



NSC CORE THEMES

GROUNDING OUR MISSION
FULFILLMENT PLAN

Why Core Themes

Historical Role of Core Themes

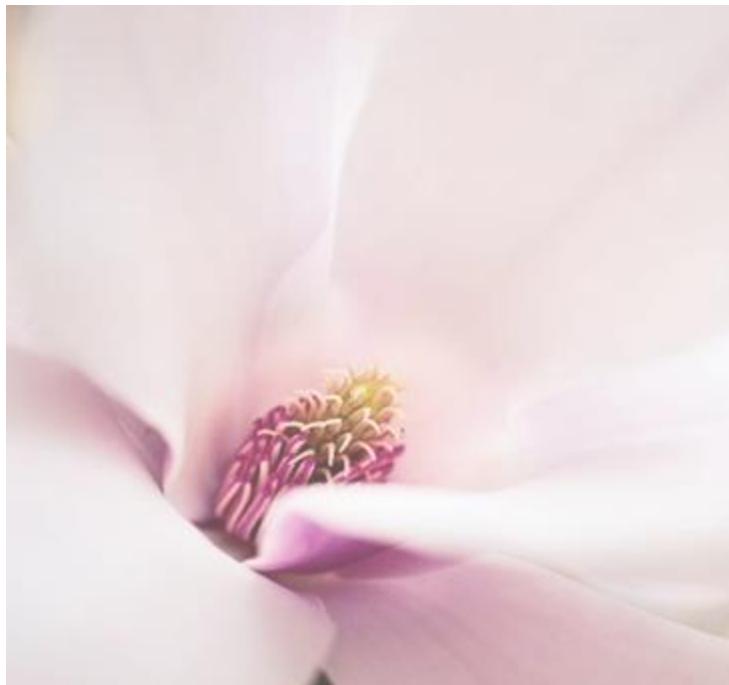
- Under the pre-2020 standards, institutions were required to:
- Define **core themes** that represented essential elements of their mission.
- Establish **objectives** for each core theme.
- Identify **meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators** to evaluate the achievement of those objectives
- Use these indicators to determine **mission fulfillment**.

Figure 1

Core Themes	Student Success	Percent of achievement of each indicator rolls up to percent of objective achievement.	Percent of achievement of each objective rolls up to percent of core theme achievement.	Percent of achievement of each core theme rolls up to percent of mission fulfillment .	Mission Fulfillment
Teaching & Learning		Percent of achievement of each indicator rolls up to percent of objective achievement.	Percent of achievement of each objective rolls up to percent of core theme achievement.	Percent of achievement of each core theme rolls up to percent of mission fulfillment .	
Building Community		Percent of achievement of each indicator rolls up to percent of objective achievement.	Percent of achievement of each objective rolls up to percent of core theme achievement.	Percent of achievement of each core theme rolls up to percent of mission fulfillment .	

May 2010: Birth of NSC Core Themes

Source: [2011 year One Self Evaluation Report](#).



Core Theme 1: Advancing Student Success	
<p>Advancing Student Success means that we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• create a culture that intentionally places student learning and growth at the center of what we do;• promote student engagement with coursework, faculty and staff, and co-curricular activities;• foster active, collaborative, self-directed learning;• support student perseverance and goal completion.	
Objectives	Indicators of Achievement
1.1 Students are actively engaged in learning and co-curricular activities.	1.1.1 Students' self-report on relevant scales from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and related surveys 1.1.2 Faculty/staff perceptions of student engagement 1.1.3 Numbers of students participating in co-curricular activities, and their assessments of those activities
1.2. Students use available support services.	1.2.1 Students' self-report on relevant scales from the CCSSE and related surveys 1.2.2 Usage reports from support services' offices
1.3. Students are successful in achieving their educational goals.	1.3.1 Student Achievement Initiative data 1.3.2 Overall and disaggregated student retention, progression, and completion rates 1.3.3 Students' self-report of goal achievement on surveys and interviews
1.4. Upon leaving the college, students succeed at the "next step" on their chosen pathway.	1.4.1 For students wishing to continue their education, transfer rates to baccalaureate institutions and success upon transfer 1.4.2 For students wishing to enter the workforce, training-related job placement or advancement



Core Theme 2: Excelling in Teaching And Learning	
<p><i>Excelling in Teaching and Learning</i> means that we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• engage in the work of teaching and learning with passion, vision, and creativity;• adapt to the needs of our rapidly changing world by changing ourselves, our curriculum, our services, and our practices;• ensure the effectiveness and quality of our work through ongoing assessment and professional development.	
Objectives	Indicators of Achievement
2.1. Faculty regularly assess student learning outcomes at the course, program and institutional levels, and provide feedback to students on their performance.	2.1.1 Annual records of faculty assessment of student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels 2.1.2 Student reports of awareness of student learning outcomes, and of faculty feedback on their performance
2.2. Faculty use assessment information to improve their own professional practice.	2.2.1 Annual records of changes faculty have introduced as a result of assessment activities, including their impact on student learning 2.2.2 Student awareness of class or program changes made on the basis of faculty assessment practices
2.3. Evidence-based best practice innovations are regularly introduced into curriculum and support services.	2.3.1. Annual report of faculty and student participation in instructional innovations (e.g. eLearning technologies, integrated learning experiences, applied learning experiences, etc.) 2.3.2 Annual report of innovations in support services (e.g. transitions fairs, orientations, embedded student services, etc.)
2.4. Instructional programs are current.	2.4.1 For professional-technical programs: Industry-based assessments of program currency (e.g. Technical Advisory Committee assessment, external accreditations, industry certifications, etc.) 2.4.2. For transfer programs: an inventory of courses transferable to baccalaureate institutions 2.4.3 For basic skills programs: currency with state standards for basic skills programs 2.4.4 Number of course/program changes approved by the Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee 2.4.5 Educational scale ratings on STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System)
2.5. Employees pursue professional development to enhance knowledge and skills.	2.5.1 Average number of annual professional development activities by employee group 2.5.2 Percent of participation by employee group 2.5.3 Distribution of activities across various areas of development: teaching & learning, technology, diversity, leadership & community, sustainability 2.5.4 Annual compilation of publications, shows, presentations, awards, etc. by college employees



Core Theme 3: Building Community	
<p>Building Community means that we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• create a diverse, inclusive, and safe environment accessible to all;• strengthen our college community through open communication, civility, accountability, and mutual respect;• reach outside our institution to form local and global partnerships and pursue civic engagement;• work in ways that are environmentally, socially and fiscally sustainable.	
Objectives	Indicators of Achievement
3.1. The college creates and sustains a culture that is welcoming and supportive of employees, students, and other patrons of college services.	3.1.1 Student and employee diversity data 3.1.2 Student and employee satisfaction data 3.1.3 Patrons' ratings on customer service surveys
3.2. The college engages in community-based partnerships for mutual benefit.	3.2.1 Number and nature of partnerships 3.2.2 Breadth of partnerships (number of areas and participants involved) 3.2.3 Participants' satisfaction ratings 3.2.4 Annual revenue generated by partnerships
3.3. The college practices responsible stewardship of resources.	3.3.1 Annual FTES 3.3.2 Cash reserves 3.3.3 Revenue/expense ratio 3.3.4 Operations scale ratings on STARS

Timeline



2013

reduced objectives from 12 to 3 per core themes



2017

with new leadership and strategic plan, core themes were reaffirmed with changes on objectives and measures. Core theme #3 included "Sustainable".



2016

further refinement on objectives and measures and reported on progress



2019

updated indicators and measures

Post 2020 NWCCU Core Themes

The 2020 NWCCU Standards shifted away from core themes and now emphasize:

- Student success as the primary measure of institutional effectiveness.
- A continuous process of assessment and planning to improve learning outcomes.
- Use of meaningful indicators to evaluate institutional performance and mission fulfillment.
- A focus on equity, closing achievement gaps, and disaggregating data by student demographi

Timeline

2023

North has maintained the following Core Themes:

- Advancing Student Success
- Excelling in Teaching and Learning
- Building a Sustainable Community

Each Core Theme has five or six Objectives that are named and defined in NSC's [Institutional Effectiveness Plan](#), serving as performance indicators. When NWCCU reorganized the Standards and moved away from the requirements of Core Themes, accredited institutions were given the freedom of holding onto their established Core Themes or moving away from them (as well as whether or not to use the new or old standards). After deliberations, the Executive Team decided to move to the new standards and hold onto the Core Themes as the framing elements of the college's Institutional Effectiveness Plan. The Executive Team believed there was enough time to reorganize around new standards, but it would be too disruptive to the overall college focus to abandon the Core Themes that college employees had come to know and work toward. Review and revision of the college's Institutional Effectiveness Plan (including Core Themes) will begin in late 2023, along with overall District strategic planning efforts.



NSC committed to review and reaffirm NSC's Core Themes and ELOs to align with the 2024-2034 Seattle College District Strategic Plan.

2025

Building on Institutional Effectiveness Plan of 2017

Advancing Student Success

At NSC, we see Advancing Student Success through creating college structures and student experiences that aid in student development leading up to their academic goals.

NSC achieves this through our institutional values by: Supporting a caring, inclusive, student-centered culture. We foster active, collaborative, and self-directed learning. We promote student engagement through embracing diversity of cultures, ideas, perspectives and people. We support innovation that leads to greater student success. We support student perseverance through institutional and student integrity and accountability. We strive for quality across student services, instruction, and administrative services areas so that our students have the ability to excel.

Excelling in Teaching & Learning

At NSC, we see Excelling in Teaching and Learning by embodying a "learning college" culture. We believe that as a learning college every area and program of the college contributes to the learning process. We focus on learning and not instruction as a structure. Additionally, teaching and learning is a reflexive and shared process where, regardless of our role in the institution, we are both teachers and learners at the same time.

NSC achieves this through our stated institutional values by: Engaging in the work of teaching and learning while caring for the learner as a whole person. We support collaboration through the interchange of teaching and learning across the institution. We create inclusive environments that bring learners together to construct knowledge in their own diverse ways. We support innovation, knowing that learning occurs in many ways, anywhere, and at any time. We help learners engage in the knowledge development process, as they demonstrate personal integrity and accountability for their own learning. We strive for quality and effectiveness through the creation of standards, formative assessment, and measurable outcomes.

Building a Sustainable Community

At NSC, we see Building a Sustainable Community as an important ethical standard driven by the "triple bottom line." Thus, before the college engages in an internal or external community program or service, we will determine the social, fiscal and environmental impact of the college's actions.

NSC achieves this through our stated institutional values by: Ensuring our work is performed with a caring and inclusive perspective for all communities and the environment. Maintaining and growing collaborative relationships with our community to establish synergies of scale and outcome. Affirming that the college is a microcosm of society, we actively strengthen our work in social diversity, inclusion, and equity. Supporting innovation with unique approaches that reflect the changing needs of various communities. Demonstrating integrity by the transparent application of "the triple bottom line." Assessing for quality and commonality in mission as we work with our various on-and-off campus partners.

Building on Institutional Effectiveness Plan of 2017

Advancing Student Success

Goal: To significantly increase the % of students who successfully complete their educational goals.

- *Increase SAI points
- *Increase fall to winter retention rates for full and part-time students
- *Increase % of students reporting that they are meeting or definitely meeting their educational goals
- *Increase the % of professional-technical completers who are employed in any field after leaving the college
- *Increase the # of students who complete a degree or certificate
- *Increase the equity of academic success of all student groups

Excelling in Teaching & Learning

Goal: To produce more opportunities for knowledge and skill development for every learner.

- *Increase documented achievement of ELOs, program learning outcomes and course learning outcomes
- *Increase student satisfaction with meaningful learning experiences
- *Increase documented achievement of instructional support programs through review and assessment of goals
- *Increase efforts to promote and track external recognition of institutional excellence in teaching and learning
- *Increase % of employees who report applying new knowledge derived from professional development to their work

Building a Sustainable Community

Goal: To use a long-range perspective to make decisions that lead to a fiscally, socially, and environmentally sustainable institution

- *Increase the development of an equitable and inclusive campus
- *Increase engagement of strategic partnerships that support the triple bottom line
- *Increase state-funded, contract-funded and continuing education enrollments (annualized FTEs)
- *Increase the development of the college's sustainability efforts in resource utilization, curriculum, and campus culture
- *Balance operational plans and fiscal capacity for institutional effectiveness

SUMMER 2025 CORE THEME TASKFORCE

**SAMANTHA DOLAN
DAWN CHEUNG
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CAROLINE PEW
EMILY RODRIGUEZ
NEAL PARKER
JILL LANE
KATE MONTGOMERY**

MEMBERS

EXPLANATION OF CORE THEMES

Our Core Themes reflect the collective values and priorities of the North Seattle College community. They guide how we support ***students, empower staff and faculty, and serve our community.*** These themes shape our decisions, interactions, and priorities across all aspects of college operations.

Task force Proposed Core Themes

Centering Students (SCD 1, 2)

At North Seattle College, we center students in college governance, teaching, and learning. We are committed to continually improving the student experience through innovation, inspiration, and data-informed practices. Students are integral in shaping and co-creating programs, services, and culture of the college through shared governance. College culture prioritizes fostering safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural responsiveness. These commitments foster an environment that supports students fulfilling their educational, professional, and personal goals. **Note:** “safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural responsiveness” is language specific to trauma informed practices.

Thriving Communities (SCD 4)

At North Seattle College, we believe that education is most powerful when rooted in community. Our college exists in community with students, faculty and staff, neighbors, and our local, regional, state, and global partners.

We dedicate ourselves to building and sustaining thriving communities both on campus and beyond. We foster a learning environment where belonging, connection, and collaboration are prioritized. Within the college, we invest in structures and relationships that empower students, faculty, and staff to grow together as a supportive and inclusive community.

We cultivate partnerships that advance educational opportunity, civic engagement, economic development, basic needs, and cultural enrichment. We recognize our responsibility as a public institution to co-create solutions with the communities we serve and to contribute to a more just and vibrant society. Through these efforts, North Seattle College strives to be a place where all members of our communities can thrive, individually and collectively.

Honoring Employees (SCD 3)

At North Seattle College, we recognize that our employees are essential to the mission of education and community engagement. We acknowledge the challenges our community faces, and we commit to growing and learning from those challenges together.

We recognize we are working within inequitable systems, and remain committed to challenging and transforming those systems, even as we navigate them. Our aim is to cultivate a workplace where all employees feel valued, supported, and connected to our shared mission.

Supporting employees means building a culture of mutual respect, trust, healing, and shared purpose. We strive to center safety, equity, and empowerment in our daily practices, understanding that this work is ongoing and collective.

Cabinet Feedback Version 1

Centering Students

We center students in all we do to support their success through **excellence in teaching and learning**. Excellence in teaching and learning means we continually evolve our practices, services, and programs to meet the diverse and changing needs of our students.

We are committed to continually improving the student experience through innovation, inspiration, and data-informed practices. Students are integral in shaping and co-creating programs, services, and culture of our caring college through shared governance.

College culture prioritizes safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural responsiveness. These commitments foster an environment that supports students fulfilling their educational, professional, and personal goals.

Sample Element:

- *Commitment to adaptability
- *Student voice
- *Title honors diverse educational goals
- *equity
- *teaching and learning

Thriving Communities

At North Seattle College, we believe that education is most powerful when rooted in community. Our college exists in community with students, faculty and staff, neighbors, and our local, regional, state, and global partners.

We dedicate ourselves to enriching and sustaining diverse, engaged and dynamic communities both on campus and beyond. We foster a learning environment where belonging, connection, and collaboration are prioritized.

We cultivate partnerships that advance educational opportunity, civic engagement, economic development, basic needs, and cultural enrichment. **We recognize our responsibility as a public institution to co-create solutions with the communities we serve—grounding our efforts in both data-informed insights and the collective wisdom of our people.** At North Seattle College, we believe that meaningful change emerges when evidence meets empathy. By combining rigorous analysis with lived experience, we generate intelligence that leads to impactful, community-centered actions.

Through these efforts, North Seattle College strives to be a just and vibrant society where all members of our communities can thrive, individually and collectively.

- *belonging, connection & collaboration
- Partnerships advance educational opportunity, economic development, basic needs, cultural enrichment
- *co create solutions
- *culture of evidence
- *thrive individual & collective with equity lens

Honoring Employees

At North Seattle College, we recognize that our employees are essential to the mission of education and community engagement. We honor the humanity and dedication each person brings to our shared work.

This approach reflects our culture of care, where we recognize that we thrive when we connect with compassion and lead with kindness rather than when we connect with blame and shame. We acknowledge the challenges our community faces, and we commit to growing and learning from those challenges together. We recognize we are working within inequitable systems, and remain committed to challenging and transforming those systems, even as we navigate them.

We cultivate a caring workplace where all employees feel valued, supported, and connected to our shared mission, leading to a collective impact that is thoughtful, inclusive, and transformative. Supporting employees means building a culture of mutual respect, trust, healing, and shared purpose. We strive to center safety, equity, and empowerment in our daily practices, understanding that this work is ongoing and collective.

- *culture of care
- *employees feel valued, supported & connected
- *collective impact -thoughtful, inclusive & transformative
- *safety, equity, empowerment

NSC MEASURE OF SUCCESS

NORTH STARS = STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENTS

NEAR STARS = CORE
THEMES



NORTH STARS METRICS: EVIDENCE OF MISSION FULFILLMENT

GROUNDED ON OUR MISSION

"AS AN OPEN-ACCESS LEARNING INSTITUTION, SEATTLE COLLEGES PREPARES EACH STUDENT FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE AND WORK, FOSTERING A DIVERSE, ENGAGED, AND DYNAMIC COMMUNITY."

- **ACCESS**
 - ENROLLMENT (PARITY ADDRESSING POPULATION GAPS)
- **SUCCESS IN LIFE AND WORK**
 - COURSE COMPLETION - (INCLUDING COURSE ATTEMPTS)
 - CERTIFICATE/DEGREE COMPLETION
 - LICENSURE PASS - HISET OR HS COMPLETION??
 - TRANSFER(WITH TRANSFER SUCCESS)
 - JOB PLACEMENT
- **DIVERSE, ENGAGED & DYNAMIC COMMUNITY**
 - EMSI, STATE OF ECONOMY???
 - CITY OF SEATTLE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS)?
 - INCOME AND OCCUPATION
 - POVERTY & EMPLOYMENT STATUS
 - EDUCATION

Near Stars Metrics: Continuous Quality improvement

Grounded on Core Themes

Centering Students

- Course completion (degree vs non degree)???
- SLOs??? North Star
- Student CCSSE or Student Survey

Thriving Communities

- Partnerships?

Honoring Employees

- Campus Climate Survey (with caucus)
- Professional Dev completion or participation

CORE THEMES: FOCUSSED PRIORITIES



Students: Strengthening Student Journeys from Outreach to Outcomes

- Grow enrollment 8% or higher (retention),
- Improving student engagements & experience
- Increasing our students' attainment of credentials of value (beyond transfer)
- Expand work based and experiential or project-based learning e.g. Learn & Earn while continuing to connect our students to the community
- Explore summer bridge FYE

Centering Students

We will focus our efforts to improve 1) Outreach and Recruitment and 2) student achievement with high impact engagement and support using Guided Pathways framework.

SCD Goal 1 & 2

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

WE WILL FOCUS OUR EFFORTS TO EXPAND OUR PARTNERS TO DIVERSIFY OUR RESOURCES AND BUILD CONNECTIONS TO OUR COMMUNITY.

SCD GOAL #1

Community **Strengthening** **Partnerships for Impact: Growing** **Resources, Deepening Roots**

- Expanding community using us as a resource (e.g. space)
- Increase new students to support 8% growth. Look into outreach/retention of older learners
- Extending partners to support basic needs
- Community engagement with retirees & alumni
- Expand partnerships, diversify resources

Honoring Employees

We will focus on improving our operational and foundational systems and infrastructures to provide our employees stability, caring support and growth opportunities.

SCD Goal 3 & 4

Each Other Foundations of Care: Strengthening Systems for Employee Success

- Efficiency in use of resources
- Focus on the OCR audits and how to improve accessibility
- Fix broken infrastructures like business process improvements
- Fiscal sustainability – meeting fiscal goals
- Exploring ethical use of A1 in our capacity