

Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (Year 7)

Peer-Evaluation Report

Western Nevada College

Carson City, Nevada

April 2-4, 2025

NWCCU Liaison to the Peer Evaluation Team:

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

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I. Introduction

A four (4)-person peer evaluation team conducted a Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) visit to Western Nevada College from April 2-4, 2025, in response to the *Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report* submitted by the College to NWCCU on February 5, 2025. The comprehensive visit covered Standard One, and Standard Two with particular attention paid to standards identified as needing follow-up from the Year-Six Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) report, specifically 2.C.4, 2.G.2, and 2.G.3.

Western Nevada College (WNC) is a comprehensive community college serving transfer students and those pursuing professional education and lifelong learning opportunities. WNC offers Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS), Associate/ transfer (AA, AB, AS), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), certificates of achievement, and skills certificates, along with dual enrollment courses in regional schools. As one of eight institutions in the Nevada System of Higher Education (NHSE), WNC is charged with addressing local community and workforce needs within a large geographic area.

II. Assessment of Self-Evaluation and Support Materials

The 78-page self-evaluation report was well-written and described the institution and the initiatives in which it is engaged. The report also included extensive links to supporting documentation that was easy to access remotely and elaborated and clarified the text of the report.

III. Visit Summary

The evaluation team met with members of the Western Nevada College community in meetings over the three-day visit, including with college senior leadership, directors/managers, and one member of the Board of Regents. The team held forums with faculty, staff, and students. The team toured campus facilities and the Fallon , NV, distant site/ additional location.

The evaluation team thanks all involved for their hard work, support, and engagement in this review process. We particularly appreciated the responsiveness of Accreditation Liaison Officer, Geraldine Pope in responding to team questions and requests for documents, as well as the hospitality and transportation coordinated by Senior Executive Assistant, Tracy Mendibles, and her team.

Student government leaders ushered evaluation team members to all meetings, and participated in the opening meeting, the student forum, and the student leadership meeting. In all cases, the students were thoughtful, poised, professional, and exemplary representatives of WNC, leaving the team extremely impressed.

IV. Topics Addressed as an Addendum to the Self-Evaluation Report

NWCCU requests that the EIE Evaluation Committee members review and discuss policies and procedures related to Distance Education with institutional representatives. WNC has a robust menu of online, hybrid, and mixed-modality courses, aligned with its educational programs and general education requirements. In the self-evaluation report, WNC affirmed that a student who enrolls in a course or program of any format, is the same student who completes the course and earns credit. This was confirmed in meetings with institutional staff, faculty, and administration. It was shared with the evaluation team that multi-factor authentication will soon be implemented for campus constituents, including students at all instructional locations, further assuring the accuracy of student identity, particularly in online courses. Faculty, staff, and students adhere to WNC's Distance Education Online Policy, which conforms to the NSHE's Distance Education policy. The institutional policy outlines clear procedures for faculty-student online interaction and verification of student identity associated with exams taken online, in the testing center, and at proctoring sites. In some cases, online proctoring through a third party is utilized. Every three years, online courses are peer-reviewed to assure conformance with best practices and that outcomes, content, and student achievement indicators are aligned across sections and instructional modalities. Faculty affirmed satisfaction with these processes. Students are notified of associated technology / distance education charges through the current year registration fees and tuition web page.

V. Standard 1: Student Success and Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

a. Standard 1.A: Institutional Mission

i. 1.A.1

1.A.1 The institution's mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement.,

WNC has developed a mission statement that is approved by and aligns with that of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). The mission of contributing "to solutions for the 21st century by providing effective educational pathways for the students and communities of Nevada" provides direction for the college and its educational programs. WNC's values of being student-centered, inquiry-driven, and data-informed, support the mission, as do NSHE's goals of increasing access to higher education, improving student success, closing institutional performance gaps, meeting workforce needs in Nevada, increasing solutions-focused research, and ensuring system coordination, accountability, and transparency. Further, the college's strategic plan goals align with the institutional mission.

The mission statement, which affirms the institutional commitment to student learning and achievement, is viewed as the institution's touchstone and as containing its guiding principles. It is regularly reviewed in campus forums. In meetings and forums, students, staff, and faculty demonstrated understanding of and pride in the tenets of the mission.

Commendation: The evaluation team commends the institution for living its mission to provide effective education pathways for the students and communities of Nevada.

Specifically, the institution is commended for its outreach to rural Nevada, strong dual credit partnerships, partnerships with local industry and a 92% job placement rate.

b. Standard 1.B: Improving Institutional Effectiveness

i. 1.B.1

1.B.1 The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement.

The institution's planning and evaluation process, launched each spring when leadership reviews the previous year's goals and outcomes and sets new goals for the following year, is well defined and appears to be uniformly and effectively implemented. The process itself is simultaneously both top-down and bottom-up; the executive leadership team establishes a focus document each year based, in part, on the goals and areas of emphasis shared by the Nevada State Higher Education (NSHE) board. From that document, individual units establish ground-level goals and plans. These plans are reviewed and revised annually and are purposefully aligned to both the institution's goals and the performance evaluation processes for individual employees. Multiple units and offices confirmed for evaluators that the process is clear, facilitates forward progress and that plans align with larger institutional goals.

While annual planning activities, both for units and individual employees, appear to be working well, longer-range planning, as the institution has acknowledged, is somewhat on hold. Several reasons were given for this, including leadership changes and subsequent changes to goals at the system level. Going forward, WNC may consider establishing shorter-term plans; this can help the entire campus community clearly understand the mission and its role(s) in supporting it.

For academic programs, there is a five-year program review cycle that is comprehensive, and includes information about program quality, effectiveness, efficiency and demand. Reports provided by faculty are detailed and thoughtful. Recent and planned changes will provide additional staff and data support for future cycles of program review, with the intention of allowing faculty input to be more focused on how programs are aligned with the institution's goals, and on how well programs are serving the students and their needs.

Within the newly proposed process, a significant role is proposed for the position of Program Review Support Specialist, including collecting data, drafting the review with input from faculty, reviewing the drafts, presenting the findings to the curriculum committee to implement any needed curricular updates, then to college council and then back to the program's division. While this level of involvement represents an admirable commitment, this unified role could diminish the effectiveness of the process in terms of ensuring programs understand their own data and are regularly assessing and reflecting on changes to the overall program structure, not just individual courses within the program. When led and deeply engaged by program faculty, program review can prove to

be a highly effective strategy to ensure that data are used to improve student learning and achievement and to assist the college in assigning resources.

Compliment: The annual planning process, established in 2022, is comprehensive and effective. Numerous faculty and staff members spoke to its value and how it provides structure and focus to their work.

ii. 1.B.2

1.B.2 The institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions.

Following the mid-cycle visit, WNC engaged in efforts to establish a clear definition of mission fulfillment with supporting targets. WNC's definition of mission fulfillment is based on the attainment of a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned to the four broad goals set by NSHE, access, success, closing the achievement gap, and workforce demand. Benchmarks are set annually, and performance is tracked and communicated broadly back to the institution and to the public via dashboards. The four goals are tied to the institutional mission of contributing to solutions for the 21st century by providing effective educational pathways for the students and communities of Nevada. The goals also serve to meaningfully assess progress toward fulfillment of the mission, vision, and values espoused by WNC.

The indicators of success, e.g., the KPIs, are themselves meaningful and, in the case of the graduation rate KPI, reviewed in comparison with several peer institutions. Evaluators heard a few times during the visit of conversations around the usefulness of these KPIs going forward. For instance, the use of IPEDS data was felt by some constituents to be less relevant to the WNC context, since the institution typically enrolls large numbers of part time students and has a significant number of students who stop out and later return.

An issue that emerged during the visit was apparent inconsistency around data definitions. WNC has some clear definitions required for its submissions to IPEDS and to NSHE for high-level institution-wide indicators such as retention and graduation. However, several other types of data, and especially program-level indicators, appear to be measured by different groups with different definitions of "program." This was echoed by key staff members and faculty when they discussed their efforts around processes such as program review, assessment of course-level learning outcomes, and how they might assess the program learning outcomes. In a few meetings, individuals expressed difficulty in gaining access to data they need to conduct assessment and review activities. Yet, others offered praise and appreciation to various employees for their responsiveness in providing data.

The institution will need clarity and consistency around data definitions since there is a new institutional data warehouse, and because it appears that multiple staff members may be accessing and using the data going forward. Similarly, the institution will need

clarity around how it will define and report internally on such issues as online programs, dual enrollment participation rates, and distance sites.

It is also unclear the extent to which indicators, beyond the graduation rate, are set or are evaluated more broadly against the regional or national peers. In some conversations with evaluators, institutional staff described NSHE institutions as a peer group, in other settings, the peer list was different and included institutions outside of Nevada. Evaluators noted staff seemed unclear or that it appeared to not be widely understood what peer set is considered regional and what set is national, or how peers were selected. Several WNC employees noted that comparison to many of the larger Nevada or other largely urban institutions might be problematic given that WNC primarily serves rural communities.

The institution's report did not provide evidence that WNC is regularly using a defined set of regional or national peer institutions to help set or refine goals or metrics associated with the institution's mission fulfillment plans. Additionally, evaluators were unable to locate any peer institutions or peer data on WNC's public website. WNC could consider using its next strategic plan process to engage stakeholders in conversations around both regional and national peers. WNC should select, widely share, and regularly use the selected peers to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness.

Concern: WNC lacks clear and consistent data definitions for several key indicators, and in some cases faculty or staff who must access data are currently unable to do so reliably.

Concern: Peer institution data is not widely available, nor is it regularly used to help set or refine goals and metrics.

iii. 1.B.3

1.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

Evaluators heard in a variety of campus meetings that WNCs process, particularly its annual planning process, is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies. Both faculty and staff expressed that they have the opportunity for input on both the front end of building the plan and in the review and reset phase.

The institution's report did not provide clear evidence of how the planning process links to resource allocation. Evaluators sought clarification in multiple settings, and in some cases, faculty and staff were unable to explain how planning and evaluation are tied to resource allocation. In other meetings and particularly in meetings with various campus leaders, examples were provided of how requests submitted to the budget committee flow from the annual planning cycle, and how the executive team has reallocated internally or found external support for improvements or new initiatives.

The creation of the role of Program Review Support Specialist, for example, was cited as a direct response to the annual planning and evaluation cycle. Evaluators learned that multiple offices identified gaps in mental health support (for students, faculty, and staff) following the pandemic. Inclusion in annual plans led to increased resources being allocated, including an online chat tool to assist students with basic mental health counseling. Similarly, the Esports area was established to foster more engagement and offer options for incoming students whose high school Esports teams had been particularly successful. When the plan was assessed at the end of the AY23-24 year, utilization rates were low. The goal was deemed to be worthwhile, so more time, attention, and communication were needed to ensure students were aware of and more likely to use the space. A new plan was established and now in its second year, student utilization has improved significantly. Student surveys conducted by the institution and feedback from the student government revealed gaps in career support, leading to recent investments within the college and career readiness unit to establish a more formal career service for students.

Numerous examples of the process exist, but still knowledge of these processes was inconsistent, depending on the group. WNC could benefit from more detailed and transparent information about how unspent funds and unfilled budget lines are selected and used for reallocation, and how the priorities forwarded through both the enrollment management committee and the budget committee are evaluated for additional funding.

As noted above, the description of and several examples from the annual planning process provide clear evidence that it improves institutional effectiveness. Because the process is aligned with institutional mission and goals and flows from the executive team downward through the entire college, it effectively moves WNC forward. It allows for annual adjustments as needed in response to changes in the environment.

Compliment: The annual planning process is an effective mechanism to align efforts to improve institutional effectiveness.

iv. 1.B.4

1.B.4 The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals.

The institution utilizes various methods and means for monitoring internal and external environments through the work of its advisory bodies, committees, and shared governance groups (the Faculty Senate, Administrative Faculty Senate, Classified Council, and Associated Students of Western Nevada), as well as the high degree of external civic and community engagement of its leadership.

Internally, WNC utilizes a series of standing committees, each with a well-defined mission and scope, and each of which is designed to represent broad and appropriate constituencies within the institution. Through its shared governance committee structure, all students, staff, and faculty have representation and a defined process for providing input and feedback to executive leadership regarding the internal campus environments. The evaluation team found evidence in multiple conversations, that leaders of these groups feel they have full access to share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions with leadership, that their input is valued and respected, and that leaders are responsive, including occasionally taking steps to revise plans, intended outcomes, and indicators. For example, student governance leaders expressed appreciation for how the president and the leadership team have responded to their requests for increased career support; faculty governance leaders likewise expressed appreciation for the monthly meetings they have with the president and vice president.

During the visit, numerous faculty and staff provided examples of efforts to monitor external environments and to respond to a rapidly changing state economy and national higher education context. The ad hoc enrollment management committee has an ongoing process for monitoring economic and labor trends. WNC also convenes numerous advisory bodies, especially for its career and technical programs, to seek input from industry representatives from the local communities served by the college. WNC faculty and staff also shared examples of how they regularly connect with colleagues at other Nevada institutions to share information, ideas, or resources.

As Nevada and the local economy continue to diversify, WNC's executive team has gone out of its way to engage with local business, economic, and civic organizations, so that they remain abreast of changes. Similarly, the college's deep engagement with the six local county governments and the nine local school districts in its region ensures that WNC is part of a pipeline that can fulfill its mission of contributing to solutions for the 21st century through its educational programs and numerous partnerships. The tight alignment between local workforce needs and the programs and services offered by the college is demonstrated, in part, through its exceptional 92% job placement rate.

c. Standard 1.C: Student Learning

i. 1.C.1

1.C.1 The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and include designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

WNC offers certificates, associates, and bachelor's degrees that align with the institutional mission of providing effective pathways Nevada's students and communities. The content, designators, and rigor of the programs offered are consistent with nationally recognized fields of study for college-level degrees and certificates. Several programs, such as welding

and nursing, currently meet the quality standards required by specialized accrediting agencies.

An NSHE academic degree proposal form guides new program development, with academic directors, faculty, the budget office, and relevant community members consulted throughout the process. Learning outcomes are established for each newly developed course or program, and several processes are in place to ensure learning is consistent at the various levels of achievement. NSHE maintains a common course numbering system that includes common course descriptions and learning outcomes.

ii. 1.C.2

1.C.2 The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.

All programs, certificates and degrees include student learning outcomes, which are published in the program guide and on the website. The curriculum for all degrees and certificates identifies the necessary sequencing of courses to provide students the appropriate content and synthesis of learning as they successfully progress through the curriculum. WNC's 5-year program review cycle and process ensure programs remain current and relevant and contain an appropriate breadth and depth and learning expectations for the credential being awarded. Alignment with the institutional learning outcomes also is expected. Programs have outlines for each course, and with the recent adoption of a curriculum management system, faculty and staff can effectively track when course outlines have been reviewed or updated. When course outlines are sent to the Curriculum Committee, close attention is given to the objectives to ensure they are appropriate. Program development or revisions to existing programs are faculty-driven.

iii. 1.C.3

1.C.3 The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students.

The institution publishes program learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials in the program guide and makes available to current and prospective students on the website. The program guide and the website are updated annually and as needed to reflect changes. Student learning objectives for all courses are included in the course outlines, which are shared with enrolled students as a required component of course syllabi.

iv. 1.C.4

1.C.4 The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public.

WNC's admission requirements are clearly defined and published on the admissions' website. Some programs maintain special admissions requirements which are located on the program pages in the catalog and on the website; special requirements are also included in the program's separate admission application.

Graduation requirements are published in the college catalog and on the graduation webpage. Students track their progress through the academic advisement report, which is also used by the Admissions and Records Office to review the files of students who have submitted a graduation application.

v. 1.C.5

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

Assessment of student learning at WNC is primarily focused on the course level. Full-time faculty are highly engaged in course-level assessment, which they describe as being organized and systematic. Faculty find the process meaningful and consider it a reflective exercise. Through meetings with faculty and in reports posted on the website, it is evident that the institution values the process of student learning assessment to improve course offerings and delivery. The evaluation team commends the institution for its well-developed faculty-led course-level assessment process that is organized, meaningful, and reflective.

As described earlier, the 5-year program review cycle is the primary method of assessment at the program level. During program review, course assessment data is considered along with student achievement data. While each program at WNC maintains program learning outcomes, the outcomes are not actively being engaged to measure student learning and achievement. The strong emphasis on course data and course-level assessment within the program review process may circumvent a connection between program learning outcomes and students' overall success relative to these outcomes.

Another challenge facing program review and program assessment of student learning is the high number of part-time faculty, with some programs being led and staffed entirely by part-time faculty. It was reported that part-time faculty involvement in the assessment of student learning is limited and sometimes even discouraged by the full-time faculty, due to the already heavy workload of part-time instructors.

Though the institution lacks a process for evaluating student learning against program outcomes, the creation of the Accreditation and Curriculum Management Coordinator position, the strong organization of and engagement with course-level assessment, and

the existence of program learning outcomes serve as a strong foundation from which to build a culture of program assessment.

Compliment: The institution created the Accreditation and Curriculum Management Coordinator position to help advance the work of program review.

Concern: The institution lacks a systematic process for evaluating student learning at the program level.

Concern: Though part-time faculty make up a sizable percentage of those who teach within programs at WNC, few are engaged in course or program level assessment. To fully establish and implement program level assessment, part-time faculty will need to play an active role.

vi. 1.C.6

1.C.6 Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy.

WNC maintains seven institutional student learning outcomes (ISLOs), which the College Council approved in the fall of 2024. The iterative process for developing and approving the ISLOs was inclusive, including faculty, the academic director of the Liberal Arts and Sciences division, the College Curriculum Committee, the College Council, and the broader campus community.

Assessment of the ISLOs is conducted through course-level assessment, relying on the alignment of course objectives with the ISLOs. The process for evaluating student learning for each ISLO is robust and comprehensive. Assessment plans are created by faculty and are included in full-time faculty annual plans. Reporting on the plans occurs through the Accreditation and Curriculum Management Coordinator's office and within individual faculty annual self-evaluation reports.

vii. 1.C.7

1.C.7 The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.

Evaluation of student learning focuses on course-level objectives as well as institutional student learning outcomes (ISLOs). Course-wide assessment examples demonstrate alignment to relevant ISLO(s). All full-time faculty conduct assessments on at least one course each academic year as part of their annual plan. The use of assessment results

informs changes to course outlines, changes within the course, and pedagogical changes and identifies areas of growth for faculty. As an example, data from these efforts have been used to strengthen the ISLO focused on communication. As science faculty were integrating ISLOs into their courses, a writing assignment was identified as being potentially useful as a learning tool. Through collaboration, science faculty integrated writing assignments into biology courses both to enhance student learning and as an artifact for ISLO communication assessment.

Student support programs and services create an annual plan that identifies intended assessment and evaluation efforts for the academic year. The collection of data consists of feedback from both national and homegrown surveys. The applicable data are collected, analyzed, and reported annually. The continuous nature of this process has been meaningful for staff serving in these areas. Compared to previous processes, this annual cycle is more useful, providing immediate feedback to implement necessary changes, including identifying resources that are needed. In one example shared with the evaluation team, a gap between student need/ interest and existing campus resources in the area of career and employer services was identified through surveys and anecdotal conversations with students. Resources were reallocated for staff positions and a dedicated space was identified.

viii. 1.C.8

1.C.8 Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.

WNC publishes clearly defined transfer of credit and prior learning policies on the Admissions & Records webpages and in the catalog. The policies provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality and are in line with NSHE's policies. Common course numbering provides a system-wide standardization that supports course transfer between Nevada institutions. All courses that are non-transferable or are transferable for a Bachelor of Applied Science degree only are identified for students and advisors during the registration process.

The appropriate forms and processes to implement these policies are clearly identified and published on the website. Qualified faculty and staff review student requests and ensure transfer credits and credits awarded for prior learning are appropriate for the student's program and are comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.

ix. 1.C.9

1.C.9 The institution's graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate

programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.

WNC does not offer graduate programs.

d. Standard 1.D: Student Achievement

i. 1.D.1

1.D.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.

WNC's open-access mission provides opportunities for dual enrollment, recent high school graduates, and adult learners. Recruitment strategies are strategic for each type of prospective student. For example, WNC recruits dual enrollment students through school district meetings, high school dual enrollment nights and events, classroom visits, concurrent enrollment options, CTE pathway options, and home school information sessions. WNC has also developed an app to make applying to the college on one's cell phone an easy process.

All first-time degree and certificate-seeking students attend a WNC orientation, and non-degree-seeking students have the option of attending orientation. Students may attend in-person or through Zoom; a self-paced Canvas orientation is also available. The college-level Wildcat Welcome Orientation introduces students to academic advising, student resources, financial aid, career exploration, and student responsibilities. Select programs offer additional student orientation requirements, such as the nursing and prison education programs. The aim of all orientation activities is to provide students with an understanding of student support services, academic requirements, and WNC tools. The development of orientation was informed by student and advisor feedback gathered through student surveys and staff meetings. During the student forum, students commented on the supportive and welcoming environment that WNC creates from campus tours, orientation, advising, the library and more. When students shared a pain point such as needing more information on the use of the Canvas learning management system, they paired it with the recommendation that how-to-use-Canvas information be included in campus-wide orientation sessions, and this was well received and now included.

Commendation: The institution is commended for its investment in student leadership and development consistent with its learning outcome of Career Preparation. Students present themselves with professionalism, poise, and are extraordinary representatives of Western Nevada College.

ii. 1.D.2

1.D.2 Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps).

As evidenced in the annual Mission Fulfillment Report, WNC's key performance indicator (KPI) data are appropriately disaggregated to assess student achievement and close equity gaps. The mission fulfillment report and associated data are shared with college leadership groups and with the broader campus community through all-college forums, email updates, and presentations at the conclusion and beginning of each academic year.

The 2023-24 Mission Fulfillment Report includes outcome data for KPI seven (7), Peer Institution Graduation Rates, displaying a comparison of 2023-24 graduation rates for WNC and five peer institutions. A threshold was set using the peer average graduation rate. The five peer institutions included in the data are not referenced in any other data or disaggregated data, such as persistence, retention, or postgraduation success.

Concern: Peer comparators are minimally used for graduation rates only. Expanded use of peer institutional data to include comparisons of persistence, retention, and postgraduation success, would assist with the promotion of student achievement and closing equity gaps.

iii. 1.D.3

1.D.3 The institution's disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely published and available on the institution's website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used for continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources.

The Institutional Research and Effectiveness office at WNC publishes disaggregated student achievement data through public dashboards and through its annual Mission Fulfillment Report. The dashboards are dynamic, and the data can be disaggregated. Some disaggregated data have been used to inform planning, decision-making and allocation of resources. For example, the Course Success Dashboard was used to identify a gap in placement measures, leading to revision of the measures and increased student achievement. As noted previously, peer institution data are not used in relation to disaggregated WNC data, except in the area of graduation rates. Further, through campus meetings, the evaluation team was unable to receive clarification on how thresholds for KPIs are determined.

Concern: WNC should articulate how thresholds are determined and should use peer institutions to help set meaningful thresholds.

iv. 1.D.4

1.D.4 The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity.

WNC's processes for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent, using a centralized and standardized approach to data collection and validation. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness maintains three key dashboards related to student achievement: the graduation dashboard, the course success dashboard, and the program evaluation dashboard. The institution has used these data to make decisions related to institutional planning. For example, the course success dashboard has been used to identify gaps in student achievement and improve instructional strategies. It was reported that an equity gap between Hispanic student enrollment and non-Hispanic student enrollment was identified; once disaggregated data were analyzed efforts to recruit Hispanic students were intensified resulting in a greater than expected enrollment for the 23-24 academic year.

VI. Standard 2: Governance, Resources, and Capacity

The following Standard 2 elements were specifically reviewed during the visit as either PRFR findings, items included in the self-evaluation report addenda, or as areas of interest resulting from meetings during the visit.

a. Standard 2.A: Governance

i. 2.A.1

2.A.1 The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

Western Nevada College is governed by the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents, which is given exclusive control and administration of institutions of higher education in the state of Nevada by the Constitution of the State. Duties of the Board of Regents are established in the Nevada State Constitution, including responsibility

for matters related to the business, finance, and facilities of NSHE institutions; academic, research, and student affairs; the enhancement, promotion, and support of inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible education environments; investment policies; health sciences education and research across health care disciplines; workforce-specific training programs; and reviews the policies, procedures, and best practices related to the maintenance of a secure campus environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. These matters are overseen via standing committees detailed in Article VI Sections 1-3 of the bylaws of the Board. The president of Western Nevada College, along with the presidents of the other institutions in the system, reports to and is accountable to the interim Chancellor for the administration of their institutions.

As directed by NRS 396.122 and included in Article III Section 8 of the Board of Regents bylaws, no member of the Board may benefit from earnings of funds from a system institution, nor may they hold an interest in, directly or indirectly, any contract or expenditure created by the Board, or in the profits or results thereof.

A member of Western Nevada College's faculty was elected to the NSHE Board of Regents, leading to an apparent conflict of interest as the faculty member holds an interest in expenditures of the Board related to faculty compensation and other funding for Western Nevada College. There is no law, statute, or bylaw that prohibits an employee of a NSHE institution from serving as a Regent; however, there is also no written conflict-of-interest policy to guide such Regents in lines of authority and responsibility vis-à-vis institutional autonomy in pursuit of mission.

Concern: The evaluation team is concerned that Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents lacks a comprehensive conflict-of-interest policy that provides the institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission, specifying the authority, roles, and responsibilities of Regents who are employed by an institution governed by NSHE.

ii. 2.A.4

2.A.4 The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.

Western Nevada College is student-centered in both word and deed. Students have access to administrative leadership, who listen to their needs with an open mind and respond with respect. Students feel free to share their concerns and advocate for their needs. In recent years, the University of Nevada Reno has created a food pantry to address food insecurity and repurposed a recreational space with gym equipment.

The library has made a point of greeting every student upon entry and created a family friendly study room to help all students feel welcome. College staff are responsive to students' needs, providing well supplied first aid kits in every building. The student center has ample space as well as snacks and beverages for students in addition to a comfortable, private space for nursing mothers.

Students report that staff are available, knowledgeable and helpful, a valiant feat given that many staff members are serving in multiple roles due to staff shortages. There are minimal wait times for academic advising, and the Veteran's Center is vibrant. Lines of communication between students, staff, faculty, and administration are open, creating a culture of trust that allows needs to be understood and met.

Commendation. The evaluation team commends the institution for its student-centeredness. Students are respected, have a significant say in institutional decisions, and can advocate for their needs. Examples abound: the library, a mobile-friendly app, advising, Student Life and more.

b. Standard 2.C: Policies and Procedures

i. 2.C.4

2.C.4 The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records.

During the PRFR review, evidence supporting reliable backup and retrievability of records was not found. Subsequently, the college has ensured that its policy is available and follows the NSHE procedures and guidelines for records retention, security, and retrievability. The evaluation team was particularly impressed with the multiple secure backup systems for data retrievability shared by the Information Technology Services, including in a wide variety of locations across the world and in the cloud.

c. Standard 2.D: Institutional Integrity

i. 2.D.1

2.D.1 The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

In reviewing the PRFR finding for 2.G.3, the evaluation team found a misalignment between the online program guide (<http://www.wnc.edu/academic-program-guide.php>), and the program descriptions on the web pages (<https://wnc.edu/areas/>). For example, the Collision Repair program is listed under "Certifications" as "Industry Certification Preparation Automotive Collision Repair", yet in the program guide, it is listed under "Skills Certificates." On the web page, it appears that this is a program leading to certification. In contrast, in the program guide, it is very clear that it is a short 8-week program providing the skills for a career in collision repair, for which certification is not required in Nevada.

In discussion with staff, it appears there is a lag between the updating of the program guide and the webpage; nonetheless, this misalignment leads to a lack of clarity for students. Western Nevada College clearly has every best intention and is managing with a

thin and dedicated staff; this oversight is not intentional. Nonetheless, it needs to be corrected to be fully in compliance with NWCCU standards.

Concern: The evaluation team is concerned that misalignment in descriptions of the programs on the website and in various publications could confuse and mislead students.

d. Standard 2.F: Human Resources

i. 2.F.4

2.F.4 Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement.

The faculty Professional Development Committee (PDC) has created a process for ushering junior faculty through the tenure process that is supportive and successful. Faculty know what is required to achieve tenure. The PDC assigns new tenure-line faculty an advocate as well as an ad hoc pre-tenure committee to guide faculty through their response to a set of established criteria. Faculty spoke with gratitude about the peer support and clarity of the process – to the degree that one faculty member saw the process as not merely bureaucratic, but valuable.

Commendation: The evaluation team commends the WNC faculty for creating a clear, meaningful, and supportive tenure process. Faculty know what is required to achieve tenure, and they have strong peer support that leads to success.

e. Standard 2.G: Student Support Resources

i. 2.G.2

2.G.2 The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.

During the PRFR review, the listing of faculty degrees and institutions was found to be insufficient. Western Nevada College has now ensured that faculty and administrators' qualifications, including institution and degree, are included in the campus directory.

ii. 2.G.3

2.G.3 Publications and other written materials that describe educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials.

Program requirements are described in several places on the Western Nevada College website. The PRFR review noted, however, that some programs did not provide the requirements for licensure or certification and if the program is meeting those requirements. In on-campus meetings, the evaluation team learned that only four programs require certification in Nevada, and Western Nevada College is working to ensure those requirements are included in the respective program descriptions.

The United States Department of Education, however, requires that information on certification or licensure be specified by state. While an institution is not obliged to meet all requirements for all states in all its programs, it is obliged to share whether each program offered by the institution meets those licensure or certification requirements.

Western Nevada College is a member of NC-SARA, and has provided a webpage with the state requirements by program: <https://wnc.edu/online-learning/state-requirements.php>. However, many of the links are broken, or do not reference specific states.

Concern: The evaluation team is concerned that certification and licensure requirements for programs offered are not available by state.

f. Standard 2.I: Physical and Technology Infrastructure

i. 2.I.1

2.I.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities and technology infrastructure that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services.

Western Nevada College, founded in 1971, has several buildings that are over fifty years old. New facilities' leaders are proactive regarding building maintenance and safety and have been successful in obtaining grants to improve some buildings. However, the formula used by NSHE to allocate funds for deferred maintenance is thin: \$500,000 every other year. This amount is wholly insufficient, leading to building closure that impedes Western Nevada College's ability to provide the facilities students need for their learning.

Concern: The evaluation team is concerned that the Board of Regents is not providing Western Nevada College with the financial resources necessary to ensure the safe upkeep of their buildings.

VII. Summary

Western Nevada College is a successful institution that serves the higher education needs of a diverse population of students within a large geographic service region. In the face of institutional and system leadership changes, WNC staff and faculty remain engaged and supportive of one another and the students. Across the institution, there is a strong commitment to student success and career preparation, evidenced by the professional and poised manner in which students present themselves. Students are extraordinary representatives of Western Nevada College.

The institution is to be commended for staying true to its mission through its campus-wide commitment to engagement with local and state industry.

As WNC moves into the future, it is well postured to develop meaningful and consistent data measures and effective program-level assessment processes leading to continuous improvement. With its current, well-respected president, the institution is on a good course for the future.

Compliment: Faculty, staff, and students express support for the president, including his regular, consistent, and clear communication with the campus community.

VIII. Commendations and Recommendations

a. Commendations

i. Commendation 1:

The peer evaluation team commends the institution for its well-developed, faculty led course-level assessment process that is organized, meaningful, and reflective.

ii. Commendation 2:

The peer evaluation team commends the institution for its annual planning process, which is comprehensive, and is initiated each year with assessment of appropriate data and other sources of information.

iii. Commendation 3:

The evaluation team commends the institution for living its mission to provide effective education pathways for the students and communities of Nevada. Specifically, the institution is commended for its outreach to rural Nevada, strong dual credit partnerships, partnerships with local industry, and a 92% job placement rate.

iv. Commendation 4:

The evaluation team commends the faculty of Western Nevada College for creating a clear, meaningful, and supportive tenure process. Faculty know what is required to achieve tenure, and they have strong peer support that leads to success.

v. Commendation 5:

The evaluation team commends the institution for its student-centeredness. Students are respected, have a significant say in institutional decisions, and are able to advocate for their needs. Examples of vibrant staff collaboration include, the library, a mobile friendly app, advising, Student Life, and more.

vi. Commendation 6:

The institution is commended for its investment in student leadership and development consistent with its learning outcome of Career Preparation. Students present themselves with professionalism, poise, and are extraordinary representatives of Western Nevada College.

b. Recommendations

i. Recommendation 1:

The peer evaluation team recommends that the institution: Develop clear and consistent data definitions, share them widely, and use them to further refine its goals, objectives, and indicators of mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of, and in comparison with, regional and national peer institutions (1.B.2)

ii. Recommendation 2:

The peer evaluation team recommends that the institution: Develop an effective, faculty-led system to assess the quality of all its program learning outcomes and use the results for ongoing program improvement. (1.C.5)

iii. Recommendation 3:

The peer evaluation team recommends that the institution: Clearly indicates which programs require licensure or certification, and how those requirements can be met by the program for each state. (2.G.3)

iv. Recommendation 4:

The peer evaluation team recommends that the institution: The evaluation team recommends the institution ensures accuracy and consistency across its website and catalog. (2.D.1)

v. Recommendation 5:

The peer evaluation team recommends that the: Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents develops a comprehensive conflict-of-interest policy that provides the institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission, while specifying the authority, roles, and responsibilities of Regents who are employed by an institution governed by NSHE. (2.A.1)