goals for these revenue-generating operations to become more self-supporting.

NWIC undergoes an external financial audit each year. The annual financial statements and independent auditor's report (Stauffer & Associates, Liberty Lake, Washington) for the years ending on June 30, 2012 and June 30, 2013 were reviewed by the accreditation evaluation team and assessed to be a realistic assessment of the institution's financial position.

NWIC is supported by the Northwest Indian College Foundation. The Foundation's operations are conducted in accordance with published bylaws and a foundation operating agreement which defines the relationship between the College and the Foundation.

## **PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

NWIC's physical facilities have been significantly improved as a consequence of the College's ongoing \$48 million capital campaign. All but one of the 25 buildings on the main campus (an older two story office facility) are ADA accessible, and suitable accommodations are made for that unit when necessary for student meetings. Facilities at the College's six extended sites are maintained by the hosting tribal entities and comply with NWIC facility requirements. Teaching, office, laboratory, student health, and residential life facilities are adequate to carry out the College's mission. The College leases a number of apartment units to complement operations of its 35-unit (67-bed) residence facility.

The College utilizes a published Hazardous and Toxic Materials Policy which covers procedures for the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous/toxic materials for science/instructional units as well as maintenance operations. The current policy was revised and implemented in January 2014.

NWIC's Campus Master Plan was implemented in 2004 and has guided development of the campus over the past decade. The plan has been reviewed on a regular basis and continues to reflect the mission and core themes of the institution. Plans are underway for the completion in the near term of two additional facilities: a Workforce Training building and a Wellness Center with gymnasium. A contract has been let with a regional architectural firm to update the Campus Master Plan.

The College's equipment inventory is sufficient to support program objectives. NWIC has made good use of federal (Department of Defense and Department of Education) and private grant (MJ Murdock Foundation) funds as well as student support dollars to acquire equipment and technology to support instructional programs. Ambitious projects are underway to upgrade the main campus phone system and infrastructure for the expanded southern section of the main campus.

NWIC has appropriate and adequate technology systems and infrastructure in place to support its operations. Data operations are hosted on College-owned servers on the main campus. Back-up generator and equipment cooling systems are in place to minimize the chances of service interruptions. Wi-Fi capability is available throughout the main campus area and at all but one of the extended sites (the one exception stemming from local tribal operations beyond the control of NWIC). Extended site operations are supported through interactive television (ITV) technology and on-line delivery of asynchronous distance learning classes. The College utilizes "Jenzabar" software for its business operations and "Moodle" software for on-line courses. Other software systems support course/room scheduling and student testing. Laptop computers, projectors, and cameras are available for students to check out in support of coursework.

Instruction and support for faculty, staff, and students are provided on the NWIC website. Instructional videos, publications, “blogs,” and video material are accessible from the website for faculty training. The College also provides in-service and individual training support on technology use through an E-Learning Coordinator, and technical assistance and tutorials on technology are also available to students.

The College established an Instructional Technology Sub-Committee in 2013, comprised of members from the institution’s constituency groups, to develop and oversee plans and strategies for use of teaching and learning technologies across the College. A Five-Year Distance Learning Plan is now in the draft stage.

The College maintains an inventory of computer equipment and servers and regularly replaces units as they reach their planned three-year replacement points or as maintenance warranties expire. NWIC has done a noteworthy job planning for its growing bandwidth needs, and the College is collaborating with the Washington State K-20 system to expand bandwidth and improve interconnectivity with the state’s primary and secondary school systems.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The Panel commends the College for its dedication to student success. Beginning with the Mission, continuing with institutional Core Themes and the development of new programs, it is evident that faculty, administration, and staff are dedicated to meeting the educational needs of NWIC students. The dedication to “Indigenous Self-Determination and Knowledge” permeates the institution.
2. The Panel commends the College for including students in the governance of the institution and for underscoring the College Mission with its student body.
3. The Panel commends the College for its effective administration and its widely understood system of governance. The division of authority and responsibility is understood and accepted by Trustees, the President, and all members of the College Community.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Panel recommends that the College review its policy regarding the granting of prior experiential learning, and if granted, is: a) guided by approved policies and procedures; b) awarded only at the undergraduate level to enrolled students; c) limited to a maximum of 25% of the credits needed for a degree; d) awarded only for documented student achievement equivalent to expected learning achievement for institutional courses; and e) granted only upon the recommendation of qualified faculty. Credit granted for prior experiential learning is so identified on students’ transcripts. (2.C.7)
2. The Panel recommends that the College review policies related to publishing course, program and degree learning outcomes. All outcomes need to be easily located, clearly worded and provided in written form to enrolled students. (2.C.2)
3. The Panel recommends that the College continue its work on a coordinated systematic assessment program to benefit students, student services, and educational resources. (2.C.11, 2.D.8, 2.D.10,)