

# WINTER OPEN APPLY

**N** Northern  
COLLEGE

2024/27



Approved by the Board of Governors  
May 9, 2023

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## TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional and territorial lands of the Cree, Oji-Cree, Ojibway, and Algonquin homelands. We acknowledge these ancestral lands that we are gathered on, which continue to interconnect us all and remind us that we are all treaty people. First Nation communities now located on these lands include: Temagami, Timiskaming, Matachewan, Mattagami, Apitipi Anicinapek Nation, Taykwa Tagamou, Beaverhouse, Flying Post, Moose Cree, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Attawapiskat Weenusk, and Metis Peoples Region #3.



# INTRODUCTION

Northern College launched its inaugural Academic Plan in August of 2020. At that time, we, like so many others across the world, were engaged headlong in the global fight to curtail the spread of COVID19, and to provide our students, staff, and faculty a safe and fulfilling educational experience. The victories won, and lessons learned since the release of the 2020-23 Academic Plan have had the marked effect of accelerating our growth and maturity as an institution.

While there are many examples of the impact this has had across the College, none is perhaps more striking than the impact this has had on our students and graduates, and the practices by which our Faculty and Staff now rely on to ensure we fulfill our vision and mission. For that reason, and with the lessons of the past 3 years in mind, we turned our attention to producing the next iteration of the College Academic Plan.

This is being done with the recognition that the landscape has shifted and our best path to future success is to take measure of the things that have served us well, and to propose new aspirations that reflect our post-pandemic growth. This document takes the foundational work of the College's Strategic Plan and serves as the pole star for our academic priorities - it will be our guidebook as we work towards realizing our special place in the educational landscape of Northeastern Ontario and the world.

This academic plan is built upon three interdependent foundational elements: 1) graduates/students; 2) educational philosophy, and 3) academic professional development. These three elements interplay at all times during the course of program delivery. In crafting the 2024-27 Academic Plan, we reviewed and affirmed the 3 original foundational elements, viewing those through a lens of our current and future priorities: as an institution, we are tasked with providing our students with all of the necessary tools and supports required for them to be successful in their chosen career goals. Our educational philosophy is the way in which we intend to deliver on that task.

Our commitment to Academic Professional Development recognizes that not only Faculty, but everyone who interfaces with students shares the responsibility that comes with our mission.

The work that we do as a College provides for us a unique opportunity to effect real change towards making the world a better place to live for ourselves and future generations. Our commitment to do our part towards that ultimate goal underpins much of our planning for the future of the College, across all departments, but especially in the Academic sphere.



**This academic plan is built upon three interdependent foundational elements**

**Graduates & Students**

**Educational Philosophy**

**Academic Professional Development**





# COLLEGE VISION & MISSION

The Strategic Directions of Northern College are foundational to the action items included in the year's Academic Plan.

## MISSION

Building community across the North through partnerships and excellence in education.

## VISION

Empowerment through learning to build a better world.

## MOTTO

Proud to be North. Proud to be Northern.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Learning for empowerment
- ✓ Accessibility for learners
- ✓ Diversity and inclusion for a progressive organizational culture
- ✓ Career opportunities through innovative education and transferable skill development
- ✓ Relevant applied experiences
- ✓ Value for investment
- ✓ Support for lifelong learning
- ✓ Continuous Improvement
- ✓ Intentional communications
- ✓ Transparency

## INDIGENOUS STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

In aspiring to become the college of choice for Indigenous learners, we shall integrate the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Indigenous Education Protocols developed by Colleges and Institutes Canada; and we shall conduct ourselves with the spirit of Indigenous Peoples' teachings.

# **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**



**We will be courageous and steadfast in  
being truly student-centred by establishing:**

**INDIGENOUS EDUCATION  
AND EMPOWERMENT**

**INNOVATIVE  
APPROACHES TO ACCESS**

**INVIGORATING  
NORTHERN EXPERIENCES**



# GRADUATES & STUDENTS

## Aspirational Goals for Northern College Graduates & Students

- ✓ Understand the value of continuous learning and skills development throughout and beyond their program of study
- ✓ Develop the foundational knowledge and skills related to their field of employment
- ✓ Gain the breadth and depth of knowledge and skills that will allow for career success in a rapidly evolving workplace
- ✓ Gain an enhanced capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect



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.



– Audrey J. Penner  
President & CEO



Our graduates and current students are the next generation workforce and contribute to economic development for the region, the province and the country. In many circumstances, our students are contributing to the workforce and local employers' success while they study. To this end, we aspire to ensure that current students and graduates will not only be competent in their fields of study but will demonstrate the essential employability skills that College students and graduates are prized for.

Our goal is to 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.

The reality of today's work environment is one of constant change and adaptation. This dynamic has only been accelerated post-pandemic, and calls for students and graduates to be prepared - not only to enter the workforce with the skills required for this moment in time - but the ability to gain new skills rapidly.

We strive to ensure our students gain a depth of program content and a breadth of skill across a wide range of dimensions, including those meta-cognitive domains that will help graduates understand their own learning process.

As the world has made a significant shift to increased remote learning and work, we remain committed to ensuring Northern College students and graduates are comfortable in these environments. These efforts will allow our graduates to enter the workforce job-ready, adaptable, and eager to take on new challenges and new skills.

We continue the long path towards reconciliation, undertaking the Calls to Action for education published by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. All students and graduates of Northern College will have the opportunity to gain an enhanced capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.

This is achieved through several targeted initiatives, including content embedment, programming, and Northern Experiences. Graduates can take these skills with them to their employers and, together, be voices for reconciliation locally, nationally, and world-wide.





# EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

## Aspirational Goals for Learning

- ✓ Foster a culture of continuous improvement in Program Quality Assurance, meeting Program Standards set out by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU), Colleges Quality Assurance and Audit Process (CQAAP) standards, and established Indigenous Quality Standards
- ✓ Further employ Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in course delivery
- ✓ Provide flexible delivery where possible to meet students where and when they are ready to learn
- ✓ Enhance Work-integrated and Experiential Learning, and Applied Research opportunities in all programs of study
- ✓ Provide state-of-the-art learning tools for the benefit of students and faculty
- ✓ Develop prior learning and credential recognition that meets industry needs as well as the Ontario Qualification Framework
- ✓ Leverage our position as a unique institution in Northeastern Ontario to deliver programs and services true to the Northern Experience
- ✓ Generate a mindset of sustainability by integrating Sustainable Development concepts and content into existing academic programming, applied research efforts, and new program offerings

Continuing to develop and deliver relevant, high-quality, and sustainable learning experiences demands that we respect each student's unique context by implementing flexible and innovative models for curriculum delivery, differentiating instruction and assessment strategies, adopting educational technology that facilitates student engagement and providing 'real-world' opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge and skills. It is within this framework for success that Northern College will continue to strive and achieve its aspirational goals.

– Dean Lessard,

Dean of Community Services,  
Learning Excellence and  
Innovation Department (LEID)



The Academic Plan exists at the intersection of the Strategic Plan and a number of guidance documents and related annual plans. Together, these documents shape the future of the academic enterprises at our College.

Simply stated, the Academic Plan is how the various Academic and related departments propose to uphold our Vision and satisfy our Mission. It is not an exhaustive list of activities we will undertake in the next three years, but it does lay out the basic principles of how we will approach those activities.

This iteration of the Academic Plan builds on the belief that a strong foundation starts with a sound educational philosophy. Northern's educational philosophy is one that is grounded in a strong belief in the transformative power of education - for both student and Industry. It is focused on fostering the intellectual, emotional, social, and ethical development of graduates through an approach informed by research, reflective practice, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Our academic programming, services, and supports are the manifestation of our philosophy and we will work to ensure that all of these elements are critically examined for opportunities to improve and assessed against CQAAP and Indigenous Quality Assurance Standards.

Our commitment to meet the needs of all learners is as strong today as it has ever been. We have seen the power of Universal Design for Learning in our own classrooms, and we continue to ensure all students experience a classroom environment where UDL is employed.

Along with the tremendous number of changes to programming and supports that resulted from the COVID19 Pandemic, we were also acutely reminded of the intrinsic inter-connectivity that all people share with one another as we pulled together as a global community. We recognize that perhaps now, more than ever in our history, we are compelled to meet students where and when they are ready to learn. This also requires us to examine the changing needs of Industry and develop new and innovative credentials that are validated and valued by Industry.



Our ability to link Industry with future talent requires us to take student-centered learning to the industry setting. Work-integrated and experiential learning, including the opportunity to engage in hands-on research to solve Industrial challenges, is a competitive advantage of colleges. Our graduates are more employable with this type of experience in their programming. This, coupled with classroom and laboratory learning that employs modern pedagogical and industrial tools, creates an environment for learning that is both holistic and of high quality.

One of the many ways in which we can transform the life journey of our students is by valuing the prior learning and work experience that many of them already possess when beginning their studies. We aspire to be innovative and inclusive in our approach to recognizing the work experience and prior credentials of learners.

Sustainability in all that we partake in is of critical importance to the future of our College and the communities we serve. By viewing our activities through the lens of sustainable development, we ensure that we are providing our students, graduates, faculty, and staff with a foundation for learning that we can all be proud of. To this end, Northern College has signed on to the Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICAN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Accord – a commitment to leverage the opportunities that an institution like ours enjoys towards broadening worldwide progress in meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals . Academic programming and Applied Research at the College will be instrumental in Northern meeting our commitment to the Accord, allowing graduates to reap the benefit of gaining an understanding of just how important sustainable practices are to the future of the planet.

All of these goals contribute to a student experience that is student-centered, evidence-based, inclusive, and committed to fostering lifelong learning and personal growth.

## **This is the Northern Experience.**



# ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Aspirational Goals for Faculty and Staff Development

- ✓ Aim for Excellence in Faculty and Staff Professional Growth and Development across all domains
- ✓ Ensure Faculty are afforded the opportunity to develop as educators and researchers
- ✓ Enable Faculty to work towards digital fluency and competency in teaching and learning tools
- ✓ Encourage and provide opportunity for Faculty and Staff to enhance digital literacy and skills
- ✓ Generate a “Student Success” mindset among all Faculty and Staff

Northern College Faculty and Staff are at the forefront of our program and service delivery. By virtue of this position, they are critical to our goal of student success. As an institution focused on student success, it is therefore of paramount importance that Faculty and Staff grow and develop as professionals across all domains of the student experience. Our commitment to support our students is met by our commitment to support faculty and staff in their growth and development. We do this by setting a standard of excellence that all Academic Faculty and Staff aspire to achieve.



Through a series of training opportunities for all faculty, Northern College has demonstrated its commitment to providing accessible programs for all learners, based on the principles of UDL. The college recognized that these changes were necessary to empower today’s learner to be successful.



– Tara Duclos, Professor,  
Coordinator, Community  
Services



**The previous Academic Plan laid out a number of Principles for supporting Faculty. We recommit to those Principles here:**

- ✓ 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

**Academic Staff are often the first point of contact for our students and graduates, and we propose the following Principles for supporting Academic Staff:**

- ✓ Use of Professional Development Days will be encouraged
- ✓ Digital Literacy and digital skill enhancement will be readily available to all Academic Staff
- ✓ Academic Deans will seek out opportunities for Staff Growth and Development relevant to programming needs
- ✓ Opportunities for cross-training between support staff will be encouraged
- ✓ Academic Support Staff will be afforded opportunities to observe and join Academic meetings and committees

To deliver on our aspirational goal of being able to meet students in a flexible format - where and when they are ready and able to learn - we must ensure that Faculty and Staff have both the comfort and knowhow to move with ease among the various digital environments and platforms where learning and service occurs.

The interface between student and College is expanding and it will serve the College well to have all Faculty and Staff working with ease in these real and virtual environments. However, the medium in which we interact, albeit important, is not the only factor in ensuring students are supported on their way to success.

All Academic Faculty and Staff remain focused on Student Success and must support students in gaining as much as possible from their experience here. Generating a student success mindset, one that ensures we are focused on the highest levels of service to students and interest holders, through targeted professional development and training, will be fundamental to supporting students in the many domains in which we now engage them.



# CONCLUSION

The Academic Plan 2024-27 sets out the broad strokes for how the Academic and related department areas intend to support Canada's Kindest College in realizing its strategic priorities. Our Educational Philosophy informs our focus on Graduate and Student success and Faculty and Staff Academic Professional Development. These three elements are the critical areas where the College Strategic Plan comes to life in the most meaningful way.

As we move forward in the implementation of this Academic Plan, we will continue to measure our success and readjust our efforts in response to the impact we see on our Students, Graduates, Faculty, and Staff. This is a plan that is intended to live alongside our Strategic Plan, College Mission, and College Vision. Like the roadmap that it is intended to be, this plan can show us the direction to take, but it is up to us as a College to choose to follow that guidance. Some routes are easier than others to navigate, but, with a good map, we have the means to find success for our students.





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