



**Northern  
COLLEGE**

# **ACADEMIC PLAN**

2020-2023



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# VISION

## VISION

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*Success for all through learning and partnerships.*

## MISSION

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*Excelling in quality, accessible education through innovative programs, services and partnerships for the benefit of our northern communities.*

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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- Learning for success
- Career opportunities through innovative education and transferable skills
- Practical experience
- Value for your investment
- Support for lifelong learning
- A healthy, adaptive and progressive organizational culture

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

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- Accessibility
- Signature Programs
- The Northern Experience
- Indigenous Perspectives







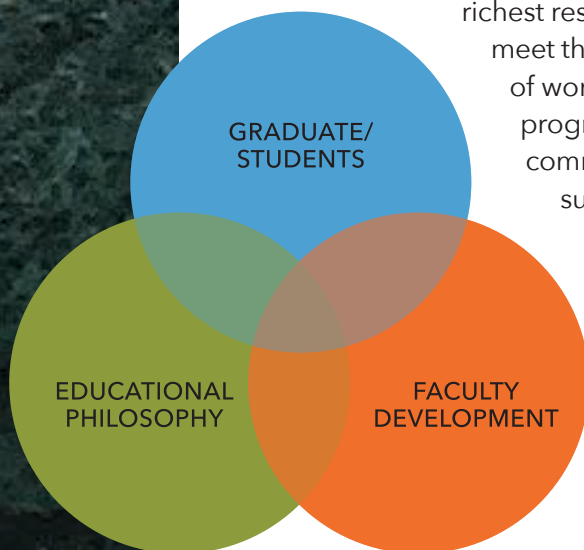
## INTRODUCTION

Northern College is known for its small class sizes, high quality graduates and employer satisfaction. Northern College aspires to be the college of choice for Indigenous peoples. Northern College has dedicated and dynamic faculty, support staff and administrators who assure high quality education and a caring atmosphere for students. In compiling this academic plan, Northern College expands on its long history of high caliber programming and graduates by outlining future priorities in academic programming.

The purpose of this academic plan is to define the 'road map' integrating the strategic plan with program delivery in a cohesive articulation. The plan is used to guide programming development and delivery while providing aspirational goals for students, the institution, and all employees within the College.

The academic plan is rested upon three foundational elements: 1) graduates/students; 2) educational philosophy, and 3) faculty development. These three elements are interdependent, and no one area exists in isolation from the others. At the core of our business, we are here for students. These students become graduates who work with industry to support continued economic growth within Northeastern Ontario. In order to equip these students with the learning and skills they need, our educational philosophy has to be clear for all to understand what it is we are trying to achieve, and how we will achieve it. We are accountable to our students for implementing a practical, yet transformational educational philosophy that includes experiential learning. As an institution, our educational philosophy incorporates applied research, working collaboratively with industry to solve problems. Our faculty are the most visible ambassadors of Northern College and our

richest resource. As education evolves to meet the needs of an ever-changing world of work, so must the skill sets we bring to program delivery. To that end, we are committed to assuring faculty have the support they need to align skill sets with the workforce and demands of this century. These three elements interplay at all times during the course of program delivery. Our aspirational goals and commitment to these three elements comprise this academic plan.



# GRADUATES

## ASPIRATIONAL GOALS FOR NORTHERN COLLEGE GRADUATES:

- Be prepared for continuous learning and skills development
- Have the foundational knowledge and skills related to their field of employment
- Have a broad base of supporting knowledge and skills to help them adapt to a constantly changing workforce - the T shape

All learning is a journey, and Northern College recognizes learning journeys are unique. We are here for students, with a goal of ensuring all students acquire the skills they need for future and long term employability. Students are at the heart of what we do at Northern College.

Our graduates are the next generation workforce and contribute to economic development for the region, the province and the country. Our graduates will be competent in their fields of study and generate a high degree of employer satisfaction, regardless of industrial sector. We consider our graduates to be the best ambassadors of Northern College and the Northern experience. Northern College programming will link to industry to assure work integration of learning occurs.

As the world rapidly changes, skill sets change. Knowledge bases slow to change in previous decades have become more fluid, with knowledge doubling in very short timeframes. We cannot possibly teach our students everything they need to know as graduates. We can assure our graduates have the skills to be adaptive in a constantly changing economic environment, with a commitment to continue to develop their knowledge and skills.

Northern College is committed to student success through high quality programming along with a variety of supports, focused upon the wellness of the student: the “whole student.” In setting aspirational goals for our graduates, we commit to a learning experience that is student centered. How we define and measure student success is the essence of the Northern College learning experience. We recognize all students arrive with skills and abilities, and these levels vary. Northern College has a committed Student Advising team, who excel at helping students succeed. Developing proactive processes for student advising, is a priority for this team. To assure the learning journey succeeds, we focus upon student success at all touchpoints during their educational journey at Northern College.

## STUDENT SUCCESS

At Northern College, student success is stated in our Vision and Mission. Student success is Northern College’s highest priority. Everyone is responsible for student success. Student Advising staff work to assure in time, on time support for all students in their learning journey. Support for Indigenous learning and culture is critical to serving the needs of northeastern Ontario. This support is how we achieve success for our institutional mandate.

Northern College’s commitment to student success is based upon a value system entrenched in the Northern College culture. This value system defines our approach to individual learning needs: students are at the centre of everything Northern College does; therefore, our approach to student success includes all faculty, support staff, and administrators. Policies and procedures reflect this priority.



## STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGY

To assure we meet our priority, key principles have been defined for student success. These principles are designed with the belief that everyone is responsible for student success.

The key principles to Northern College's student success strategies are:

- Inviting and responsive proactive approaches
- Student identification of their needs 'in time/on time' to meet students' needs
- Technology utilized where possible to expand reach, and build early connections with students

## HOW DO WE SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS TO GRADUATION?

- Recognize students are the best experts on their individual experience
- Ensure academic policies and procedures are student centered
- Assure student success/retention strategies are evidence based, evaluated and updated as needed
- Recognize the variety of needs and learning styles in individual learning journeys
- Refine and promote skill sets required for work preparedness
- Map skill sets to programs
- Show progress towards Truth and Reconciliation
- Provide flexible program delivery to accommodate unique learning journeys
- Utilize technology enhanced tools for student access and support





## EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

### ASPIRATIONAL GOALS FOR LEARNING

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- Develop programs based upon vocational learning outcomes inclusive of Building a Strong Fire: Indigenous Quality Standards in Ontario Colleges, while adhering to quality assurance standards as outlined by the Colleges Quality Assurance and Accreditation Program (CQAAP)
- Employ Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in course delivery
- Provide flexible delivery to meet ever-changing student needs and demographics
- Ensure curriculum is current, validated, with experiential learning activities in all programs, incorporated work integrated learning, and utilizing assessments approaches that are authentic and formative
- Develop credential recognition that meets industry needs as well as the Ontario Qualification Framework
- Deliver programs within the context of our unique existence as a small college in Northeastern Ontario

An academic plan provides the 'road map' for integration of the Strategic Plan with high quality program delivery. This plan is about 'how' we do things, the 'what' we do is determined through economic development, community and industry needs. Educational philosophy shapes curriculum development and flexible program delivery. Learning integrated with work placements enhances the quality of programming and the educational experience of our students.

As an institution, our educational philosophy is about beliefs, values, and assumptions. Our beliefs guide us in the interests of aligning learning with industry need. Our values drive 'how' we do this. Everyone's learning journey is unique. We believe all students can and will learn given the right opportunities and time. Our assumptions reflect an approach that supports these beliefs and values.

Northern College works with diverse cultures and learners. To meet the needs of all learners, a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach is recognized as a best practice in post-secondary learning. Many aspects of UDL are already incorporated into Northern College's classrooms, and faculty practice these principles. It is time to clearly articulate these principles, and provide UDL as the basis for future program design and delivery.





## PRINCIPLES FOR LEARNING DESIGN

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- Utilize UDL to create expert learners
- Intentional and proactive application of UDL
- Incorporate authentic assessment as a quality measure of learning
- Apply UDL as a dynamic process, never ending and always under review
- Give faculty options to meet student needs and in turn students driving what their needs are.
- Recognize how to adapt UDL to distance/online/modular learning delivery models

## HOW WILL WE SUPPORT AND EXPAND OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY?

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- Incorporate UDL principles into all courses and programs
- Offer training and support in UDL principles and delivery methods to staff and faculty
- Create highly interactive learning environments that capture the essence of experiential learning
- Promote and sustain work integrated learning opportunities for all programs
- Build authentic and formative assessment strategies into all program areas
- Define expansion of and support for flexible delivery opportunities for our vast geographical region

“Northern has exceeded my expectations. I know how successful other welding grads from this program are, and being here, learning in this environment, I completely understand why.”

Megan Reppard, Welding Engineering Technology,  
Kirkland Lake



# FACULTY DEVELOPMENT



## ASPIRATIONAL GOALS FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

- A culture of progressive learning is established
- Sustainable practices for program delivery are employed
- Digital competency is supported and developed
- Consistent orientation is provided for all new faculty

Northern College faculty are key to successful program delivery and student success. While student success is everyone's responsibility, faculty are intricately entwined in the student learning experience. Within the parameters of Ministry binding policy and as outlined in Northern College policy, faculty enjoy academic freedom.

Faculty are recruited and employed by Northern College on the basis of their industry knowledge and expertise. Northern College provides the enabling environment to insure faculty engage in their development as teaching professionals.

## PRINCIPLES FOR FACULTY SUPPORT

- Quality Matters will be the standard for course design
- Existing curriculum will be maintained in a master course format
- Experiential learning and highly interactive environments will be encouraged
- Assessment strategies will be aligned to 'real world' evaluations

## HOW WILL WE SUPPORT FACULTY?

- Mentorship and peer support will be encouraged within faculty groups
- Digital competency will be measured and enhanced
- Faculty will define their professional development
- Professional development opportunities will be guided by the academic plan
- Continuous professional development will be encouraged and supported
- Promising practices will be shared and promoted amongst faculty
- Principles of instructional design will be provided for incorporation into teaching plans
- Academic integrity will be highlighted and promoted as it relates to academic planning and delivery





## CONCLUSION

As an institution, Northern College is known for high quality programming and a caring environment. Our small size defines our relationship with our students.

The Strategic Plan emphasizes a vision of successful learning. This academic plan addresses how successful learning is incorporated with three key elements:

- 1) graduates/students;
- 2) educational philosophy; and
- 3) faculty development.

Individual learning journeys will be supported through the implementation of this plan.

Implementation of the academic plan is ongoing and will be evaluated yearly. The purpose of this plan is to provide a 'road map' for the integration of program delivery with Northern College's Strategic Plan. Articulation of the plan, enhances program delivery while supporting faculty to ensure student success.

**We are here for students.**



# Proud to be North. Proud to be Northern.

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“The teachers are the reason this program is such a success. They take the time to connect with students on an individual level to gain an understanding of their day-to-day lives.”

Rob Cameron, Social Service Worker, Timmins

