Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

North Shore Community College
Danvers, MA

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
New England Commission of Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a site visit
October 27-30, 2019

The members of the team:

Chairperson: Dr. Ronald G. Cantor, Former President, Southern Maine Community College, South Portland, ME

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This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status

NEW ENGLAND COMMISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Preface Page to the Team Report
Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team
Date form completed: 10/28/19

Name of Institution North Shore Community College

1. **History**   Year chartered or authorized 1965   Year first degrees awarded 1967

2. **Type of control:** X State   ☐ City   ☐ Other; specify: _____

                ☐ Private, not-for-profit   ☐ Religious Group; specify: _____

                ☐ Proprietary   ☐ Other; specify: _____

3. **Degree level:**
   X Associate   ☐ Baccalaureate   ☐ Masters   ☐ Professional   ☐ Doctorate

4. **Enrollment in Degree Programs** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	**Part-time**	**FTE**	**Retention[a]**	**Graduation[b]**	**# Degrees[c]**
Associate	1692	2684	3203.32	60.5% (372)	22% (IPEDS 150%)	822
Baccalaureate						
Graduate						

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year   (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate   (c) number of degrees awarded most recent year

5. **Student debt:**

	Most Recent Year	**One Year Prior**	**Two Years Prior**
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	12.4%	12.7%	14.3%
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A

	Associate	**Baccalaureate**	**Graduate**
Average % of graduates leaving with debt	49		
Average amount of debt for graduates	7653		

6. **Number of current faculty:**   Full time 121   Part-time 362   FTE: 242

7. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: 2019)
   (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., $1,456,200 = $1.456)

Tuition	$16.482	Instruction	$25.035
Gov't Appropriations	$31.209	Academic Support	$7.814
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	$17.066	Student Services	$10.272
Auxiliary Enterprises	$0	Schols and Fellowships	$3.217
Other	$17.700	Operation of Plant	$5.436
Total	$65.076	Institutional Support	$8.575
		Depreciation	$3.611
		Total	$63.960

8. **Number of off-campus locations:**
   In-state   1   Other U.S. _____   International _____   Total   1

9. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**
   Programs offered entirely on-line   6   Programs offered 50-99% on-line   14

10. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**
    X No   ☐ Yes   Specify program(s):

Introduction

North Shore Community College (NSCC) was introduced to the visiting team by the self-study's accurate portrayal of a well-organized and innovatively resourceful institution dedicated to student and community success in challenging times. College representatives graciously hosted the team and accommodated our many requests for additional meetings and documents. Our focused discussions with a broad range of college constituencies in Danvers, Lynn and Middleton were insightful and candid. All members of the college community demonstrated engaged support for the accreditation process as a welcome means to assure quality and foster improvement.

Team members met (often multiple times) with President Gentile and all Vice Presidents, deans, senior administrators and managers, as well as several members of the Board of Trustees. Forums with faculty, department chairs and program coordinators were well-attended. Student forums on both campuses added crucial perspective to the team's analyses, as did conversation with a group of adjunct instructors and a meeting with shared-governance leaders. In smaller groups, team-members explored various aspects of NSCC operations with representatives of offices and functions across the college.

The self-study, along with many megabytes of associated data and the chair's preliminary visit last May, provided a comprehensive platform for launching further exploration and analyses. All of this serves as the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in the nine sections of this report that address the *Standards for Accreditation* of the New England Commission of Higher Education.

This evaluation of North Shore Community College is a comprehensive evaluation following its interim report submitted and accepted in 2014, as well as its report on the temporary instructional location for the College's Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs at North Shore Technical High School in Middleton, Massachusetts submitted and accepted in 2015 after a visit to that site. Additionally, this evaluation addresses the institution's success in implementing its Master Facilities Plan (including the planned but not yet achieved permanent relocation of its Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs to the Lynn campus), as well as assessing student learning in the general education program and using the results for improvement.

1. Mission and Purposes

As a public, comprehensive two-year institution of post-secondary education, North Shore Community College has worked to advance student success, academic effectiveness and affordable access since 1965. Authorized by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and committed to workforce development as well as transfer preparation, the College's statements of mission, vision and values clearly address the diverse and changing needs of its students and communities.

NSCC has reviewed and updated its strategic plan every five years since 1983. Work on the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan began when President Gentile convened an all-college convocation in

fall 2015. The ensuing review, environmental scan and SWOT analysis yielded the current mission, vision and values statements, and coincided with a reassessment of the College's shared governance system. During 2016, the strategic plan, titled *North Shore Advancing: A Vision for the Future,* was endorsed by the faculty and staff at an all-college meeting, as well as by the NSCC Board of Trustees and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education.

Integrated into *North Shore Advancing* are a Master Academic Plan, a Strategic Enrollment Plan, a Master Facilities Plan, a Strategic Technology Plan, and an Advancement Plan. Together and separately, these plans provide avenues for pursuing the College's mission and purposes while giving rise to four themes: Academics, Access, Achievement and Affordability. Specific strategies, key indicators and measurable outcomes follow.

Pursuing its mission amid the constraints of resources, demographics and societal change, NSCC is leveraging partnerships to achieve pragmatic goals. Through the CommUniverCity at Lynn, the College promotes participation and shared-impact collaboration in an urban center enlivened by immigration. With a mix of public and private funding, education and workforce partners are expanding opportunities from birth through career.

Having achieved a Hispanic student population of 25%, NSCC is well on its way to becoming a federally-recognized Hispanic Serving Institution and qualifying for additional funds to meet more needs. Early College programs in partnership with area high schools and Salem State University are yielding success rates as high as 87%, with 36% of participants matriculating at NSCC after earning a high school diploma.

The visiting team's review of strategic and operational documents and its probing conversations with students, faculty, staff, administrators and Trustees substantiate the guiding impact of the collective vision, mission and strategies on daily activities and interactions. All constituencies collaborate to advance stated priorities in ways that benefit students and communities. A few of many examples are the program review process, investments in facilities and IT infrastructure, and the Title III *Pathways to Success* initiative.

In spring 2019, input was gathered through mission-awareness surveys and a College Forum organized around NECHE's nine Standards for Accreditation. Familiarity with the mission is high among students as well as employees. The mission statement is prominent in electronic and print publications such as NSCC's website, catalog, promotional materials and handbooks for students and employees: "North Shore Community College is a diverse, caring, inclusive community that inspires our students to become engaged citizens and to achieve their personal, academic, and career goals through accessible, affordable, rigorous educational opportunities that are aligned with our region's workforce needs and will prepare them for life in a changing world."

Forty percent of employees responding to a mission-awareness survey felt that the College fulfills some but not all aspects of its mission. Sixty-one employees offered comments on NSCC's alignment of its mission, principles and practices, with 30% commenting positively, 31% offering critical comments, and the remaining 39% making constructive suggestions or

neutral comments. The breakdown of 25 student comments was 48% positive, 20% critical, and 32% either constructive or neutral.

As observed repeatedly by the visiting team, the college community's understanding of, and commitment to its mission are demonstrated through numerous actions and interactions that connect with students and help them navigate toward academic, career and personal success. During two forums with the visiting team, students expressed appreciation for the support and respect they feel from faculty and staff.

The clear consensus of the large number of faculty and some staff who spoke with the visiting team is that the respect and inclusion reported by students and proclaimed as an institutional value are not always felt by employees. Although faculty input has led to reform of shared governance, shared governance generally is not seen as an effective vehicle for addressing strong concerns about top-down administration. Many described institutional dynamics in which faculty voices were marginalized. The team notes that of the self-study's 16 chairs, co-chairs and coordinators, only two leadership positions were held by teaching faculty.

The team's candid discussions with President Gentile and the Board of Trustees confirmed that all have been well aware that many faculty and some staff share these broad concerns. In a challenging era of enrollment and funding decline, NSCC is assessing realities, identifying opportunities and making choices to position itself for long-term sustainability and success. These decisions are consistent with its mission and purposes as interpreted by its administration with strong support from its Board of Trustees. However, many faculty and staff believe that a more collaborative approach would serve students and the College communities better.

2. Planning and Evaluation

The self-study and related documents, as well as interviews across the NSCC community, affirm that the College has established a culture of effective and comprehensive planning and evaluation that aligns with its stated mission. The processes, activities and frameworks that guide planning and evaluation are thorough and rigorous, demonstrating commitment to continuous improvement. NSCC has woven planning and assessment into all key operational areas, committing resources and implementing refinements to create a pragmatic, achievable roadmap for goal achievement and mission fulfilment.

Planning

NSCC's 35-year record of strategic planning/evaluation cycles serves as a model for any institution. The entire process was refreshed in 2016 when individual Academic, Enrollment, Facilities, Technology and Advancement Plans were developed or revised with input from expert consultants. Foundations were thereby set for subsequent analyses and coordinated planning with clear expectations for communication and integration.

Planning updates coincided with review and reform of the College's shared governance model, with stated goals of increasing transparency, improving college-wide communication and

promoting effective governance. Results include a new committee structure intended to serve as a framework for cultivating informed and constructive input on matters before the College, including strategic and tactical planning. Concurring opinions that surfaced during the team's conversations with many faculty and staff, however, suggested that the governance committees still do not adequately promote shared decision-making. Committees were often described as vehicles for informing members of decisions previously made rather than for gathering meaningful input.

NSCC has strengthened its planning efforts with investments in its Office of Research, Planning & Institutional Assessment (OPR) and Center for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation (CTLI). The three-person OPR collects, analyzes and disseminates actionable data for a range of purposes, including multiple levels of academic, financial, strategic and operational planning. CTLI provides crucial support and guidance for many academic and curricular endeavors, including those associated with assessment and program review.

Another admirable component of planning at NSCC is the Annual Tactical Plan that is largely informed and driven by action items enumerated in the strategic plan. For two decades annual tactical plans have provided organized channels for fulfillment of strategic action items in a manner that ties them to budget allocations and annual performance evaluations. Sufficient latitude is maintained to permit senior management to address unanticipated or underestimated risks and opportunities as the fiscal year unfolds.

The 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, *North Shore Advancing,* has been reviewed and approved by the College's faculty, staff and Board of Trustees. It has also been approved by the Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, and the Massachusetts Secretary of Education. This high degree of state-wide transparency and accountability has heightened awareness and appreciation for the planning process across the college community. NSCC's strategic plan was cited by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education as a model of excellence among all higher education sectors across the Commonwealth.

Evaluation

Each year the College prepares a Collective Goals Report that summarizes performance according to the outcome measures in the Annual Tactical Plan. In the opinion of the visiting team, this data-rich report provides a clear and useful snapshot of performance on key indicators across the College. The Collective Goals Report is reviewed by the Board of Trustees and used to update the College community on progress toward achieving tactical and strategic goals.

NSCC's model planning and evaluation practices are supported by the new Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS) that allows each Massachusetts public college and university to access a dashboard of mission-specific, key performance indicators aligned with its strategic goals. This customized set of metrics provides NSCC and its institutional peers with timely, actionable data that boosts visibility and accountability in service to continuous improvement.

The team's discussions with senior administrators and Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment officers confirmed that the College regularly measures outcomes against peer, national and statewide benchmarks. Standard assessment tools, such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS) measures and Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) success measures from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), are augmented with the Voluntary Support of Education (VSE) survey results from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), the annual Blackbaud Charitable Giving Report, and a range of reports from the Massachusetts HEIRS database.

Significantly, NSCC recently shortened and streamlined its academic program review process. Each program is now on a five-year review cycle and the entire process is completed within a single academic year. Assisted by the use of a standardized template and project plan/schedule, academic program reviews are now condensed to a single year to ensure prompt, and therefore more relevant and actionable, sets of deliverables.

Additionally, we note that the Center for Teaching, Learning and Innovation and the Office of Research, Planning & Institutional Assessment provide data and guidance for the program review process in ways that maximize the benefits of collaboration and synergy. Faculty and administrators expressed support for the program review process's revised timeframe and structure/methodology. Several academic department chairs expressed confidence that solid recommendations resulting from these data-informed reviews are now more likely to be incorporated into Annual Tactical Plans with positive results. This collaborative progress is notable as the program review process expands into Student Affairs and other areas of the College.

3. Organization and Governance

Lines of authority and responsibility are clearly depicted on North Shore Community College's organizational chart. The respective roles of the Board of Trustees, administration, staff and faculty are detailed in the *NSCC Policies and Procedures Manual,* updated most recently in September 2019. The philosophy and organization of the Board of Trustees are set forth in NSCC's Bylaws, updated most recently in November, 2018.

Internally, the College's administrative structure and shared governance model support efforts to orchestrate the complexities and nuances of a multifaceted institution comprised of diverse constituencies pursuing a common mission.

Governing Board

The responsibilities of NSCC's 11-member Board of Trustees include appointing and evaluating the President, exercising budgetary oversight, participating in strategic planning and conferring degrees and certificates. Representing a range of professions, businesses and industries, this independent and diverse body brings multiple perspectives to enhance the College's fulfillment of its mission while refraining from undue interference in management or operations.

NSCC's Bylaws articulate a Board philosophy that aligns with the College's mission and vision. As stated in the Bylaws, Trustees volunteer their time in regular meetings throughout the academic year (attending in person or virtually) and the Board holds special or emergency meetings when necessary. A quorum of a simple majority is required to move, second or pass votes. Per Massachusetts law, the meetings are open to the public, and agendas and minutes are posted on the Board's web page.

Board membership has turned over significantly in recent years, and some meetings have been cancelled. Portions of the Board's web page were out-of-date at the time of the team's visit. To promote continuity and effectiveness, the Board has enhanced its onboarding process with six video modules to orient new Trustees to their roles and responsibilities. New Trustees described the video orientation modules as convenient, accessible and helpful.

The Bylaws require the Board to undergo periodic self-evaluation; however, this has not occurred since 2012. Efforts are currently underway to identify a Board-evaluation process that will align with the College's mission and goals. Recently, Trustees lamented the lack of time to fully discuss complex issues and discussed a need for a Board professional development plan. Overall, Trustees reported that they are gaining deeper understandings of NSCC's strengths and challenges as they address the needs of the College

Minutes of Board meetings confirm that the Trustees communicate regularly with the President and senior management, engaging with a variety of issues and opportunities. Proceeding diligently, agenda items are sometimes tabled to allow time to gather additional information. Standing agenda items include a report from the Student Trustee and a showcase presentation by students or other members of the college community. Individual Trustees sometimes attend College events such as Commencement and program ceremonies as well as College Foundation events like the Foundation Scholarship Reception.

Trustees described their voluntary efforts as a mission-driven partnership to ensure the health and sustainability of NSCC. During conversations with the visiting team, they noted their collaborative work to review, assess and continuously revisit the College's progress toward strategic priorities. One Trustee referred to the Collective Goals Report—particularly its outcome measures—as the College's "lodestar."

Internal Governance

The President serves as the College's Chief Executive Officer with authority to manage and direct the affairs of the College, sign and execute all legal documents and contracts, appoint executive, managerial, professional, and classified staff, allocate resources to meet the needs and mission of the College, and assess the effectiveness of the institution.

Led by the President, NSCC's Senior Management Team includes four Vice Presidents who oversee the core areas of academic affairs, administration and finance, student affairs, and human resources. The President assumed her duties in 2014, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs was hired in 2014. The new Vice President for Student Affairs took office just prior to the team's visit. The relatively short tenure of recent arrivals is balanced by the Vice President

for Administration and Finance's 45 years of service to NSCC and 18 years of service by the Vice President of Human Resource Development. Members of the Senior Management Team meet formally on a bi-weekly basis and often interact with each other daily to address operational needs collaboratively.

A 2016 reorganization of executive positions eliminated the position of Vice President for Institutional Advancement. Since then, Marketing, Public Relations, Development and Alumni Relations report directly to the President. The reorganization further expanded the President's scope of direct reports by shifting to her the Offices of Planning, Research, Institutional Assessment, and Grants, which had formerly reported to the Vice President for Administration and Finance.

In 2015, the Assistant Vice President for Compliance and Student Financial Services position was created within the Administration and Finance division. Student Financial Services had formerly been part of Enrollment Services within the Student Affairs division.

As vacancies occurred over time due to retirements, the College's six academic divisions were reduced to five, each led by a dean. NSCC has created 13 academic Pathways grouped into its five academic divisions of: 1) Career and Technical Education and Business; 2) Health and Human Services; 3) Liberal Studies; 4) STEM and Education; and 5) Corporate Training Solutions and Community Education (non-credit).

Students participate in college governance by joining faculty and staff on several committees. Through the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Office of Student Engagement (OSE), students weigh-in on a variety of issues before the College, ensuring that other stakeholders are aware of student perspectives and insights as operations and deliberations proceed.

The team's review of documents and conversations across the College confirmed that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined with opportunities for productive collaboration. All levels of academic and administrative management are mobilizing expertise and creativity to address daily challenges and larger priorities with limited resources. Laudable commitment, professionalism and resilience are evident everywhere. The logistics associated with multiple locations are handled smoothly as nearly all faculty and staff demonstrate equal commitment to the Danvers and Lynn campuses—something very rare among multi-campus institutions. However, in some cases, multiple (vertical) levels of supervision increase distance from senior management, possibly contributing to the transparency concerns voiced by faculty and staff.

A 2015-2016 evaluation of the effectiveness of shared governance surfaced concerns about over-representation of administrators and managers on committees, inadequate governance communication, and the accountability of "nebulous" governance. Many College constituents noted that substantial reforms were needed including redefinition of the purposes and priorities of shared governance. By 2017, NSCC had developed a new "Philosophy of Governance" and a new structure aligned with the strategic plan.

The new governance model consists of four (policymaking) Standing Committees: Academic Policy Committee, Curriculum Committee, Student Development Committee, and Diversity Leadership Council, plus two Advisory Committees: Professional Development Committee, and Information Technology Council.

The Forum Steering Committee serves as the umbrella for the four Standing Committees with a representative from each. The agenda for the monthly College Forum includes college updates, discussions and votes on college policies, and an "open forum" for discussion of ideas and concerns. Each Standing Committee holds a monthly meeting at times calculated to facilitate maximum attendance by faculty and senior administrators.

Membership was expanded to include student and adjunct faculty representatives. Senior administrators and managers remain heavily represented with faculty comprising only 47% of the Curriculum Committee and 54% of the Academic Policy Committee. In 2018, a follow-up satisfaction survey was administered to gauge the effectiveness of the new governance structure. Of 221 respondents, 31.2% (69) were full-time faculty and 23.9% (53) were adjunct faculty. Sixty percent of respondents evaluated most of the areas positively, including questions about improved communication and transparency.

The lack of a faculty majority on the Curriculum Committee raises questions about whether faculty maintain primary responsibility for the content, quality and effectiveness of the curriculum. Conversations with faculty, department chairs, program coordinators and representatives of the Standing Committees revealed perceptions that the abundance of administrators and managers on the Committees is problematic, with concerns expressed about suppression of faculty voice and restriction of the latitude faculty need to make curricular decisions.

The Curriculum Committee's annual report referenced many curricular changes– both minor and major. Although all changes were made in accordance with Curriculum Committee guidelines and approved by voting at the department and division levels, several faculty cited examples to substantiate their belief that their experience and expertise were disregarded as curriculum (and other) changes were made too quickly. Expressing dismay that students would be ill-served by the hasty changes, they nonetheless conceded that some difficult changes were necessary while, at the same time, noting that shared governance should be a forum for truly collaborative change-- not a vehicle to announce decisions already made.

4. The Academic Program

As a comprehensive community college, North Shore fulfills its mission by offering rigorous post-secondary programs (transfer and career) in general and technical education that prepare students for life in a changing world. A total of 74 programs lead to degrees and certificates including 10 Associate in Arts, 29 Associate in Science, five Associate in Applied Science, 29 certificates and one clock-hour-based certificate in Cosmetology. All programs are designed to be completed in one or two years. Most Associate degree programs require 60 credit hours to

complete, with the exception of some externally accredited programs such as nursing and other allied health programs that require up to 70 credit hours to complete.

NSCC has a thorough and navigable website that includes clear program descriptions, program learning outcomes and guided pathways. For externally accredited programs the website includes program-specific data on student achievement. Although the guided pathways offer a useful tool for students, advisors and faculty to promote student success, concerns were expressed about the frequent incompatibility of published pathways with actual course availability.

The academic program review process and the coordinated planning efforts discussed above help to assure the quality and integrity of all academic programs, as well as the associated credits and credentials. The Curriculum and Academic Policy Committees provide oversight and make recommendations to the College Forum, the President and the Board of Trustees on matters involving curriculum or academic policy.

While many collaborative academic successes were evident, faculty expressed frustration over the lack of serious consideration given to their input. One example often cited was the decision to modify the history, literature and math requirements in the Liberal Arts curriculum consistent with State guidelines and the Liberal Arts Guided Pathway. The team heard a range of fervent perspectives on the impacts of these changes as well as the fairness/appropriateness of the process by which a faculty vote was administered via electronic survey.

Assuring Academic Quality

NSCC assures the quality of the programs it offers through a variety of methods employed via shared governance, academic program review, program advisory committees and regularly held division and department meetings. Development, delivery and oversight of live, online and hybrid courses are the responsibility of faculty supported by staff.

As noted in Standard 2, the academic program review process was revised in 2016 with input from faculty. The goal was to ensure that faculty (individually as well as with their program and departmental colleagues) would get what they needed for productive analysis, reflection and improvement. All programs are scheduled to be reviewed on a five-year cycle; by 2020 it is expected that 88% of the programs will have completed the self-study component of the program review process.

A standardized program review template provides consistency yet remains adaptable. For example, some programs need to place more emphasis on transfer rates while for others the emphasis needs to be on job-placement rates or successful licensure exam rates. The Office of Research, Planning & Institutional Assessment staff provide data for faculty to analyze and interpret in context, with qualitative measures and program-specific metrics.

Program review leads to recommendations that impact budget allocation, contribute to the Annual Tactical Plan, and provide evidence as well as insight pertaining to program strengths and challenges. Decisions influenced by program review include the purchase of updated

equipment in the Computer Aided Design (CAD) department, a new greenhouse and classroom space for the Horticulture program and the creation of a new Director of Nursing position. While these initiatives contribute to the health and vitality of the programs, there is limited evidence to date of how the program review process has impacted student learning.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

Program and course design for live, online and hybrid options is largely the responsibility of faculty. Associate degree programs are designed to be completed in two years and include a balance of general education and discipline-specific content that promotes inquiry and broad knowledge. NSCC's website is comprehensive and provides valuable information for students to plan their course of study, including guided pathways.

Review of sample syllabi provided to the visiting team found that most courses include clear learning outcomes. However, the team found only minimal evidence that student learning outcomes were linked directly to specific assignments, activities or assessment methods.   The self-study confirmed that the College is aware that it needs to continue building a culture of assessment by collecting artifacts in its career and technical courses, as well as its general education courses, subsequently analyzing these and using the quantitative and qualitative results to drive course and program improvement.

To make education more accessible, NSCC has expanded its online and hybrid offerings. Development of such courses includes a required six-week online preparation course for all faculty new to teaching online or hybrid courses. The six-week preparation employs best practices with materials adapted from Quality Matters. Faculty receive support and guidance from instructional designers in the Center for Teaching, Learning and Innovation as they develop a course over a six-month period. Students who had taken online classes reported to the team that the courses are well organized, and expectations are clear. They were pleased with the level of engagement, participating in discussion forums, group projects, podcasts and collaborative assignments. Since many students enrolled in online classes also take classes on campus, they are able to connect with faculty in person as well as via email or electronic discussion forums.

General Education

NSCC offers a range of general education courses and revised its General Education Student Learning Outcomes (GESLOs) in 2017-2018 to better align with the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics. The revised GESLOs are: Critical Thinking and Information Literacy, Oral and Written Communication, Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning and Intercultural Competency and Civic Engagement. The College has created a mapping document for all general education courses to ensure that students have opportunities to practice and become proficient in communication and mathematics competencies. The mapping document identifies which GESLOs are addressed in each course and at what level (introductory, reinforcement/practice, or mastery). While this is a good first step in the process of ensuring that students are competent in communication and mathematics, NSCC understands that continued work is needed to measure Student Learning Outcomes and provide evidence that students have learned what was intended.

To be designated a liberal arts elective, a course must meet at least two of the four GESLOs. Additionally, all degree programs and many certificate programs require Composition I, and 52 of the 74 degree and certificates require at least one college-level math course.

In response to the MassTransfer Block, NSCC revised its Associate in Arts degree by reducing the requirement for previously mandated courses in English literature, history, mathematics and science. This allows students more flexibility in choosing general education electives that align with transfer requirements as they demonstrate proficiency in the GESLOs.

As noted above, although these changes were approved by the Curriculum Committee and College Forum, many faculty reported that they had had little input as decisions were made to reduce course requirements, thereby, in their view, eroding NSCC's definition of an educated person. Administrators pointed out that state mandates restricted leeway.

To reduce the number of developmental courses many students need to prepare for college-level work, the lowest level of developmental math was eliminated and a new course in Math Literacy was created with a focus on quantitative reasoning. Corresponding success rates in college-level math courses have since increased from 49% to 64%. The Accelerated Learning Program, a co-requisite model in which students take Composition I and Developmental English concurrently, was piloted in 2010 and has also returned positive results.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

In 2018, NSCC updated its policy for the award of credit hours and remains compliant with the definition of the federal credit hour. The credit hour definition is published in the 2019-2020 Credit Catalog and on some of the syllabi reviewed. Faculty knew the definition of the credit hour and most affirmed that at the beginning of each course they discuss with students the expectations and structure that yield sufficient depth and rigor, including time required for students to prepare and complete assignments outside of class. Students reported that most courses require significant outside study, but many were not specifically aware of the definition of the credit hour.

5. Students

North Shore Community College is an open-admissions institution serving students across three locations in the North Shore region: Danvers (a suburban campus), Lynn (an urban campus) and Middleton (a small, dedicated suburban facility). The College serves a diverse student body ranging widely in age, race, ethnic background, language, socioeconomic status and academic preparation. In 2018-19, NSCC served approximately 11,000 students, with 89% enrolling in either career or transfer programs. Traditional students aged 17-21 comprise 44% of the student body and adult learners represent 56% of total enrollment. The majority of NSCC students enroll part-time (65%), with 35% enrolled full-time. Gender enrollment mirrors national trends, with males comprising only 37% of the student population.

Admissions

Enrollment at NSCC has steadily declined in recent years and is both a significant challenge and primary area of strategic focus for the College. In fall 2019, the College enrolled 5,763 students, which represents a 17% decline since 2016 and a 28% decline since fall 2010 when the College experienced record-high enrollment of 7,985. The demographic and economic trends challenging enrollment include a decline in the number of prospective traditional college-age students, low unemployment and other shifting demographics.

In response to declining enrollment, NSCC established a Strategic Enrollment Planning Team with cross-institutional and external stakeholder representation. Analyses of institutional data, projected demographic data, and marketing research informed the NSCC Strategic Enrollment Plan. This plan presents an integrated focus on admissions, retention and graduation. Although the College did not meet its 2018-19 headcount goals, it did meet its goal to increase Hispanic applicants and admissions by 1%.

The College revised its application materials making the application steps clearer. In addition, prospective students now are informed of options for financing their education at the beginning of the application process. In 2018, NSCC employed a constituent relationship management technology tool, streamlining the application and matriculation processes. Investment in an online catalog has enabled considerable progress toward communicating academic program expectations, graduation and employment outcomes, and program alignment to mission. NSCC programs have made programmatic adjustments based on robust assessment data, demonstrating the College's use of evidence to support student success.

The College employs targeted marketing strategies to attract diverse groups of prospective students, namely working adults, traditional aged first-time college students, and the region's growing Hispanic and Asian communities. Accordingly, the College evaluated and redesigned its marketing strategies and materials. For example, NSCC has added Spanish-speaking recruitment staff, created Spanish language marketing materials, and increased offerings of culturally relevant events and programs that serve diverse learners and their families as it seeks federal designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

NSCC, as an open-access institution, employs multiple measures to assess students' academic preparedness, including Accuplacer placement tests, SAT and ACT scores, and high school GPAs. Students who seek to enroll in one of the College's selective admissions programs are assessed to determine if they have the academic and personal qualities that will contribute to their success. A committee comprised of admissions and recruitment staff and academic program representatives evaluate application materials using a rubric.

There is significant evidence that the College provides programs to support the retention and academic success of admitted student populations. Data analysis informed the 2016 First-Year Experience course redesign. Subsequent analysis conducted in late 2018 demonstrated students who took this course were retained at a rate almost 13% higher than those who had not taken the course. NSCC is using this information to target the course to at-risk and first-time students as a key recruitment and retention strategy; the Strategic Enrollment Plan highlights these students as

priority populations for strategic growth. NSCC has also seen significant improvement in the number of Latinx and Black/African American students completing the college-level gateway math and English courses, with three-year increases of 19% and 16%, respectively.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences

In alignment with its mission and purposes, NSCC offers all students in all locations and modalities a comprehensive suite of student and learning support services designed to enhance students' academic success and personal growth and development. Students can access advising, career services, accessibility services, crisis and mental health support, financial aid services, transfer counseling, and student leadership and engagement opportunities. The scope and availability of these services are described on the College's website, in the Student Handbook and during the required New Student Orientation.

NSCC made the strategic decision to dedicate a staff person to the orientation of new students which has enabled the College to move from a transactional orientation model to one that is relational and holistic. New-student onboarding is an iterative process that encompasses career exploration and goal setting, academic advising, registration, financial aid, student rights and responsibilities, student services and academic program affinity building. Students learn about opportunities for involvement and are prepared for the social component of learning, facilitating the cultivation of a horizontal peer-support network.

Institutional data demonstrate that new students who participate in the orientation are retained at higher rates than those who do not. Consequently, effective fall 2019, NSCC requires all new students to participate in orientation.

The College offers specialized programs to support specific student populations including TRIO, Women in Transition (WIT), the Presidential Scholars Program, and Veteran Services. The Accessibility Services department helps students arrange reasonable academic accommodations, and Student Health Services provides health education and awareness and coordinates programs such as the mobile food market, alcohol awareness, Title IX awareness, HIV and flu clinics, and pregnancy testing.

To advance the College's mission of access and affordability, in fall 2019 NSCC launched North Shore Promise. North Shore Promise waives the gap between tuition and fees incurred by Pell-eligible students enrolled in at least six-credits and the federal and state grant funding received, mitigating financial barriers for economically disadvantaged students.

Lack of public transportation to/from the Danvers and Middleton campuses is a significant barrier for students without cars. After much work with State and local authorities to extend nearby existing bus lines proved unsuccessful, the NSCC Uber Ride was created to provide a geofenced last mile gap on-demand ride from end-of-line bus and rail routes, underwritten with a $10 subsidy per ride for any NSCC student and coverage of the total cost of the ride for low-income students.

These transportation supports serve hundreds of NSCC students annually and emergency help for

car repairs is also available to insure continued retention of those facing transportation challenges. The College markets the transportation supports to students in a variety of ways including its web-based "Here to Help" page. Still, a range of stakeholders raised concerns about the administrative decision to discontinue the College's former shuttle service.

Consistent with national trends, the complexity of student crises has grown and the number of students requiring intervention has steadily increased, with the College's two academic crisis counselors managing over 1,000 visits each year. CCSSE data shows that students are not highly satisfied with the ways the College helps them "cope with non-academic responsibilities" (2.02/5).   Furthermore, staff raised concern that NSCC does not have the capacity to adequately address the scope of students' mental health needs, potentially limiting the College's ability to retain students. Additionally, the visiting team notes concern that academic crisis counselors are providing mental health counseling without the supervision of a licensed clinical supervisor, either on staff or on retainer.

The College cultivates civic engagement through its long-standing and robust service-learning program and effectively partners with community stakeholders to expand its scope of services, helping to meet the range of needs of its diverse students. Recognizing that students whose basic needs are not being met are most at-risk of attrition, NSCC administered the Hunger/ Homelessness Eradication Applied Research Tools (HEART) instrument in September 2016. The survey showed that nearly 70% of NSCC students were struggling with food and/or housing insecurity.

In response, by 2017, the College had coordinated monthly mobile food markets at each campus, enhanced the Stop Hunger on Campus food voucher program, increased institutional aid for emergency grants, received a grant from a local foundation to support single female parents, and partnered with a community organization to secure preference of highly subsidized transition housing for young adults.

In recognition of the importance of deep and effective advising, NSCC has developed a new model informed by best practices published by the Community College Research Center. Since fall 2017, each degree-seeking student has been assigned an advisor with depth of knowledge about specific guided academic pathways. The new advising model has resulted in a stronger collaboration between the Academic and Student Affairs offices and coincides with a one-year increase of 3,107 advising appointments.

This new advising model corresponds with a reduction in the gap in graduation rates between White students and students identifying as Latino (2.8% reduction) and Black/African American (5.8% reduction). A new Title III grant will allow the College to license EAB, a robust advising technology solution. EAB will enable advisors to utilize a variety of data and communication strategies, positioning the College to proactively engage students and provide just-in-time supports.

Despite declining enrollment, Tutoring Center visits have increased by 30% over three years. NSCC enhanced its delivery service model to make more efficient use of resources and provide students greater access to learning support services. Implementation of the

ThinkingStorm platform has provided students 24/7 on-demand, online access to tutoring, helping to expand support for high demand subject areas. Use of the TutorTrac management system helps to coordinating tutoring services with an efficient, sustainable and data-driven approach. The College plans to conduct a comprehensive program review of Tutoring Services in the 2019-20 academic year.

NSCC's Office of Student Engagement (OSE) provides students opportunities to engage in campus activities, clubs, organizations and the Student Government Association (SGA). SGA leaders participate in College governance and are provided access to leadership training. The OSE employs promotional campaigns with a spirit of equal opportunity and strives to include as many students as possible. OSE's efforts have not yet resulted in increased participation in student activities, as evidenced by 2017 CCSSE data where NSCC scored below the mean on both rated importance and satisfaction with student organizations. The OSE and faculty are actively exploring ways to expand co-curricular offerings.

Student Financial Services is responsible for administering financial aid and providing students with comprehensive financial aid and financial literacy counseling services. The College has adequate systems in place to ensure aid is awarded consistently and accurately and in accordance with federal and state regulations. NSCC's financial aid counselors are available to provide personalized assistance and systematically monitor students' satisfactory academic progress. Students are required to complete the Department of Education's online Loan Entrance Interview before their funds are processed, informing them of their rights and responsibilities when borrowing a Federal Direct Student Loan.

The Credit Catalog, Student Handbook and Faculty and Staff Handbook are accessible via the NSCC website; they describe available services and provide relevant contact information. Additionally, policies on students' rights and responsibilities, student conduct, grievance procedures and other related policies are readily available in the Credit Catalog, in all Handbooks, and on the website. The College's policies pertaining to academic records, FERPA, Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy (SAP), and academic standing, as well as statements informing students about privacy of records and disclosure of directory information are included in the Credit Catalog.

The Vice President for Student Affairs and his staff oversee student affairs programming, bringing rich backgrounds, significant experience and a student-centered approach to their work. The Dean of Students articulates a guiding philosophy on the website and student affairs professionals enjoy opportunities for development, structured learning experiences, and opportunities to collaborate and share best practices. To ensure that the work of the student affairs division advances the College's mission and strategic outlook, annual goals are linked to the College's Strategic Plan, Annual Tactical Plan, the Strategic Enrollment Plan, General Education Student Learning Outcomes and NECHE Standards.

The College systematically evaluates its student services programming, having initiated a division of student affairs program review process in 2018. This review noted a greater than 80% rate of satisfaction among both students and faculty for Accessibility Services, exceeding the established benchmark for four-year institutions. Veterans Service's 2018 program review

revealed that NSCC's veterans have the second highest retention and graduation rates of Massachusetts' 15 community colleges. One hundred percent of veteran students surveyed indicated they were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the services they receive. Staff members reported that the comprehensive review provided useful data and insights to inform the development of actionable steps.

6. Teaching, Learning and Scholarship

The self-study and additional information gathered by the visiting team indicated that there is a sufficient number of qualified faculty and academic staff, including librarians and advisors, to fulfill the mission and purposes of North Shore Community College. The College employs 121 full-time, 386 adjunct, and 17 clinical faculty members as of fall 2019. NSCC also employs 28 full-time professional academic staff, including five librarians, 14 advisors, five assessment officers, three unit coordinators, and one instructional designer. The faculty are members of one of four academic divisions: Career and Technical Education and Business, Health and Human Services, Liberal Studies, and STEM Education. (A fifth division, Corporate Training Solutions and Community Education, administers non-credit learning opportunities.)

Each academic division is headed by a dean who reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Among the full-time faculty, 35 (29%) hold doctoral degrees and 76 (63%) hold master's degrees. Faculty and academic staff are well qualified and are suited to the field and level of their assignments.

The full-time faculty (with Day contracts) are members of the Massachusetts Community College Council/Massachusetts Teachers Association (MCCC/MTA) and their terms of employment are negotiated with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE). Adjunct faculty (with DCE contracts) have a separate agreement negotiated between the MCCC/MTA and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. The conditions of service for full-time faculty are codified in the MCCC Day Agreement 2015-2018 while the terms for adjunct faculty are codified in the MCCC DCE Agreement. Full-time tenured faculty hold and may be promoted through the ranks of instructor, assistant professor, associate professor and professor. The responsibilities of full-time faculty, in addition to instructional workload, include non-instructional work such as advising students, college service, community service and professional development activities.

Based on the MCCC Day Agreement, the standard full-time faculty instructional workload is a minimum of 29 instructional hours per week and a maximum of 35, with no more than three preparations per semester and five preparations per year. Full-time faculty are expected to perform non-instructional responsibilities consisting of seven hours per week of other activities such as advising, community service, and professional development. Full-time faculty can also receive reassigned time to perform other responsibilities for the College such as course, program or curriculum development. In addition, as stated in the collective bargaining agreement, faculty generally advise between 18 and 25 students and maintain four office hours per week on at least four days.

The College has an orderly faculty and academic staff recruitment process. Search committees for full-time faculty and academic staff are formed and generally chaired by the administrator of the department or program and composed of faculty and/or staff from within and outside the area. A representative of the Diversity Leadership Council is also assigned to each search committee to guide the interview process in meeting institutional diversity goals. All finalists are interviewed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs as a final step in the process.

The College reported that it has made efforts to reflect the diversity of the community in its hiring practices and that there has been a 6% increase in minority representation over a five-year period. However, compared with other employment groups at NSCC, the College noted that the faculty remain the least diverse group. The College reported that it adheres to State and Federal laws regarding equal opportunity and affirmative action.

Academic advising is provided by full-time faculty as well as by professional staff in the Student Support and Advising Centers. Faculty members are contractually assigned 18-25 advisees with some variance depending on their actual workload composition. Academic advising is designed around guided academic pathways and coordinated with the academic divisions. A designated advisor is assigned to each pathway in the Student Support and Advising Centers. Faculty advisors help students make appropriate course selections and program connections.

The College strives to assign to each student an advisor on the student's primary campus, who teaches in the program in which the student is matriculated and who is a consistent presence throughout the student's time in a program. Training is provided for faculty and professional advisors to ensure consistency and currency in advising practices. The visiting team notes that some faculty continue to use and prefer the old Program of Study Sheets for advising while others have transitioned to the guided pathway model. During its conversations with students the team heard no concerns about advising.

The collective bargaining agreement for full-time faculty provides reasonable contractual security. Non-appointment of faculty on regular appointment in the first four years of service can be without cause but requires written notice. Upon satisfactory completion of six years of service, full-time faculty become eligible for tenure and the process for attaining tenure is delineated clearly in the MCCC Day Agreement. The MCCC Day Agreement and the MCCC DCE Agreement have provisions for safeguarding the academic freedom of faculty. Faculty are encouraged to use teaching methods that fit their style and the learning styles of their students.

The College stated in the self-study that in some departments, course materials may be determined by the department for use across all sections of a course. In order to ascertain that students in various sections of the same course achieve the same foundation of knowledge, full-time and adjunct faculty are provided syllabi templates that outline the common Student Learning Outcomes for each of the courses.

North Shore Community College supports the professional growth of its faculty with professional development funding and other opportunities. For example, the Office of Academic Affairs and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Innovation sponsor semi-annual Faculty Development Days that provide participants with opportunities to share best practices and to

choose from a variety of sessions to learn about developments in the field. Faculty are also provided one departmental day per semester which may be applied to individual professional development interests.

The Professional Development Committee administers an institutional fund of $25,000 annually to support professional development proposals. The self-study noted that there were frustrations with delays in processing requests and with inadequate dollar awards, and these concerns were reiterated during the team's conversations with faculty. Yet over the last several years the $25,000 fund has not been fully expended and each division has an additional line item to support professional development.

The College has equitable and broad-based procedures for evaluating its faculty in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement. Full-time faculty are evaluated annually through their first six years at the College. If granted tenure at the end of the sixth year, the evaluation timeline is changed to once every three years. The process considers student evaluations, classroom observations, personnel file review, student advisement, and college service. Adjunct faculty are also evaluated by their students, but the adjuncts who spoke with the visiting team reported that they had been observed or evaluated by colleagues or supervisors rarely, if ever. (The Massachusetts DCE (adjunct) contract requires "cause" to observe faculty once a member reaches seniority.)

Full time faculty responsibilities include teaching, staying current in their disciplines, incorporating best practices in terms of pedagogy and instructional technology, and advising students. The Vice President for Academic Affairs is the chief academic officer with direct responsibility for teaching, learning, and scholarship across the College. She and her direct reports oversee all aspects of teaching, learning and scholarship.

Discussions with academic deans and others substantiated that the College's academic leadership and support units are strong and collaborative, making many significant contributions to academic excellence. Yet, as addressed in other portions of this report, many faculty expressed concerns about constraints on faculty voice due to a top-down management culture, and some noted that this has a deterring effect on teaching and scholarship.

7. Institutional Resources

During challenging times NSCC has continued to maintain stability in terms of its human, financial, information, physical and technological resources. College resources are well-managed and invested in long-term stability and improvement.

Human Resources

Employment levels (396 full-time and 570 part-time employees) appear to be sufficient to meet the needs of students but have declined in recent years consistent with the College's enrollment decline. Minimum qualifications are clearly stated for all positions and each new full-time employee receives a letter outlining the terms and conditions of the appointment. All new

employees also participate in an in-person orientation. Salaries are in line with those at peer institutions and the Human Resource Development department regularly conducts comparative compensation studies. Recently some non-unit professionals left the College to accept higher paying positions.

Policies and collective bargaining agreements are available on the college website and portal. Conditions of employment such as probationary periods and grievance procedures are in accordance with collective bargaining agreements. Conditions of employment for non-represented employees are in accordance with the Non-Unit Professionals Policy Handbook. The Human Resource Development department has begun surveying new employees after three months of employment to gather information to aid retention efforts. The NSCC workforce is rather diverse and, in most staffing areas, representative of the communities served by the College. The College has a fairly robust and systematic professional development process in place.

Financial Resources

Consistent with both regional and national trends, NSCC has experienced enrollment declines due, in part, to low unemployment rates as well as a declining number of high school graduates in the region. Peak enrollment was in 2010 with 7,985 students attending the fall semester and, since then, enrollment has fallen considerably, by 32.5%, to 5,763 students in the fall 2019 semester. The FY 2020 budget is based upon a projected 5% enrollment decline from the previous year.

NSCC's total revenue declined from $36.9 million in FY 2017 to $35.0 million in FY 2018 and to $33.6 million in FY 2019, while appropriations from the state increased from $26.5 million in FY 2017 to $29.2 million in FY 2018 and to $31.2 million in FY 2019.

The number of students graduating from high schools in the College's service area is projected to continue to decline, resulting in continued financial pressures. These pressures might be mitigated if the College chose to expand into new markets and/or increase its student persistence and retention rates. In any event, it is likely that the enrollment projections in the Strategic Enrollment Plan are no longer realistic and may need to be revised to align with recent data on high school graduation trends and other factors.

Despite declining enrollment and the corresponding large share of its revenues being generated by enrollment, the College has achieved financial stability—a notable accomplishment. The team reviewed NSCC's audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, which were prepared by an independent certified public accounting firm and reviewed and approved by the College's Board of Trustees. These statements document continued improvement in financial operations, including cash on hand and an unrestricted fund balance, providing the necessary reserves to continue funding educational and student services at appropriate and consistent levels with the ability to offset potential financial emergencies.

A presentation to the Board by the College's accounting firm indicated that, not counting pension and OPED liabilities, unrestricted net assets increased dramatically – from $11.877

million on June 30, 2018 to $15.224 million on June 30, 2019. NSCC's current ratio (current assets divided by current liabilities) increased from 2.522 to 3.00, reflecting a financially stable institution. Yet, lack of a multi-year financial forecast hampers the College's ability to quickly pivot during times of significant enrollment challenges as well as potential changes to funding models. While State budgeting processes and various uncertainties make multi-year forecasting difficult, all colleges need to develop long-term financial plans based on the most realistic assumptions possible and then continuously update and revise.

The Board of Trustees is kept well informed of the College's fiscal affairs and is involved in the budget development and approval process, taking special care to analyze any proposed increases in student fees and the resulting impact on students with and without financial aid. Fee increases have been a primary tool to offset declining tuition revenue. The FY 2020 budget was approved with increases of the student fee by $1 and the technology fee by $3, with other increases in course-specific fees.

The College's finances are managed at the Executive level. While some noted opportunities for input from departments and faculty across the College, finance staff and others characterized the management of College finances as top-down with minimal faculty/staff involvement beyond participation in development of the Annual Tactical Plan that draws upon the Strategic Plan to guide fiscal resource allocations.

In addition to increasing student fees, a fee differential for higher cost programs was instituted several years ago. Success in securing several substantial grants and increased revenues from fundraising have generated funds for new programs and facility improvements. During the course of the team's evaluation the College was notified that it had been awarded a $2.247 million, five-year Title III grant to promote student success by enhancing its guided pathways, strengthening student advisement and fortifying educational and career planning.

The Board of Trustees has exercised its fiduciary role in overseeing the affairs of the College and Trustees were instrumental in updating a comprehensive and detailed college policies and procedures manual. The administration and Board recognize that NSCC is part of a state system and therefore, some aspects of approval and control rest with the state.

Information, Physical and Technological Resources

In 2016, the College completed a Campus Master Facility Plan (Master Plan) covering the five-year period ending in 2021. The Master Plan was prepared simultaneously, and coordinated with, the Academic Plan, Technology Plan and Enrollment Management Plan. While most of the Master Plan's major components have been accomplished, a notable exception is the necessary relocation of the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs from Middleton to the Lynn campus.

The visiting team toured the Danvers and Lynn campuses as well as the Middleton site, noting that buildings and grounds were well maintained and exceptionally clean. Appropriate levels of information technology infrastructure and library resources were evident.

Most substantial among the completed portions of the Master Plan are a 41,500 square foot addition to the McGee Building on the Lynn Campus and the new Health Professions and Student Services Building on the Danvers campus. Significant state investments were secured to address deferred maintenance projects ($6.685 million) as well as critical infrastructure and ADA maintenance projects ($4.8 million). Having substantially reduced its use of rented facilities, termination of operations in Middleton will meet many needs by consolidating all operations onto two campuses consistent with the Master Plan and previous accreditation discussions.

The College's Facilities team plans for short-term and long-term needs well in advance, handling some projects internally and designating others for external contractors. Project schedules are coordinated with academic and operational calendars to minimize disruption. At a recent Board meeting, Trustees approved a request to the State Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance for a capital project to renovate and expand the College's science labs. This Danvers campus project was prioritized in the Master Plan and is estimated to cost slightly over $14 million.

The Information Technology team works closely with the Facilities team to plan and execute numerous projects year-round within the fiscal parameters provided. One example from the 2020 Annual Tactical Plan lists 20 different Information Systems projects, many with multiple, complex components to improve network infrastructure, conduct penetration tests and upgrade firewalls, along with a disaster prevention and recovery plan to maintain robust technology delivery and infrastructure.

8. Educational Effectiveness

A major focus of North Shore Community College is the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its academic programs and the success of its students. NSCC has made considerable progress to ensure graduates' competence in specified program objectives, as evidenced by data reported in the Educational Effectiveness Data First forms, the E1A and E1B, forms, and the recently implemented Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS) of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, along with the Voluntary Framework for Accountability (VFA).

A strong commitment to building a culture of assessment is evident across the college. Created in 2018-19, the Academic Affairs Assessment Advisory Committee for Student Learning Outcomes is charged with researching best practices for assessment and recommending improvements in the academic program review process, especially pertaining to multi-section student learning outcomes. The College has also joined a Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment, which recently came under the auspices of the VALUE Institute.

Co-curricular learning outcomes that align with and support the College's mission have been developed for assessing Institution-wide Learning Outcomes (ILOs). These include demonstrating an awareness and appreciation of the value of diversity, equity and inclusion, and

recognizing the importance of lifelong learning and value engagement in civic and democratic processes, both locally and globally. Assessment of these new ILOs will occur on a five-year schedule across all departments and programs.   Accessibility Services and Veterans Services were the first areas to go through this new process.

The Credit Catalog lists clear learning outcomes for each academic program. Assessment planning materials have been updated recently and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Innovation has produced useful training videos for faculty. A systematic program- and learning-outcomes review process is in place, helping to build a strong culture of assessment within programs and departments as well as across the entire curriculum and College. Specific evidence of this was identified in the visiting team's analysis of assessment policies and procedures, the report of the new Academic Affairs Assessment Advisory Committee, and wide-ranging discussions with faculty and academic leaders.

Additionally, the educational effectiveness of thirteen NSCC programs is periodically assessed by external accreditation bodies ranging from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and the Association of Nutrition and Foodservice Professionals (ANFP), to the American Bar Association (ABA) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS).

Revisions to the academic program review process (discussed in other sections of this report) have increased the capacity and impact of data-informed decisions by promptly delivering actionable results to faculty and program planners. Rigorous review of student learning outcomes, enrollment trends and other measures has led to numerous small and large changes including curricular adjustments, the sunsetting of three programs and construction or renovation of facilities. Program advisory boards also provide useful data and contexts from ever-changing workforce and community settings.

NSCC's robust program review process and other organizational/governance sensibilities were put to a test when the benefits of the statewide MassTransfer Pathways arrangement could not be realized unless significant changes were made to North Shore's Liberal Arts and Sciences degree program. Flexible alignment and articulation required reducing the program from 62 to 60 credits, eliminating requirements for two college-level math, literature or history courses, and allowing students in some pathways to opt out of all literature and history requirements.

These changes were made, and the results included a 25% increase in program completion. As previously noted, faculty expressed strong concerns about the educational value of the redesigned program. Many complained about the timing and lack-of anonymity of a survey to gather input on these changes, reinforcing doubts about the institutional context of faculty voice.

Data on national best practices in modular math programs led the Mathematics department to redesign its course offerings. A new quantitative reasoning course was created as a prerequisite for Statistics and Liberal Arts Math. This change was intended to boost completion rates by helping students align their math courses with the specifics of their programs or pathways. Success rates in college-level math (with success defined as a grade of C- or better) have moved from 71% to 72%.

The lowest level of pre-college math was eliminated, and a new developmental math course was created, also focusing on quantitative reasoning skills. This change helped to reduce the proportion of students requiring a developmental math course from 57% to 22% while helping to increase their success rate in subsequent college-level courses from 49% to 64%. Students who do not place into developmental math are offered a variety of free tutorials and refresher courses online and are invited to work with math tutors in the Tutoring Center. Math bootcamps are also offered at no cost to students.

Student placement is based on multiple measures including test results, high school GPA and crosswalks with high school curricula. Placement results can be waived by deans for students who show evidence of possessing the requisite skills for probable success.

Students who participated in the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), a co-requisite model in which a college composition course is paired with developmental academic support in reading and writing, had a 74.8% fall-to-fall retention rate compared with the college's overall rate of 67%. This increase is especially notable since 59.8% of the ALP students identified as minorities who traditionally have lower retention rates. ALP students also registered for a subsequent composition class at a rate 5.5% higher than other students.

New general education outcomes have recently been developed, closely aligned with the VALUE Rubrics associated with the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes. Additional activities to assess learning outcomes in English and Natural Science courses are underway and will need to be systematized.

Institutional-peer comparison of student artifacts associated with general education learning outcomes in quantitative literacy, critical thinking, written communication and civic engagement indicated that NSCC met or exceeded national and state averages in the outcomes measured, but improvement is needed in source documentation. Faculty and academic leaders are reviewing the specific results as they develop strategies for improvement.

Data on national best practices (CCSSE and Achieving the Dream) also led to a redesigned First-Year Experience program and a new course in First-Year Foundational Literacy. The course focuses on enabling students to improve their critical thinking and oral/written communication skills while building their confidence as they transition into higher education. A total of 448 students have taken this course since its redesign with an 83% pass rate. Students who complete this course have an overall fall-to-fall retention rate 12.8% higher than those who do not.

Approximately 1,000 students participate in NSCC's Service-Learning program each year with 90% or more reporting that their service-learning experience increased their desire to enroll the next semester, complete their degree or certificate, or pursue a bachelor's degree. Direct connections to NSCC's mission and values statements were noted with pride as Service-Learning promotes "diverse, caring, inclusive community that inspires our students to become engaged citizens," "so that we may serve to improve the quality of lives in the North Shore communities."

Robust data on student retention, graduation and transfer is gathered and used in many ways. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS) shows that the College is exceeding its peers on key indicators of student success, boosting on-time credit accumulation from 24% to 36% between 2014 and 2018. Completion of gateway math and English courses for NSCC's Latinx students improved from 10% to 29%, and for African-American students the improvement was from 12% to 28%. Steady increases in full-time and part-time degree attainment and transfer are being charted.

The College attributes much of its progress to program review, guided pathways, the scaling of the Accelerated Learning Program in English, redesigned math courses and multiple measures for course placement. NSCC recognizes that formal assessment will be needed to track specific factors and subsequent adjustments will be required to ensure continued improvement. A "Leading for Change" group has been formed to review data from across the College with a goal to close achievement and opportunity gaps for underserved students of color.

9. Integrity, Transparency and Public Disclosure

North Shore Community College adheres to a clear set of ethical standards that align with its stated mission and values and help shape its academic, operational and community decisions and activities.

Integrity

The visiting team's review of documents and data, and interviews with members of the College community substantiate that NSCC has established effective and reliable procedures to comply with all externally mandated reporting obligations. Relevant policies, information, expectations and values are communicated effectively among internal and external constituencies, although issues surrounding institutional response to faculty (and some staff) dissent persist, as noted throughout this report. NSCC has a policy to guide the assessment, revision or revocation of existing College policies and procedures.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) has statutory oversight of the State's public higher education institutions, and the team finds that NSCC adheres to the system-wide policies, procedures, and reporting requirements established by the BHE. Voluntary, ongoing accreditation by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) provides an additional layer of external review for NSCC. Affirmation of the College's support of academic integrity is also found in its maintenance of accreditation by specialized accrediting bodies for thirteen of its programs. Many internal efforts through such vehicles as the program review process and shared governance also promote academic integrity and quality.

Academic freedom, employment conditions and corresponding responsibilities are clearly articulated in collective bargaining agreements for faculty and professional staff. Academic policies are also established and reviewed on a regular basis by standing committees as part of NSCC's shared governance system. The College provides a range of mandatory online trainings

on topics such as discrimination and harassment, though NSCC notes the difficulty of ensuring full participation given the contractual strictures associated with workload and professional development. Fewer than half of all employees completed these trainings in 2018 or 2019.

The College maintains a repository of diversity resources and provides programming to promote tolerance, yet interviews with employees suggest a need for additional staff and faculty training related to cultural sensitivity and awareness. Students, staff, faculty and external stakeholders have clear and direct access to NSCC Affirmative Action and Title IX policies and contacts on the NSCC website.

Transparency and Public Disclosure

The team found that all required legal information and institutional policies and procedures are published on the College website. Stakeholders are able to access a suite of financial information, contracts and other financial data on a Public Records page maintained in accordance with applicable Massachusetts laws. Candidates interested in employment opportunities and anyone else can access employment and benefits information on the Human Resource Development web page.

The Credit Catalog is accessible through the public website and it provides complete program information. The Student Handbook, available online and in print, establishes expectations for student conduct, standards of academic honesty, disciplinary processes and grievance procedures. Many faculty reinforce selected policies by referencing them in their syllabi. Staff and Faculty Handbooks, along with other institutional policies and procedures, are available online.

Through the recently updated NSCC website, students and others have access to a net price calculator and gainful employment information for all programs. Academic Program web pages include admissions requirements, course and program descriptions, degree completion time, employment outlook, median age data, learning outcomes and downloadable guided pathway sheets for all programs. The College provides information on student debt, cohort default, and loan repayment on the College Scorecard, accessible through the website.

The team confirmed that the College employs a range of strategies to regularly facilitate internal communication, including newsletters, podcasts, bulletins, regularly scheduled meetings, and the shared governance system. However, the team also noted concerns expressed by many employees about decisions made without adequate consideration of input.

The NSCC public website serves as the primary vehicle for providing essential information and a comprehensive overview of the College to its diverse constituents. In 2019, the College launched a newly redesigned, cloud-based, mobile-friendly website. The public website is intuitively designed, visually appealing and easily navigated. Furthermore, the website advances the College's mission of accessibility, as the site's various pages adhere to ADA best practices.

The College augments its public online presence with a web-based portal designed for students, faculty and staff. The portal provides personalized, convenient and secure access to a variety of

administrative and academic resources, including links to email and the College's Learning Management System, student account and financial aid information, course registration, College news and updates.

North Shore Community College has demonstrated that it effectively employs an integrated mix of print, digitized and web-based resources to articulate information that is timely, accurate and accessible. The College leverages social media to broaden its communication reach, elevate awareness and promote transparency and public disclosure. The website includes published information regarding mission, vision, values, student demographics, graduation rates, retention, class size averages and accreditation.

Affirmation of Compliance

To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed North Shore Community College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by its President. As noted in this report, North Shore Community College publicly discloses on its website and in other relevant publications its policy on transfer of credit along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made by the College one month prior to the visit in the *Salem News,* the *Lynn Item,* and on the College's website. Copies of the College's grievance procedures for faculty, staff and students are available through its website. For its online programs and courses, North Shore Community College uses a system of secure logins and pedagogical approaches to verify students' identities to ensure the integrity of the programs. As discussed in Standard 4: *The Academic Program*, the team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross-section of NSCC's course offerings, both classroom and online, as well as courses offered in alternative formats and modalities, found the assignment of credit reflective of the College's policy and consistent with the Commission's standards.

Summary

All of the visiting team's conversations, analyses and evaluative judgments affirm that North Shore Community College is a well-organized and innovatively resourceful institution dedicated to student and community success in challenging times. With diligence, expertise and genuineness, all constituencies strive to improve the College so that it will fulfill its mission better every day.

The College's overall stability and increasing financial strength are impressive in an era of enrollment decline and financial challenge. Much care is taken to ensure quality and continuous improvement in all programs, services, initiatives and functions. This entails accountability, creativity, data-informed perspectives and difficult choices. NSCC continues to move forward

productively along each of these paths, never losing sight of the changing needs of students and communities.

NSCC's culture and effectiveness are products of many decisions made and carried out in various ways by faculty, staff, administrators and others. All are passionately committed to the same mission, students and communities, yet perspectives and priorities can differ sharply. Herein lies an opportunity to increase institutional strength and sustainability. As dissenting voices are reconciled with institutional progress, the progress becomes shared and resilient. With this in mind, the team offers the following summary of the most important strengths and concerns.

Strengths

- NSCC is filled with caring, competent professionals who are passionately committed to student and community success. Faculty and staff are well-qualified for their responsibilities and assignments. On every side of every agreement and disagreement, everyone is eager to fulfill the college's mission by serving students and improving the college.

- Financial strength is increasing during very difficult times. As enrollment and other challenges continue, this will be a crucial asset.

- Planning and evaluation processes are comprehensive and structured to operationalize accountability.

- The program review process is thoughtfully designed to foster robust assessment and improvement. Having extended the process across all academic areas, the benefits of program review are coming to the rest of the college, starting with select student affairs functions. Program review data, along with input from advisory committees and industry partners, inform curriculum, learning and funding strategies.

- The new website is impressively navigable and descriptive. It advances transparency, familiarity with learning outcomes and much more.

- Investments in facilities and IT infrastructure are paying off. Technologies and buildings are generally up-to-date and well-maintained.

- The college is building and leveraging community partnerships while enhancing operations with grants and donations. One example of a recently awarded grant with transformative potential is Title III *Pathways to Success.* This grant will enhance student relationship management by integrating critical enrollment and retention activities with evidence-based assessment of student learning outcomes at course- and program-levels.

- Survey input has led to improvements in shared governance. Shared governance has untapped potential as a forum for addressing concerns through genuine collaboration.

Concerns

- Many faculty and some staff feel that decisions are generally made in a top-down manner that precludes meaningful communication and empowered collaboration. On matters ranging from curriculum and advising to professional development and student support, college-wide progress is hindered by a lack of faculty voice.

- While substantial progress is being made on learning and institutional outcomes, loops need to be closed by measuring outcomes, analyzing assessment results and making informed improvements at course-, program-, general-education, and institutional levels.