

**PEER-EVALUATION REPORT
MISSION FULFILLMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**Nevada State College
Henderson, Nevada**

October 9-11, 2019

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

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General Introduction

Nevada State College (NSC), was established in 2002 as a new tier within the Nevada System of Higher Education. It is a public institution with a basic Carnegie classification of Baccalaureate: Diverse Fields. In 2015, NSC was designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. NSC serves 3,361 full-time equivalent students from its campus in Henderson, Nevada. The college employs 71 full-time and 204 part-time faculty. NSC offers twenty-six baccalaureate degree programs and one master's level program.

This report summarizes the findings and conclusions of an on-site peer evaluation conducted on October 9-11, 2019, in connection with the requirements and recommended practices of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, related to a year-seven review. This review follows a year-three Resources and Capacity report and visit in 2014.

The Self-Evaluation Report was electronically delivered in a timely manner on August 23, 2019, about six weeks prior to the visit. In addition to the self-evaluation document, the evaluators received electronic access to numerous support materials, to the current college catalog, and to the class schedule. Additional materials were provided during the site visit.

Individuals Interviewed

- Members of the Board of Regents
- President
- Provost
- Executive Vice Provost
- Vice Provosts
 - Student Success
 - Academic Initiatives
- Senior Vice President
 - Finance and Business Operations
- Vice Presidents
 - College and Community Engagement
 - Institutional Advancement
- Associate Vice Presidents
 - Campus Infrastructure
 - Fiscal Operations and Controller
 - Institutional Advancement
- Deans
 - Education
 - Liberal Arts and Sciences (Interim)
 - Nursing (Interim)
 - Students
- Associate Deans
 - Education
 - Nursing
- Chief Internal Auditor, NSHE

- Core Curriculum Assessment Committee
- Core Curriculum Revision Committee
- Curriculum Committee Chair
- Department Chairs
 - Humanities
 - Social Sciences
 - Physical and Life Sciences
- Senior Director
 - Advancement
- Directors
 - Academic Advising
 - Academic Success Center
 - Accounting Services
 - Admissions and Recruiting
 - Annual Giving
 - Budget
 - Career Services
 - Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence
 - Community Engagement and Diversity Initiatives
 - Course Assistant Program
 - Disability Resources
 - Facilities
 - Financial Aid
 - Human Resources
 - Information and Technology Services
 - Institutional Research
 - Library
 - Marketing and Events
 - Nepantla Program
 - Post Awards
 - Speech Therapy
 - TRiO Student Success
 - Writing Center
- Coordinator
 - Academic Advising and Student Success initiatives
- Faculty (forum)
- Faculty Senate Chair
- Library Advisory Board
- Library Staff
- Managers
 - Finance and Business Operations
 - Information Technology
- Program Assessment Chairs
- Registrar
- Staff (forum)

- Students (forum)
- Community Partners

Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials

The 216-page self-evaluation report was well-written and described many initiatives in which the institution is engaged. The report also included extensive links to supporting documentation that were easy to access remotely. While the report provided the context for broad discussion and inquiry, the more valuable insights were gained from the additional materials submitted by the institution during the visit.

Institutional History Impacting Accreditation Visit

NSC received one recommendation in the 2014 mid-cycle evaluation: maintain a sufficient number of qualified personnel – both faculty and staff – to sustain its support and operations functions (Standard 2.B.1). Based on the evaluation committee’s findings, this recommendation has been met.

Response to Student Achievement Data

NWCCU requests that Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation Committee members discuss with institutional representatives and respond within the Team Report, to the questions below relative to the data provided by NWCCU. NSC’s summarized responses are noted here. Team members reviewed the data during the campus visit and verified implementation of the initiatives described here.

1. What are the key challenges of the institution related to the institution’s graduation rate and other data provided?
 - Upon review of the data provided by NWCCU, NSC defined key challenges in three categories: resource constraints, student challenges, and structural challenges. Resource constraints include enduring a 50% decrease in state appropriations during 2008-2011, though in recent years appropriations have improved. Among student challenges are academically under-prepared students (e.g., 75-80% remedial math placement rate), all students commute to campus, 50% or more are first generation, and approximately 50% of degree seeking students receive Pell support with 70% working at least part-time.
2. What is the institution doing to improve graduation rates?
 - NSC has engaged in a number of initiatives to improve graduation rates: Gateways to Completion, the Nepantla Program, mandatory centralized advising, peer course assistants, TRiO student support services and academic success center programming, a focus on completion through a 15-to-finish campaign, development of math pathways, establishment of a writing center, and enhancements to the library. There

has also been increased emphasis in engaging students in campus activities, as those who do have demonstrated a 16% higher graduation rate.

3. What initiatives appear to be effective in improving graduation rates?

Activities effective in improving graduations rates are those that:

- foster a strong sense of community and social belonging among students, as with Nepantla and Course Assistant programs; to this end, peer support training workshops place an emphasis on inclusion, belonging, and the application of this knowledge.
- rely on some variation of peer-to-peer support, which appears to be especially impactful for the large first-generation population (e.g., the ASC, Writing Center, and Course Assistant program).
- encourage student success behaviors via policy, not merely persuasion; the 15-to-Finish, mandatory advising, and math pathway initiatives are successful, at least to a degree, because they include default and/or mandatory elements (e.g., incoming freshmen are administratively enrolled into a slate of first-year courses and are required by policy to enroll in gateway math and English courses).
- offer students not just support, but a physical place to gather (e.g., the TRiO-SSS and Nepantla programs, which both are located in large office spaces on campus).

4. What might accreditors do to assist institutions to improve graduation rates?

- NSC staff stated it is known by campus personnel what needs to be done to improve graduation rates – time and resources to accomplish the tasks are needed.

Eligibility Requirements

NSC provided narrative and links to supporting documentation to demonstrate it meets Eligibility Requirements 2-24. Additional supporting information is contained throughout the team report. The following detailed information highlights selected eligibility requirements that reflect substantial compliance or concerns:

Eligibility Requirements 9 and 10. Administration and Faculty: NSC is adequately staffed with qualified and dedicated staff, faculty and administrators. Due to unprecedented growth in student enrollment, there has been corresponding growth in part-time faculty and mid-level-administrators. Students report that adjunct faculty create and support a positive, student centered learning environment. Faculty and staff report that rapid growth has led to leadership transitions, which are not always well communicated. There is a need for staff additional onboarding, to ensure stability for the organization.

Eligibility Requirement 12. General Education and Related Instruction: Academic programs at NSC contain a Core Curriculum with identified outcomes. A challenge identified by the Evaluation Team was an inability to effectively assess the core curriculum. There is little cohesion or shared understanding around the program learning outcomes in the core.

Eligibility Requirement 13. Library and Information Resources: As the first digital library in the state of Nevada, the Marydean Martin Library is to be complimented for partnering with NSC instructors to reduce student costs and for its work in assessing student outcomes.

Eligibility Requirement 23. Institutional Effectiveness: The Evaluation Team found limited evidence that indicators and thresholds of achievement are relevant and meaningful, or of an integrated institutional approach to assessment, and few examples of institution-wide improvements that were strategically planned and budgeted, based on assessment results. There did not seem to be an institution level structure to provide sufficient direction and oversight to facilitate authentic and meaningful assessment, analysis, reflection, planning and budgeting in support of improvement. However, there is evidence that the college is invested in data informed decisions.

Standard 1 – Mission and Core Themes

Standard 1A — Mission

NSC has developed a mission statement that is approved by the Nevada System of Higher Education. The mission, “At NSC, excellence fosters opportunity. Excellence in teaching leads to innovative, technology-rich learning opportunities that promote the acquisition of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills. Quality, affordable programs open the door to career success and enhanced quality of life for a diverse population of students. Our graduates, in turn, foster the greatest opportunity – the promise of a stronger community and a better future for all of Nevada,” provides direction for the college and was developed through a collaborative process with input from a broad range of stakeholders. Mission fulfillment is operationalized through four key elements: excellence and innovation in teaching, student success, educational opportunity, and contribution to the community. It is evident that the mission statement serves as a foundation for efforts to measure mission fulfillment.

Standard 1B — Core Themes

The mission speaks to excellence in teaching and learning, opportunity to access quality programs, and the promise of a stronger community. These statements have been articulated in the core themes of Promote Student Success, Foster Educational Opportunity, and Strengthen the Community. The self-evaluation states that the core themes define the goals NSC hopes to achieve. For each core theme, objectives, indicators, and thresholds of achievement have been established.

Core Theme 1 – Promote Student Success

There are four (4) objectives for Core Theme 1, including: 1) develop effective critical thinkers and communicators, 2) foster integrity and positive citizenship, 3) instill discipline-specific expertise, and 4) cultivate learning experiences characterized by innovative engagement. The indicators are a mix of direct and indirect quantifiable measures such as standardized tests and surveys including, Educational Benchmark, Inc., National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and National Council Licensure Examination for nursing. The college’s Core Curriculum outcomes assessment is an indicator for two of the objectives.

While the Core Theme 1 indicators are diverse and thresholds of achievement are identified for each, the meaning and usefulness of some is not clear. For example, degree program outcomes assessment is an objective with a stated threshold of ‘observe an increase in student performance in upper-division courses relative to lower-division courses.’ The value in comparing student performance in beginning courses to more advanced courses was unclear to the Evaluation Team. For the Core Curriculum outcomes assessment, the benchmark is 70% of artifacts rated as proficient. The Evaluation Team learned in some cases very few artifacts are rated, therefore a benchmark of 70% may represent very few pieces of student work. It is presumed that if students develop knowledge and skills related to each objective they will have achieved success. The Evaluation Team recognizes that having the knowledge and skills suggested by the chosen objectives should put graduates in a position to make meaningful contributions to the community.

Core Theme 2 – Foster Educational Opportunity

Objectives for Core Theme 2 include 1) recruit and support a diverse array of students, 2) improve student retention/ timely degree progression, and 3) graduate a diverse population of students in a variety of fields. Core Theme 2 indicators include counts, usage numbers, rates, and student satisfaction survey items.

The counts, usage numbers and rates are routine data points collected by the college, such as headcount and full-time equivalent students, usage of student support services, and numbers of graduates. The survey measure of achievement focuses on student satisfaction with advising, tutoring, disability, and career services, as well as with the library.

The objectives and indicators in Core Theme 2 appear to be useful, assisting the college to measure its progress in bringing diverse students into the institution, keeping them enrolled and supporting them to graduate on time. Students reported an extremely high level of support is provided by faculty and staff, and gave examples of faculty and staff checking in to ensure students are progressing well, balancing school work with their outside lives, and have access to and are utilizing any needed resources.

Core Theme 3 – Strengthen the Community

Core Theme 3 objective are 1) foster community partnerships, 2) promote student contributions to the community, and 3) promote faculty/ staff contributions to the community.

Community engagement and service are clearly NSC values and the college’s engagement with the community is demonstratively high and responsive. However, while Core Theme 3’s objectives, indicators, and thresholds of achievement are established, they are somewhat unclear. The initial definition of Core Theme 3 did not appear to be adequately developed or transferred to a newly responsible vice president, to enable NSC to identify meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement.

The differentiation between the term ‘partnerships’ of objective 1 and ‘contributions’ of objective 3 does not appear to be significant. Both objectives assess engagement activities,

objective 1 with faculty/ staff self-report and objective 3 through self-reported hours of engagement contact. The purpose of these engagement activities is not defined.

The Division of College and Community Engagement is in the process of reviewing its assessment practices, including objectives, indicators and assessment practices, to ensure they appraise authentic achievements and yield meaningful results that lead to improvement. The 2020-2025 NSC strategic plan shows expanded attention on the community engagement core theme.

Based on the NSC self-evaluation, written support materials, and interviews with administrators, faculty, and staff, it is apparent the institution is dedicated to enhancing student success and fostering educational opportunity for a diverse and often underserved population, with a set of programs designed to meet specific needs of the community. There is evidence the college is succeeding as enrollment, retention, and graduation rates are increasing.

Standard 2 - Resources and Capacity

Standard 2.A

Governance and Governing Board

NSC (NSC) is part of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), which is governed by the 13-member Board of Regents. Regents are elected within defined districts and act as a committee of the whole. Regents serve a 6-year term; the chair and vice chair are elected from the board's membership to one-year terms. The board meets four times per year on one of the campuses within the NSHE and according to a schedule posted to its web site. The Board of Regents provides oversight of system and institutional policies, including its own organization and operation, and appoints the president of NSC. Roles and responsibilities of the Regents, chancellor and president are delineated in the NSHE bylaws and handbook. During the site visit, Regents reported that the board conducts self-evaluation in an open session meeting approximately every 18 months.

Leadership and Management

NSC employs a sufficient number of senior- and mid-level administrators, however, many individuals serve in multiple capacities or are new to their roles. *Concern: Campus employees reported that turnover in administrators has impacted transparency and an understanding of how decisions, such as allocation of resources or implementation of new instructional programs, are made.* It was also expressed by constituents that there was no succession planning. In spite of these challenges, the Evaluation Team compliments administrators, faculty and staff on working well together to ensure success of students.

Policies and Procedures

Academics

Nevada System Higher of Education (NSHE) policies impacting college faculty are posted on the NSHE website. General institutional policies regarding faculty academic activities are posted in the policy library. Individual schools post unique policies in their faculty handbooks and syllabus templates.

Library use policies are posted on the library's website and online access is managed with assistance from the Office of Information and Technology Services. The Nevada System of Higher Education Computing Resources Policy governs the library's computer policies.

NSC follows NSHE policies regarding transfer rights as delineated in NSHE Handbook 4.14, Sections 14-17. The NSC College Catalog has information about transfer admissions, credit evaluation and specific credit transfers. In addition, NSC has developed articulation agreements with the state's community colleges (particularly with the College of Southern Nevada) and NSC courses are part of the NSHE Common Course Numbering System.

Students

Student policies are available via the college website, either through program pages (Registrar's Office or Advising, for example) or through the online policy library. While students reported being introduced to policies during orientation and had some idea where to find information, the online organization or accessibility was not obvious to them. This was particularly true of policies regarding student complaints. NSC students would benefit from a more accessible student grievance policy and process.

Human Resources

Human resources is working to ensure policies are available and understandable to college employees. It was evident that faculty and staff across NSC are aware that policies and procedures are being discussed and solidified. In some cases, new policies have been written, including one about student employees' responsibilities and salary scales. And, human resources staff are available to assist employees to interpret the administrative code surrounding employment rights and responsibilities. However, there are acknowledged gaps between these system-level policies and implementation at the institutional level. *Concern: better mapping and coordination between state-wide policies and institutional implementation would provide clarity for faculty, staff and students.* The Evaluation Team encourages the college to continue efforts to develop and improve institutional policies and procedures, and to communicate them broadly to the campus community.

Institutional Integrity

NSC represents itself clearly, accurately and consistently in its announcements, statements and publications, both web and print based. Materials to guide student success such as degree

requirements and residency requirements are clearly stated on the website. NSC operates within the framework of the NSHE policies on ethical standards and expectations for board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Policies setting academic standards and integrity and employee grievances also are on the website, while the procedure for filing a student grievance is found in the catalog.

Conflict of interest, copyright and fair use, and contractual agreement policies are addressed in the NSHE handbook. The institution has been directed to develop a campus-level copyright and fair use policy, which is slated to be completed during the 2019-2020 academic year.

The college maintains a website for regional accreditation that accurately represents the current accreditation status of the institution.

Academic Freedom

The institution clearly defines in both its bylaws and the NSHE handbook the protections for academic freedom in teaching and research, including a delineation of the private and public roles as citizens and as members of the institution. The promotion and tenure policies of the institution, as well as its other governing documents cited above, highlight the importance of the free expression of ideas undertaken in scholarly pursuit. The institution does not inhibit faculty, students and staff from engaging in the dissemination of their scholarly work; rather it requires the dissemination of such work via appropriate channels (i.e. juried, peer-reviewed, etc.). Faculty expressed confidence in the appropriate alignment of the tenure and promotion guidelines relative to their research expectations.

The institution articulates, via the NSHE handbook, the importance of academic honesty and integrity. The procedures used to address violations of academic honesty and integrity are clearly spelled out in the handbook, although specific criteria by which to assess such violations are not as distinct. It is not clear that the heavy use of the Nevada State System of Higher Education handbook and the lack of institution-tailored policies is transparent to faculty, students and staff.

Finance

All fiscal policies and procedures are published in the NSHE handbook and the Board of Regents guidelines manual.

2.B - Human Resources

At NSC's mid-cycle evaluation, the following recommendation was made: "...maintain a sufficient number of qualified personnel – both faculty and staff – to sustain its support and operations functions." The Evaluation Committee agrees that NSC has appropriately responded to this recommendation. During this period of increased hiring, the college has consistently represented its student success mission to potential candidates and expresses a commitment to continued recruitment of a diverse faculty and staff.

While staffing may be sufficient, there continue to be staffing challenges that may require

attention in the coming years, particularly as enrollment continues to grow. NSC reported hiring 83 staff and faculty in the past 14 months. Constituents reported that onboarding has not been consistently implemented and it takes time for new people to learn the culture and forge new working relationships.

Other staffing challenges related to rapid growth were expressed during the campus visit. As an example, the college has been moving to stabilize and focus staffing positions so fewer employees are concurrently filling multiple roles. Staff expressed concern that in many offices, there is only one employee, and no ability to cross-train. Consequently, there are concerns about succession planning and career advancement opportunities. The human resources director reported that helping staff understand the pathways to new positions with increased complexity and responsibility, and supporting employees in gaining the skills and competencies that would make them competitive for those future roles, was one of several professional development initiatives under development.

Another staffing challenge concerns part-time faculty. For a variety of reasons, the college has depended on part-time instructors for a significant portion of student instruction. Students spoke very highly of both full-time and part-time faculty, indicating the large number of part-time instructors does not have a negative impact on their classroom or online experiences. As the college explores the appropriate full-time/part-time faculty balance, peer institution data and best practices may guide future analyses and decisions.

It is noted that human resources focused this year on achieving consistency in the evaluation processes across the institution. As organizational structure evolves, it will be important to assure supervisors have the capacity, in terms of the number of direct reports, to complete appropriate and effective evaluations.

2.C — Education Resources

Full-time NSC tenure-track and tenured faculty have terminal degrees related to their fields of expertise. These fulltime, expert faculty members have developed programs within their fields that demonstrate appropriate content and rigor, and that are consistent with NSC's mission. All programs publish program learning outcomes, which serve as the basis for assessing student achievement. A list of fulltime faculty members and their qualifications was found in the NSC catalog.

As described in the NSC Program of Assessment plan, student achievement of program learning outcomes (institutional PLOs) is analyzed and assessed every second year at a retreat. On opposite years, the overall program is reviewed, including student achievement within the program and course syllabi. Course learning outcomes are assessed for appropriate quality and rigor by faculty in their program assessments. Conversations with faculty and administration confirmed this process.

PLOs are published in the catalog and on program websites. Syllabi, which contain course learning outcomes are posted in the learning management system, Canvas, for all courses.

The NSC credit hour policy is found in the catalog and in the policy library; policy AE5 defines awarding of credit. Qualified faculty determine curriculum and program development as well as approval. NSC's degree programs are consistent with system-wide standards for core curriculum requirements, major requirements, upper-division electives, and common course numbering. Degree requirements are published in the catalog. Instructors determine the extent to which a student has met course learning objectives, as reflected in the grade awarded for performance. Successful completion of courses that meet appropriate PLOs and are identified as degree requirements, lead to degree achievement.

Clearly defined admissions and graduation requirements are readily available via the college catalog, the NSC website, materials provided by the academic advising center, and unofficial degree audits available in the myNSC portal.

Faculty verify that clear and detailed guidelines are followed for curriculum proposal, development, and review. Programs go through several levels of review and approval from faculty and departments, up to the Regents. The Program of Assessment describes how the faculty members take collective responsibility for assessing students' mastery of learning outcomes. There are policies/procedures that define faculty roles and faculty are involved in hiring new faculty.

There is evidence that library personnel partner with the teaching faculty. Librarians meet with individual instructors to review research assignments and workshops, and scheduled to help incorporate information literacy concepts into student assignments. Librarians have created online guides to assist students in locating appropriate materials for their courses. It is notable that the library is also partnering with NSC instructors in working to reduce student costs by providing library purchased online textbooks for seven nursing courses and by organizing the No-Cost Textbook Summer Institute. Based on the evidence provided, NSC has assessed student outcomes for information literacy skills that are taught in library instruction sessions. In 2018, 68 student artifacts were assessed from seven courses. While the results were lower than expected, the library is to be given credit for conducting this assessment and for recommending that information literacy be included as a core component of the curriculum.

Credit for prior experiential learning is clearly defined by the NSC as limited to an appropriate exam score on standardized and validated exams such as CLEP, Excelsior, or DANTES. Portfolio-based experiential learning credits are not accepted. Transfer credits are accepted according to a set of clearly defined and transparent criteria. Students have multiple avenues by which to petition transfer credits, including a review in context of their particular academic program by faculty in that program; the criteria by which those transfer credits are evaluated is clearly stated. Articulation agreements include regularly updated course-by-course articulation maps with each community college in the state. NSC has developed dual enrollment opportunities in collaboration with regional high schools with a resultant increase in enrollment of first-time freshmen from those academies.

Undergraduate Programs

NSC has a well-defined general education program identified as the college core curriculum and required for all bachelor's degrees offered, including the BS, BA, and BAS. The program conforms to Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) requirements necessitating 21-24 credit hours in English, mathematics, natural science, and social science or humanities/fine arts, in addition to instruction in the U.S. and Nevada constitutions. Consistent with NSHE policy, NSC also added requirements to its core curriculum that address study and technology skills to promote the success of first-time students, and a cultural diversity component, to support the program outcomes of the core curriculum. The program requirements are waived for students transferring-in with an Associate of Arts or Science degree from within the system.

The student learning outcomes for the core curriculum program address critical thinking, communication, and effective citizenship. These outcomes are published widely, including in the catalog, and are aligned to the mission. The program outcomes are assessed by a core curriculum assessment committee which has recommended a revision of the core curriculum outcomes and the assessment process. The committee has been working to align the core curriculum outcomes to AAC&U LEAP essential learning and WICHE Passport outcomes.

NSC offers BAS degrees in management, engineering technology, and allied health sciences, that are based on transfer agreements with the College of Southern Nevada. Each BAS degree articulates program-level outcomes that build on certificates and AAS degrees, and includes all core and specialized courses. Coursework is outlined in degree maps.

Graduate Programs

The M.Ed. in Speech and Language Pathology welcomed its first student cohort in fall 2019. A well-written and comprehensive handbook has been created that addresses the expectations of the program and the students. The program faculty also teach in a bachelor's level Speech and Language Pathology program, and have taught in a CE program preparing speech pathology students for the PRAXIS exam, which is necessary for practice in schools.

The requirement for program admittance is completion of an undergraduate degree in the field of speech-language pathology or communication sciences and disorders, with a 3.0 grade point average, or a post-baccalaureate credential in one of these areas. The transfer policy is described in the graduate program handbook. Clinical practica and externships are carefully monitored and the hours approved by supervisors through state of the art software. No experiential learning is transferred for graduate credit.

The curriculum and student learning outcomes of the M.Ed. program are well aligned with accreditation standards and licensing requirements.

Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs

The credit-bearing post-baccalaureate courses offered by NSC are designed and delivered by faculty in the School of Education and are subject to oversight and assessment by the NSC faculty in a manner that aligns with regular policies and processes. NSC offers credit-bearing continuing education coursework for students 1) who are post-baccalaureate and seeking teacher preparation licensure through the Nevada Department of Education, 2) full-time Clark County School District teachers seeking an alternative route to certification (ARC) in Autism, 3) Generalist or an alternative route to licensure (ARL), or 4) those intending to complete the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and/or the Educational Technology Nevada State endorsements.

The offering of such courses is well aligned with the mission to foster student opportunity and career success. CEUs are not offered nor does the institution deliver non-credit instruction.

2.D – Student Support Resources

NSC prides itself on being a community of educators committed to serving a diverse student population. The mission of serving undergraduates (and increasingly, graduate students) who have not historically had access to higher education, including first-generation and Latinx students, as indicated by their Hispanic-Serving Institution status, is well understood. The culture of the college is focused on supporting students inside and outside the classroom, and increasing retention and graduation rates. Innovative services and initiatives such as the Course Assistant Program, peer mentorship, tutoring and writing services, along with population-based programs like Nepantla and TRiO Student Support Services, are evidence of this commitment.

Information about academic programs and services is available and students reported faculty and staff are supportive, including connecting students to needed resources.

The commitment to student success has resulted in a significant investment in academic advising. The advising director strategically organized advisors into teams and expanded programming to include new student orientation and peer mentorship. The dean has plans to expand the role of the advising center to a zero to 120-credit model, utilizing faculty as mentors but retaining advising as a centralized function. A number of staff members – some of whom have been or are still current faculty – mentioned that there is not the typical institutional divide between student affairs and academic affairs. There is much evidence to support this assertion and its benefits in ensuring students are well served.

Co-curricular activities (including welcome events and cultural celebrations) and auxiliary services (food service and the upcoming campus housing) contribute to building a sense of campus community, which is widely understood as an important component of student success.

During the Evaluation Team's site visit and interview, it became clear that neither the self-evaluation nor the institution's website, fully captured the many services available to students. The commitment to providing students with what they need – including childcare, lactation

rooms, and a campus shuttle – is strong and pervasive, and making services widely known should be a priority.

2.E — Library and Information Resources

Consistent with the institutional mission and the mission of the library, the Marydean Martin Library holds or provides access to information resources and instructional services with an appropriate level of currency, depth, and breadth to support its programs and students. The library is open six days a week for a total of 71.5 hours per week, and has seating for more than 170 students. There are 16 computer workstations available along with an adjacent computer lab; group study rooms can be reserved for collaborative learning. In emphasizing online resources as the “first digital academic library in the state of Nevada”, the library employs the Primo search platform to provide twenty-four hour access to an impressive collection of more than 1.5 million e-books, online journals and audio-visual materials retrieved from more than 90 databases. Partner libraries in Nevada and interlibrary loan operations provide additional resources not available from NSC’s digital collections. *Compliment: As the first digital library in the state of Nevada, the Marydean Martin Library is to be complimented for partnering with NSC instructors to reduce student costs by providing library purchased online textbooks for seven nursing courses and by organizing the No-Cost Textbook Summer Institute.*

Planning for library and information resources is data-driven, including feedback from users, faculty, staff, and administrators, and in collaboration with the office of institutional research. Usage statistics are monitored to determine the relevancy and value of current online resources in meeting the needs of NSC’s three schools, and interlibrary loan data are used to reveal faculty and student interests and to guide purchase of new materials. The library personnel appear to be well represented on appropriate management, curriculum and campus committees. The library receives feedback from a four-person library advisory board, although its meeting time was limited to a single two-hour meeting last year. In meeting with the Library Advisory Board during the site visit, it was apparent that the board is interested in serving in an advisory capacity, and the library is encouraged to engage the board on a more regular basis.

There is good evidence of appropriate library instruction and support on the NSC campus. The library offers an information literacy instruction program and research services to help students succeed with their assignments and to assist faculty with their courses and their research. Library instruction is delivered in a variety of ways including individual consultation. There are comfortable study areas, popular group study rooms, accessible computers and Wi-Fi throughout the campus. Within Canvas, there are embedded links to online research guides (LibGuides) and the faculty can highlight digital resources appropriate for their classes.

There is indication that the library has evaluated its services and facilities during the last few years. The student and faculty surveys conducted in the spring of 2014, the student satisfaction survey assessment (June 2017), and the campus climate surveys provide evidence the library is valued for its resources and public services. The library also followed up in 2017-18 with a survey on library space to measure its progress in addressing the lower ratings and concerns about library space reported in the 2014 survey. As a result, library space was rearranged and more laptop computers were made available.

The library is recognized for its outstanding effort in transitioning from output-based metrics to outcomes-based assessment measures, particularly in how the use of library resources correlates to student success. Their work in this area is of national interest in examining the value of information literacy as a core competency for general education requirements. *Compliment: The Marydean Martin Library is to be complimented for its work in assessing student outcomes and in researching the correlation between library use and student success.*

There is need for more current systematic assessment of the library's resources as a follow up to the student and faculty surveys. Given the recent growth at NSC, it would be advisable to assess the library's capacity to provide library and information resources with a level of currency and depth that is sufficient to support NSC's mission and recent strategic plan. Such an assessment should also include library space, staffing, and hours of operation to support NSC's growing programs, student services, and residential campus life.

2.F — Financial Resources

The Senior Vice President of Finance and Business Operations provides the leadership needed to project the cash flow, debt service, enrollment, revenues, expenditures, personnel and capital needs of the institution. The executive budget committee (EBC) reviews the projections, and unit requests for funding, both one-time and ongoing. The committee is charged to prioritize institutional and unit needs, and evaluate requests based upon the strategic initiatives of the institution. In addition, the committee recommends approval, denial, or delay of the budget requests. Once the EBC approves the institutional budget, it is reviewed and approved by the NSC Executive Leadership Team. This process demonstrates realistic development of financial resources, appropriate risk management, and attention to cash flow and reserves.

The Evaluation Team was provided a comprehensive spreadsheet detailing and analyzing the institution's realistic budgeting, enrollment trends, and projections for student fees, state appropriations, gifts, grants, slot funding, capital needs, and institutional initiatives. This spreadsheet is utilized to help the EBC determine appropriate levels of funding for departments, units, programs, and strategic initiatives.

A budget calendar detailing the budgetary process and deadlines and financial assumptions are provided to units during the annual budget planning process. Personnel in open forum mentioned they were unaware of the budget and planning process, how budget decisions were made, and how the final decisions were related to the strategic plan. *Concern: Constituents in open forum indicated a need for clearly defined policies, guidelines, and processes for financial planning and development that have direct linkage to the new strategic plan, mission, and goals.*

NSC is audited annually as a part of the Nevada System of Higher Education. The FY18 external audit resulted in an opinion that the NSHE financial statements were prepared utilizing generally accepted accounting principles. Also included was a Report of Independent Certified Public Accountants on Internal Controls over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters Required by Governmental Auditing Standards. The NSHE chief internal auditor provided a list of internal audits conducted at NSC which reviewed internal controls and compliance with NSHE and institution-specific policies.

The annual budget process includes a review of capital budget requests. Requests for capital initiatives include the full estimated cost of the project such as the State Public Works Board Project Cost Estimate dated September 20, 2018, for the new Education building.

The institution outsources food service and bookstore functions to third party vendors. The contracts between vendors and the institution define the relationships and auxiliary funds are separated from the general fund.

The fundraising activities of the NSC Foundation are conducted under the guidance of the articles of incorporation and bylaws of the foundation. Other state and federal statutes and regulations also require the foundation to operate in an ethical and professional manner. The bylaws detail the roles between NSC, the Board of Regents, and the Foundation, as does the NSC website. The Associate Vice President of Institutional Advancement indicated the articles of incorporation also broadly define the roles of the Board of Regents and the Board of the NSC Foundation. *Concern: This institution may benefit from a more clearly defined relationship with the foundation, guided by the 2020 NWCCU standards.*

2.G — Physical and Technological Infrastructure

Physical Infrastructure

NSC has been focused on the build out of the facilities and related infrastructure to accommodate the increased student population and enhance the student experience. A comprehensive walking tour of the campus facilities and interviews revealed detailed planning for future modifications/expansion, as well as thoughtful use of student space, classrooms, equipment, and technology. The tour demonstrated the adequacy of space, safety and accessibility, and plans for temporary moves to accommodate new construction. *Commendation: The committee commends the institution for its excellent and well-maintained physical and technological infrastructure.*

The policies and procedures for handling hazardous waste were developed by a neighboring institution, due to its proximity to NSC. Posted signs reminding personnel and students of hazardous material use, storage, and disposal were evident on campus.

The campus master plan was developed in 2010 and is due to be updated. The new plan is intended to evolve NSC from an emerging institution to a developed institution, under the leadership of an associate vice president dedicated to campus infrastructure. Given the institution's relatively young age, the infrastructure and equipment are new. Through interviews, the Evaluation Committee learned that funding had been received to upgrade the equipment and technology which is at the replacement life of 5 years. In addition, the tour of the campus validated the adequacy, quality, and quantity of equipment to support student learning.

Technological Infrastructure

The NSC Office of Information and Technology Services (ITS) provides appropriate and adequate technological infrastructure and learning management systems to support the college's

management and operational functions, its academic programs, and its support services. The internal core campus network runs at 10Gb/s with 1Gb/s connectivity to the end user. Internet connectivity is supplied by the Nevada System of Higher Education's statewide network and there are plans to upgrade this primary connection to 10Gb/s. In addition to the wired infrastructure, NSC provides both a guest and secured wireless network in its facilities. NSC has a VoIP telecommunications system, which minimizes the need for wiring and allows for easier expansion of the system to additional locations. Video conferencing is available from a dedicated Polycom system and from several online conferencing services. While NSC has a campus data center supporting over 70 virtual servers, the preference is to use a hosted cloud solution for enterprise applications with the goal of reducing operational costs. There is a single sign on for the campus portal offering 24-hour access to the campus network and NSC's electronic resources.

NSC provides appropriate services and support to ensure that faculty, staff, and students can effectively use the technology that is available for their programs, services, and institutional operations. ITS maintains a central help desk that can be accessed via the NSC portal and offers assistance by phone, online, and by email during regular business hours. ITS also has contracted out for 24-hour technical support and online courses for general technology assistance. In addition, NSC offers in person assistance, online workshops and web-accessible resources to assist with course design and development, assessment methods, and the course management system. All instructors are enrolled in NSC's WebCampus orientation sites providing 24-hour access to tutorials, mentors, and online workshops. Every student is also automatically enrolled in the WebCampus online course which links students to the Canvas student guide and to course websites that link to tutoring, to the NSC Library, and to other academic resources and services.

The NSC Technology Advisory Committee, representing campus constituents, meets regularly and provides input on ITS planning, issues, policies, and services. Based on the most recent surveys, which had limited response from students and employees, users of the campus systems are generally satisfied with the services they receive. There was a stated concern about the reliability of the wireless network and the portal from some of the students and employees. To their credit, ITS is responding to this concern by employing new tools to assess the WiFi coverage on campus and by rolling out a new version of the portal. Recent input from student leadership resulted in NSC developing two new computer labs, one of which is located adjacent to the library.

An appropriate five-year upgrade schedule for equipment replacement is in place for classrooms, labs, and for general use student workstations and for all faculty and staff workstations. The university has a student technology fee to support the replacement plan as well as upgrades for a/v systems, software, and infrastructure. Given NSC's preference for cloud-based services, the campus data center has an appropriate 10-year refresh cycle with some of the replaced equipment used for non-critical operations such as testing and development.

Standard 3 – Planning and Assessment

3.A — Institutional Planning

Planning efforts at NSC primarily focus on the development of strategic plans. The college is required to present an institutional strategic plan to the Board of Regents every seven years, which also integrates the goals of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). Internally, planning is overseen by the offices of the president and the provost. Recently, the Strategic Planning Council and the Strategic Plan Writing Group finalized the 2020-2025 strategic plan, which was presented to the Board of Regents in September, 2019. NSC faculty and staff in open fora, reported learning about the new plan during convocation sessions, and confirmed there were opportunities to participate in ‘town hall meetings’ to provide input into the elements of the strategic plan. However, there was a lack of certainty as to how decisions were made regarding the final document. During the site visit, members of the campus community acknowledged the difficulty in planning during the recent growth in student enrollment.

NSC reports a reliance on numerous data sources, including qualitative and quantitative metrics, direct and indirect measures, and internal and external data when assessing the effectiveness of strategic plan initiatives and of core theme objectives. The Evaluation Team noted a lack of unity and integration of planning efforts, particularly in regard to the core themes and the strategic plan. It is unclear how the core theme objectives and indicators align with those in the strategic plan. As one example, there were different understandings of intent to grow enrollments between administrators and enrollment management staff. There is also little documentation of planning processes and/or the roles played, and the interactions between the various committees.

NSC’s strategic plan clearly articulates institutional priorities. Data gathered around the strategic plan indicators guides decision making and the budget process. As an example, when a new faculty position is desired, the unit must provide data on student demand and enrollments, as well as on how the position furthers the college’s strategic initiatives and/ or compliance with accreditation standards. According to the self-evaluation and supported through campus meetings, it was noted that requests which align with mission and strategic goals are more likely to be supported. Greater focus on essential and key indicators and more precise decisions about essential and non-essential data collection could improve assessment and planning processes. However, these processes are still relatively young and are continuously reviewed for relevancy and essentiality.

NSC has an up-to-date emergency operations plan in coordination with a neighbor NSHE institution. The plan includes the roles and responsibilities of staff during an incident (disaster or emergency), including an orders of success table, which assigns tasks to senior administrators.

3.B – Core Theme Planning

NSC has articulated a core theme planning process that involves core theme objectives, core theme indicators, thresholds of achievement, and assessment of core theme achievement. These planning elements are linked to a set of strategic goals and strategic initiatives, which are designed to lead toward core theme fulfillment. The strategic goals that have been articulated are

the following: Opportunity, Enrichment, and Impact, and strategic initiatives are designed to meet these goals within the context of a core theme. While strategic initiatives are programs and actions undertaken to enhance core theme achievement, the role of the articulated goals in the planning process is unclear. In the planning framework, the core themes are the goals, each with articulated objectives for which there are multiple indicators of success and whose measurement can lead to assessment through thresholds of achievement.

In theory the strategic goals and initiatives were informed by the core themes, but the evidence presented insufficiently demonstrates a coherent planning and decision-making process. The strategic initiatives chosen and implemented recently have not been explicitly tied to the core theme planning process. *Concern: It is not particularly clear how the goals and strategic initiatives are related to the core themes in a coherent planning process.* If the new strategic plan is implemented and its implementation is assessed, one likely outcome will be a more coherent planning, implementation, assessment, and continuous improvement process.

NSC collects and has compiled a large volume of data on students and programs, and thus data have been available to inform both core theme and strategic planning. These data have been derived from a wide variety of sources. They have been used to assess achievement against predetermined indicator thresholds, and they have been used to assess success of specific strategic initiatives.

Core Theme 1 – Promote Student Success

Objectives for Core Theme 1 and associated programs and investments are displayed in the self-evaluation, and it appears these programs and investments have been instrumental in moving toward meeting the objectives. Some examples, such as the hiring of additional faculty members, establishment of a Writing Center, and the re-introduction of a Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, are described as enhancements to Promoting Student Success. Thus, even without a fully integrated and coherent core theme planning process, several strategic initiatives have been linked to fulfillment of Core Theme 1. The Course Assistants (CA) program is a particularly powerful example of how the institution is intentionally implementing student success support and collecting assessment evidence on that approach, to the extent that a peer-reviewed publication highlighting its accomplishments is in press. Institutional research data combined with student surveys have helped identify courses in which to place CAs. Tracking of the number and type of interactions between students and CAs has been used to demonstrate how the key interactions between students and CAs outside of class have had positive influence on GPA, retention, and DFWI rates.

Core Theme 2 – Foster Educational Opportunity

Planning for the Foster Educational Opportunity Core Theme was described in the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. Although the planning document does not specifically address the three core theme objectives, the planned programs and services align with them. As stated in the self-evaluation, the alignment between NSC's programs/ services and core themes does not always stem from an explicit consultation of the strategic plan.

Of the 27 initiatives associated with Core Theme 2, nearly all were aligned to the core theme objectives, and show progress, with almost half achieved. However, there is misalignment between the initiatives mentioned as examples of programs and services associated with the core theme objectives. For example, touted as core theme objective accomplishments, but not mentioned in the strategic planning document, are the separation of the Admissions and Recruitment office from the Registrar's office, new administrative positions and offices, and some of the new academic programs. Overall, the planning for Core Theme 2 objectives appears efficient, but it remains unclear how some of the programs and services emerged from the planning process. Discussions with the NSC community members responsible for and affected by these changes recognized the value and importance of the change given institutional context.

The metrics for Core Theme 2 are well aligned to the objectives, and based on an understanding that the core theme refers to college participation and college completion. The objectives have metrics that address recruiting diverse students, retaining students, and graduating students across all programs. These metrics directly address what may be considered key performance indicators, given concerns about low retention and graduation rates in the past. *Compliment: The data and their distribution for most Core Theme 2 indicators are institutional and shared by a small but very efficient and effective Institutional Research office, whose work is applauded. Concern: The data used to assess outcomes may not provide sufficient support for future decision-making.* For example, with so many new initiatives to support retention initiatives by the institution, it is unclear which ones have stronger effects and should be continued, and which are perhaps redundant or unnecessary and could be eliminated.

Core Theme 3 – Strengthen the Community

The definition of Core Theme 3, Strengthen the Community, did not appear to be adequately developed and clarified, making identification of meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement challenging. Stated objectives were means to accomplishing other larger more meaningful goals, rather than the objectives.

The initial planning for selection of programs and services to ensure accomplishment of Core Theme 3 objectives was insufficient and not conveyed to the new Vice President of College and Community Engagement upon establishment of that position. Therefore, little was done in development of core theme objectives or assessment of indicators in the ensuing years. However, since the objectives of Core Theme 3 resonate with over-arching principles of the college to 'exert a meaningful impact on the lives of our (NSC) students and the community', they were reflected to some degree in the 2015 to 2020 Strategic Plan goals. *Concern: The community engagement and diversity team has an extremely broad and diverse span of responsibilities regarding internal and external community engagement, relations, and development. This could lead to a lack of planning, assessment, and improvement efforts.*

Standard 4.A and 4.B – Assessment and Improvement

The core themes are aligned with indicators and outcomes that are based on a rich array of qualitative and quantitative data, collected for various measures on different cycles. The student program learning outcome assessment process, which appears to be separate from core theme

assessment, was redesigned in 2016 as a single-day event in which program faculty a) select program outcomes to assess, b) identify assignments in lower and upper-division classes, c) develop rubrics to perform the targeted assessments, d) interpret the results, e) create action plans to address any needed changes, and f) write up final reports. The results are sent to the provost's office, where key proficiency (from the upper-division course) and improvement (difference in lower and upper-division courses) data are derived. The assessment of embedded assignments for student learning outcomes makes this a valuable and meaningful process, although the Evaluation Team heard that it is more time-consuming than a one-day event suggests. There are meaningful faculty discussions and coordination to benchmark the 4-point assessment scale (from 1 /unsatisfactory to 4 /excellent). However, the samples of student performance are often small and inferences about successes and failures difficult to justify. Although comparisons are made over time in proficiency and improvement data, it is not always clear that changes are attributed to the early action plans, suggesting that there is no "closing the loop." *Compliment: For the work of the Institutional Research office which makes available numerous useful dashboards. Concern: There is little documentation of the comparison of performance over time, or in some cases, to "close the loop" in program and student learning assessments.*

Continuous improvement across the NSC campus appears to be a fundamental, institutional way of being. However, as noted in Evaluation Team comments, improvement initiatives are not directly linked to assessment of core themes. There are many examples of quality assessment leading to significant program and service improvements, especially with regard to student learning and academic program development. Because assessment is not ongoing and systematic, mission and core theme driven program and service improvements are not always supported by the budgeting process and, therefore, are not awarded the funds for implementation. Alternatively, supported and realized improvements are not always informed by meaningful assessment of core themes, mission fulfillment and institutional effectiveness. The somewhat detached, strategic planning process appears to be the primary source of improvement initiatives.

Core Theme 1 – Promote Student Success

Assessment: Several data sources have been identified for assessing fulfillment of Core Theme 1 objectives, including program outcome assessments, student self-reports, external assessments (e.g., ATI), licensure pass rates, and mean student evaluation ratings. Based upon the evidence in the self-evaluation report and from interviews with faculty and administrators, results from these assessments are used at the unit level to make changes and develop programmatic initiatives. The goals of such change are to ensure the viability of programs and to enhance student learning and success.

Based on interviews with faculty members, it is clear that the faculty are dedicated to program and learning outcomes assessment and are actively using assessment evidence within their programs. However, faculty members did not identify use of program assessment activities in a broader institutional context. Rather, the picture that emerged was of a more spontaneous, innovative, and entrepreneurial use of assessment information by programs in collaboration with other campus units to enhance student success. *Compliment: A culture of innovation and experimentation is prevalent among faculty and staff.*

The hiring of an adjunct coordinator is one example of an institutional capacity decision that was informed by the synthesis of program assessment data. Faculty did not seem aware of this decision-making process and noted a lack of clarity regarding decision-making and the allocation of resources. There is a sense, however, that with the implementation of the new strategic plan, resource requests will be more formalized and tied to the strategic plan. In addition to these unit assessments, the Board of Regents requires program reviews in the 1st, 3rd, and 5th years of all new programs, with reviews of each major every 10 years.

A system also exists for assessment of individual courses based on learning objectives. One in-class review of every full-time instructor is required every year, and student course evaluations are collected. Based on reports from faculty members, these evaluations are useful in highlighting what does and does not work, and in stimulating change in individual courses.

Improvement: NSC indicates that it is very interested in increasing student success. Several examples of improvement in individual programs and in college level activities were provided. At the program level, improvements in English, criminal justice, environmental and resource science, history, math, and psychology, were cited. At the college level, an investment in the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE), focused on professional development opportunities for full and part-time faculty, was stimulated by assessment results. The development of a new major pathway in human health services to support pre-nursing students who are unable to matriculate into nursing programs, is an example of how the institution is working to meet the specific needs of students and accommodate its rapid and significant growth.

NSC also appears to understand many of its challenges, such as sufficient course availability and degree pathways to meet the needs of its growing, diverse student body. There are good examples where NSC has used assessment data to meet some of its challenges. For example, the intentional planning around the recruitment of students to foster the diversity of the institution has been accompanied by parallel support to ensure inclusion of those students once they matriculate into NSC. The Office of College and Community Engagement provides a liaison to every themed student group to support effectiveness of those groups, and the Diversity and Inclusion Task force meets monthly to foster inclusive practice across the institution. There is also an awareness of the importance of continuing to diversify the faculty, providing role models to enhance student success. While NSC has identified several examples of how assessment activities and results have led to change and improvement, the college reports it has partially achieved the objectives established for Core Theme 1.

A challenge identified by the Evaluation Team was an inability to assess the core curriculum. Student learning outcomes with defined levels of performance have been developed, but there is little cohesion or shared understanding around the learning outcomes in the core. The core curriculum review teams identified a variety of issues from use of cursory indicators that did not clearly address the learning outcome, to faculty misunderstanding the learning outcome, to poor mapping of the core so upper division courses are being taken by first year students.

Based on dissatisfaction with the current core curriculum, planning for a new core is just beginning. It is clear from the assessment reports of student learning outcomes (critical thinking,

communication, and effective citizenship) that faculty do not have a shared understanding of how their courses in the core contribute to the greater whole, particularly with regard to learning outcomes. While some faculty have acknowledged these shortcomings and have prioritized a redesigned core in the most recent strategic plan, there is not shared engagement around a redesign. The institution has taken advantage of participation in an AAC&U institute and planning around LEAP outcomes as well as state-level interest in the WICHE passport model, to consider possible mechanisms for core redesign. The strategy by which this redesign is to take place is still coalescing, and it does not appear, based on campus interviews, to be intentionally inclusive of the broader institution. It does not appear as if reviews taking place at the disciplinary program level will feed into the redesign of the core, though there is some faculty-driven exploration of interdisciplinary integration. At a grassroots level, several programs have collaborated to develop linked learning communities as a result of their assessment activities, but this has been more spontaneous and individualized than intentional across the institution. Though the impact of the learning communities on student success has not been assessed, this nonetheless highlights the innovative and collaborative nature of the faculty.

While assessment activities and results have stimulated change and improvement in the learning environment, and presumed to enhance student success, greater alignment with all levels of strategic planning and budgeting would strengthen assessment processes. In addition, integrated results of assessment need to be manifest in determination of mission fulfillment. To date, such integration and summation has not been achieved.

Core Theme 2 – Foster Educational Opportunity

Assessment: The three objectives of the Foster Educational Opportunity Core Theme 2 are assessed with key indicators focused on recruitment, support, retention, timely degree completion, and graduation of diverse students. Many of these indicators are available on Tableau dashboards and distributed widely. The thresholds are often based on growth over time, although there is no explanation or justification for thresholds. For example, the benchmark of a 2% increase year-over-year in student use of student support services is not explained and may have resulted from many reasons, in addition to the objectives denoted in Core Theme 2. Although the threshold was exceeded, it remains a challenge to know why.

There is little “closing the loop” on the assessments of Core Theme 2 objectives. Closing the loop is central for understanding whether planned initiatives are the source of changes in metrics and achievement of thresholds. For example, the improvement of Core Theme 2 indicators of retention, course completion, student use and satisfaction with support services and program graduation (and achievement of some) may well have resulted from strengthening of Academic and Student Support programs. This lack of loop-closing is particularly concerning in academic program assessment, which addresses a different program outcome in different classes in each cycle, making the historical comparison within or across programs in improvement or in proficiency scores, difficult to interpret or assess.

Core Theme 2 objectives have received substantial institutional attention, particularly those related to enrollment and retention. However, the Evaluation Team heard in several meetings that institutional attention needs to turn to throughput and completion, which is believed to result

in increasing the graduation rate across programs and students, and lowering the “super senior” rate. The new 2020-2015 strategic plan is focused on the range of initiatives that will move the needle on Core Theme 2 indicator thresholds. Senior administrators shared their intention to “work the plan,” by intentionally and deliberately focusing efforts on planning, prioritizing, budgeting, and implementing plan-based initiatives.

Finally, the data infrastructure at the institution provides a rich set of metrics by which to perform assessments and to evaluate their assessment process. However, it may be that some core theme indicators and thresholds have outlived their usefulness. As an example, it is unclear how much lower course completion rates can go, or student service use raise.

Improvement: The Core Theme of Foster Educational Opportunity is assessed largely by quantitative data aligned to the three objectives. Some indicators are more directly relevant to the core theme’s central focus of ensuring college access and completion of minority students. Most metrics were a basis for identifying a need for programs and services described in the 2015-2020 strategic plan (e.g., expanding academic support), and others were more opportunistic rather than being part of the strategic planning process (e.g., the gateway to completion program). The allocation of resources is aligned with the identified need for programs and services, but not always in transparent ways. For example, the newly created criminal justice and engineering technology programs were identified as fulfilling the Core Theme 2 “graduation” objective, although they were not part of the 2015-2020 strategic plan, their funding source was not explained, and their impact on the objective is not specifically assessed. These programs were prioritized over other programs that remain unfunded at this time (e.g., data science).

There are some cases where student learning assessment informed academic and learning-support planning and practices relevant to Core Theme 2. The need for peer mentors and additional training for faculty in gateway courses was based on high DWF1 rates in those classes. The Evaluation Team also learned that the hiring of a School of Liberal Arts & Sciences Adjunct Coordinator was based directly on student learning outcomes assessment. The coordinator fills the gap in managing adjunct instructor’s expectations of and best practices for teaching and assessing NSC students.

Core Theme 3 – Strengthen the Community

Assessment: Assessment for Core Theme 3 was not ongoing or systematic. Due to a change in administration and also a lack of clarity in Core Theme 3 assessment, the process was not systematically carried out over the past seven years. Assessment did occur once in the last seven years, and only for some of the indicators. Three useful surveys of faculty/ staff, alumni, and community partner engagement were conducted, resulting in data yet to be applied in the creation of action plans. Baselines were not established and to all results were applicable to the assessment plan. Data on percentage change of graduates in high demand career fields from 2011 to 2018 were available. However, a more meaningful analysis may have been to compare the percentage of NSC graduates in high demand fields to state job openings in those same areas. The alumni survey focused on an increase in those completing the survey, rather than on the percentage of graduates that remained in Nevada for their first job, a stated Core Theme 3 indicator. In 2018 survey of community partners, respondents did rate NSC’s efforts as

‘moderately’ or ‘very’ impactful. However, specific NSC contributions/ impacts were not identified, so means of improvement are not clear.

A holistic approach to evaluation of alignment, correlation, and integration of programs, services, planning, resources, capacity, practices, and assessment with respect to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of its programs or services, was not evident for Core Theme 3. The office of College and Community engagement is in the process of reviewing its assessment processes to ensure they appraise authentic achievements and yield meaningful results that lead to improvement.

Improvement: Core Theme 3 did not include objectives or indicators focused on academic programs or services. However, future plans for community engagement include development of specific initiatives, and more academic-related programs, such as internships. During interviews with campus personnel, it was stated that Core Theme 3 objectives 1 & 3 were more like exploratory activities to determine what was happening regarding community engagement, and less an advanced process of improving planned programming and services. Objective 2 was an assessment of graduates produced in high demand fields. An assessment of graduates who planned to stay to work in Nevada was not completed.

Developments and improvements were not based on survey data over the seven years because the engagement surveys were conducted once, in 2018, under new leadership. The Core Theme 3 survey results were shared on campus, however, the results were not made available to the public or community partners. Action plans for improvements based on these surveys are underway. A more intentional plan of engagement and mutually beneficial relationships with the community are included in the 2020-25 Strategic Plan.

Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability

5.A — Mission Fulfillment

As noted in Standard 1, NSC defines mission fulfillment in terms of acceptable levels of performance in each of the four key elements of the mission. The key elements, also called objectives, are delineated by 11 specific measurable indicators. For each indicator, a quantitative measure is applied (0=not fulfilled; 1=partially fulfilled; 2=fulfilled), which yields 22 possible points. Three ranges for the total score have been established which reflect varying degrees of mission fulfillment, based on institutional context: below 14 – not acceptably fulfilled; 14-18 – acceptably fulfilled; and 19-22 – substantially fulfilled. The mission fulfillment summary found in the self-evaluation reports a total score of 18/22.

The excellence and innovation in teaching objective has 5 indicators. Two are rated as a two/2 [NSSE items about quality of educational experience and participation in high impact practices]; three earned a score of one/1 [degree program learning outcomes assessment (student performance on lower division courses to upper division courses and 70% of artifacts are rated as proficient or better), and NSSE item about emphasis on being an informed and active citizen]. For the student success element, one indicator earned a one/1 [6-year graduation rates] and one received a two/2 [proportion of students completing gateway math/ English in first year]. The

two key indicators for element educational opportunity scored a two/2 [affordability and enrollment growth of underrepresented groups]. Finally, the community contributions indicators each earned a two/2 [graduate employment and economic impact measured by community partner survey]. In total, of the 22 indicators, four/4 earned a score of one/1 and seven/7 rated a two/2, for a total of 18 of 22 points, indicating NSC's mission is acceptably fulfilled.

NSC has identified three (3) core themes, Promote Student Success, Foster Educational Opportunity and Strengthen the Community. The self-evaluation states that the core themes define the goals NSC hopes to achieve. Each of the core themes is measured by discrete objectives reflecting the essential elements of the theme, serving to 'ultimately interpret the fulfillment of our mission.' Core Theme 1, Promote Student Success has four/4 objectives and a total of 12 indicators; Foster Educational Opportunity has three/3 objectives and 11 indicators, and there are seven/7 indicators for theme Strengthen the Community. For each indicator, levels of achievement are listed. Examples include, increase FTE by an average of 5% annually, maintain 90% NCLEX pass rate, and increase the number of alumni complete employment surveys by 10% each year.

As is noted throughout this narrative, it was unclear in the self-evaluation and to the Evaluation Team during the campus visit, how the core themes and key elements of the strategic plan fit together to affirm mission fulfillment. The Evaluation Team found limited evidence that indicators and threshold of achievement are relevant and meaningful, of an integrated institutional approach to assessment, and few examples of institution-wide improvements based on assessment results. There did not seem to be an institution level structure to provide sufficient direction and oversight to facilitate authentic and meaningful assessment, analysis, and reflection, in support of improvement. However, there is evidence that the college is invested in data informed decisions.

5.B — Adaptation and Sustainability

The institution has spent the past several years planning and implementing the build out of the campus facilities and infrastructure to meet the increased student population and need, as discussed in previous sections. The tools of the annual budget, facilities master plan, comprehensive enrollment, revenue, and cash flow projections have enabled the institution to achieve its goals and routinely report on the progress made. The institution reports regularly to the Chancellor and the Board of Regents about the adequacy of its resources, capacity, and effectiveness of operations. The Board of Regents confirmed this flow of information and its support and approval of the institution's reports.

Recently the institution revised its strategic plan, creating a number of committees to help evaluate and document planning, resource allocation, and capacity. However, constituents in open forum expressed concern about processes and how programs, the strategic plan, and assessment data will relate to resource allocation. *Concern: The institution should build on existing program assessment efforts to support future institution-level planning and resource allocation.*

The institution has identified emerging trends, patterns, and expectations as demonstrated by its creative, nimble and innovative approach to the development of programs, resources, and infrastructure. The institution has also identified the need for an updated strategic plan to focus and coordinate campus efforts. *Compliment: The institution has a culture of innovation and experimentation prevalent among faculty and staff.*

Summary

NSC is a successful institution that serves the higher education needs of a diverse population of students within its service region and throughout the state. Like many institutions, it has suffered from large cuts to its state appropriated funding. NSC staff and faculty are resilient in the face of tremendous growth and change, including significant leadership changes. The institution is to be commended for staying true to its mission during a time of unprecedented growth, ensuring a pervasive climate that prioritizes and promotes success of its diverse student body.

As NSC moves into the future, it is well postured to develop meaningful measures of student and institutional success, and to create and engage assessment processes leading to improvement. With its enthusiastic institutional leadership, the institution is on a good course for the future. *Compliment: Senior administrators, faculty and staff work well together.*

Commendations, and Recommendations

The Evaluation Team commends Nevada State College for:

1. remaining true to its mission during a time of unprecedented growth, ensuring a pervasive climate that prioritizes and promotes success of its diverse student body.
2. its intentional development and implementation of key student success initiatives and services, particularly for first year students.
3. its Marydean Martin Library for fulfilling its mission by providing a responsive network of services and for its use of evidence-based measurements to create a student-centric learning environment.
4. its excellent and well-maintained physical and technological infrastructure.

The Evaluation Team recommends Nevada State College:

1. develop meaningful objectives and indicators of mission fulfillment that align to the institution's mission and goals [Standard 1.B.2.].
2. create a comprehensive system of assessment that builds on existing program assessment efforts and supports future institution-level planning and resource allocation [Standard 4.A.1; 4.A.5.].