



NORTHERN COLLEGE

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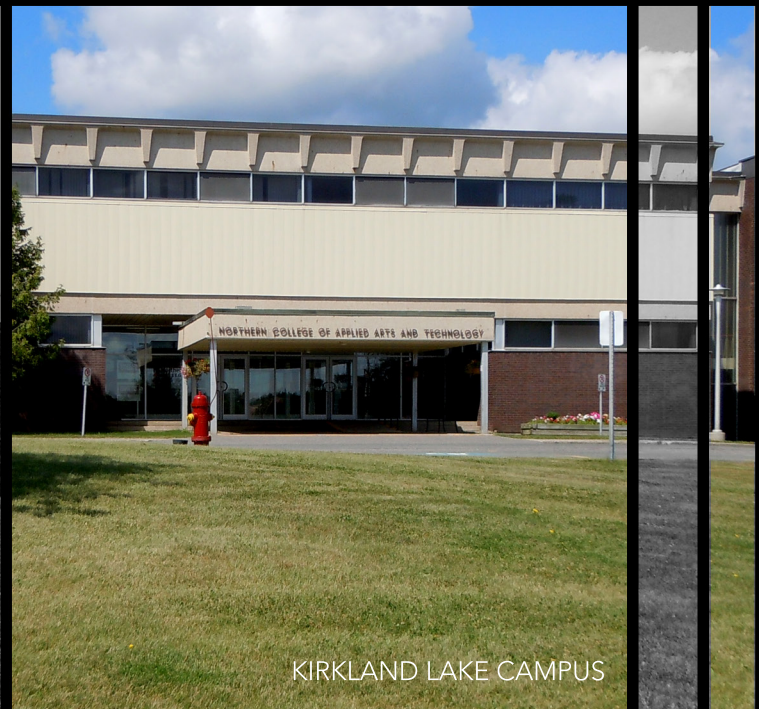
**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2013-2016**

 **Northern**  
**COLLEGE**





HAILEYBURY CAMPUS



KIRKLAND LAKE CAMPUS



TIMMINS CAMPUS



MOOSONEE CAMPUS



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# BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Acts, the mailing addresses and telephone numbers of the members of the Board of Governors are confidential. Any correspondence to the Board members may be directed to them c/o the Executive Assistant to the Board, Northern College, 4715 Highway 101 East, P.O. Box 3211, Timmins, Ontario P4N 8R6



# NORTHERN COLLEGE VISION, MISSION AND COMMITMENTS



## VISION

Success for all through learning and partnerships.

## MISSION

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

## MOTTO

Your college. Your community.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

## COMMITMENTS

At Northern College, we:

- ▶ Are open, consultative and accountable.
- ▶ Act with personal responsibility and integrity.
- ▶ Pursue collaborative partnerships and entrepreneurial opportunities to better serve all of our communities.
- ▶ Foster and encourage a safe, caring and respectful organizational culture.
- ▶ Support, nurture and celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of learners and employees.
- ▶ Respond to the choices and directions of Indigenous peoples.
- ▶ Establish an organizational culture that reflects the diversity of our communities.
- ▶ Engage in applied research in the pursuit of northern development and continuous improvement.
- ▶ Connect our learners and communities through the innovative application of technology.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I am proud to present the Northern College Strategic Plan for 2013-2016. The outcome of several months of consultation and research, the plan addresses the many opportunities and challenges facing leaders, learners and partners in postsecondary education. Its four pillars – Accessible Education, Signature Programs, The Northern Experience and Indigenous Perspectives – align with the Ontario government's vision for community colleges, as described in its 2012 discussion paper, *"Strengthening Ontario's Centres of Creativity, Innovation and Knowledge."*

This plan will set the tone and direction for college planning activities across all our campuses. It establishes decision-making guidelines for not only those priorities that are already identified, but also those that evolve over the course of next three years. It is a living document that provides a framework within which we can work most effectively, and that is flexible enough to accommodate new opportunities or changes in the external environment.

This strategic plan was shaped by extensive input from both internal and external college stakeholders. I'd like to thank everyone – more than a thousand of you – who attended a consultation session, completed a survey or contributed thoughts and suggestions. Please know that your insights are not only appreciated, but also essential to our success.

One of the broad objectives underlying the planning process was to generate enthusiasm for exploring emerging opportunities, innovations and means of positive change; another was to provide a forum in which we could reflect on the best ways to maintain and improve the quality of our current programs and services. This plan presents the results of that process, and I believe we have struck an excellent balance between the two objectives.





We have developed four strategic directions that support and reiterate our commitment to continuous improvement, partnerships and success for the northern communities we serve. Each builds on the range of strengths and assets that our campuses offer, and leverages shared infrastructure and administration that help us spend our dollars wisely. Each transcends the boundaries of traditional college functions, providing direction to all employees and learners regardless of their location or role in the organization.

The goals and action plans of each department at Northern College must align with the strategic directions and priorities in this plan. This will ensure that our planning process and allocation of college resources not only support our priorities, but also that our efforts can be monitored and evaluated in the framework of the plan. It will be instrumental as a measure of our progress and of our ability to accomplish our mission. As the landscape of postsecondary education continues to change, we must adapt and develop unique competencies if we are to help our communities and learners succeed.

This is an exciting and dynamic time for Northern College, and I am pleased that we are experiencing it together.

**Fred Gibbons**  
Northern College President

# BACKGROUND



## ABOUT NORTHERN COLLEGE

Northern College serves the postsecondary education needs of 120,000 people in the Cochrane and Timiskaming Districts of Northeastern Ontario. Its catchment area covers 160,000 km<sup>2</sup> and includes 65 communities, 17 of which are First Nations. The college has four campuses, one each in Haileybury, Kirkland Lake, Moosonee and Timmins (Timmins).

Northern College has assumed both leadership and partnership roles in its efforts to provide the widest possible range of regional postsecondary education opportunities. For example, it has forged partnerships with Contact North | Contact Nord to expand distance-learning offerings. The College has worked extensively with First Nations organizations to establish community-based training programs. It has negotiated agreements with both Laurentian and Algoma Universities to offer Bachelor's degree programs in Nursing, Social Work, and Community and Economic Development. And it continues to work with institutions across the province to bring more educational programs to this region.

The college is a highly respected community and regional partner, and plays a strong role in promoting the economic, social and cultural development in Northeastern Ontario. While the college participates in regional development projects that will build community capacity, its faculty, support staff and administrators are dedicated to helping individual learners succeed. This commitment to student support, access and program relevance contributed to one of the highest rates of graduate employment in the province.<sup>1</sup>

## NOTEWORTHY TRENDS IMPACTING THE COLLEGE

The labour force across North America and Europe is aging. In 2011, the median age in Canada was 40.6. Among the working-age cohort, a record 42.4% were aged 45-64, compared to 28.6% two decades ago. Indeed, according to Statistics Canada, employers in Northern College's catchment area alone could experience a shortfall of some 6,000 skilled employees over the next decade, a combination of aging population and youth outmigration trends.<sup>2</sup> The demand is particularly high for skilled trades people and knowledge economy workers.

In early 2012, Shawn Atleo – National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations – spoke of an “Indigenous tsunami” sweeping across Canada. The significantly younger Indigenous population (median age 27) and higher-than-average birthrate (2.5 children per woman)<sup>3</sup> presents industry – and education providers – with a tremendous opportunity, both to build regional capacity and to address the looming workforce shortage.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (2010) Key Performance Indicators, available at <http://www.collegesontario.org/outcomes/key-performance-indicators.html>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada Census 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.





Technology continues to create new opportunities for supporting and empowering postsecondary learners. Interactive websites, bring-your-own-device policies, real-time feedback and administrative self-service options are becoming increasingly important as college selection criteria. Online and experiential learning opportunities are also driving a major shift in the postsecondary education system. This holds particular promise for communities in our area, where distance and low population density have traditionally presented barriers to conventional classroom-based models. Furthermore, partnerships with industry are becoming more important as students increasingly seek opportunities for on-the-job learning. An important dimension of this strategy is to create and deliver increasingly flexible opportunities that meet the needs of Northern Ontario learners, communities, businesses and industries.

Globalization and the continuing development of emerging economies have led to an increase in the number of international students seeking a Canadian education, from 98,000 in 1998 to 178,000 in 2008. The economic, social and cultural benefits of increasing international recruitment can be significant. For example, international students generate an average of \$30,900 each into the local economy every year;<sup>4</sup> they often become ambassadors for the area, promoting it to others and generating cross-fertilization opportunities in research and industrial development; they bring global perspectives and real-world diversity into classrooms; and they may help to address labour shortages in the long term. Overseas colleges and universities are also importing Canadian curricula, teaching methods and standards.

Student recruitment is an ongoing challenge for many colleges. Where students once formerly competed for admission, colleges and universities are now competing for students.<sup>5</sup> Increasingly, postsecondary institutions have dedicated recruitment offices, and have invested in competitive branding initiatives that build their public profile and desirability as a place to learn.

Finally, colleges and universities across the province have had to respond to the Ontario government's 2012 fiscal restraint budget. While the government remains committed to supporting projected enrolment growth, it has also instituted cuts to capital funding and changes to financial aid programs.

#### THE ROLE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

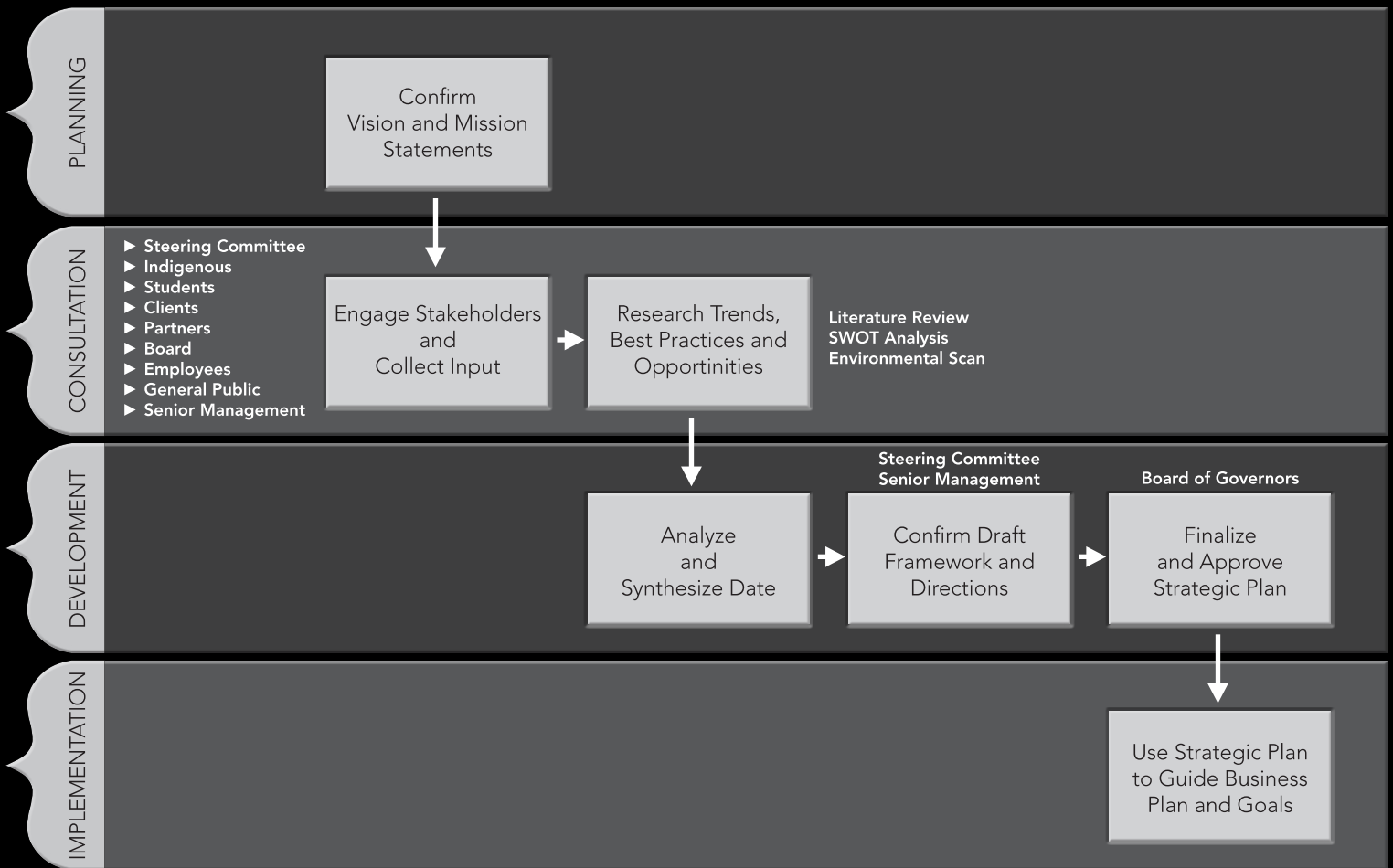
Strategic planning helps us determine to what extent we are – or could be – more responsive to the evolving needs of our learners, employers and communities. Plans such as this one facilitate our efforts to innovate and create; anticipate future demands; define our strengths; develop community buy-in; and operate as efficiently as possible within the fiscal realities of the day.

<sup>4</sup> Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. (2009). Economic Impact of International Education in Canada. Available at <http://www.international.gc.ca/education/impact.aspx?view=d>.

<sup>5</sup> Levin, J. S. (2005, Spring). The business culture of the community college: Students as consumers; students as commodities. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 129, 11-26.

# A GRASSROOTS APPROACH TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

Northern College followed a four-phase approach to strategic planning, and communicated its progress to all stakeholders throughout the process.



The College recognizes that strategic plans are more likely to be embraced and implemented when there is meaningful consultation and engagement in the planning. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee engaged in a lengthy consultation process with faculty, students, local employers, the Board of Governors and the community-at-large. This allowed the College to consider as many perspectives as possible in the Development phase.

GROUP	PARTICIPANTS
Internal Surveys	594
External Surveys	230
Employee Summits and Focus Groups	97
Public Consultations	73
Committee and Management Team	13
Industry Stakeholder Interviews	12
Board of Governors	17
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>1036</b>

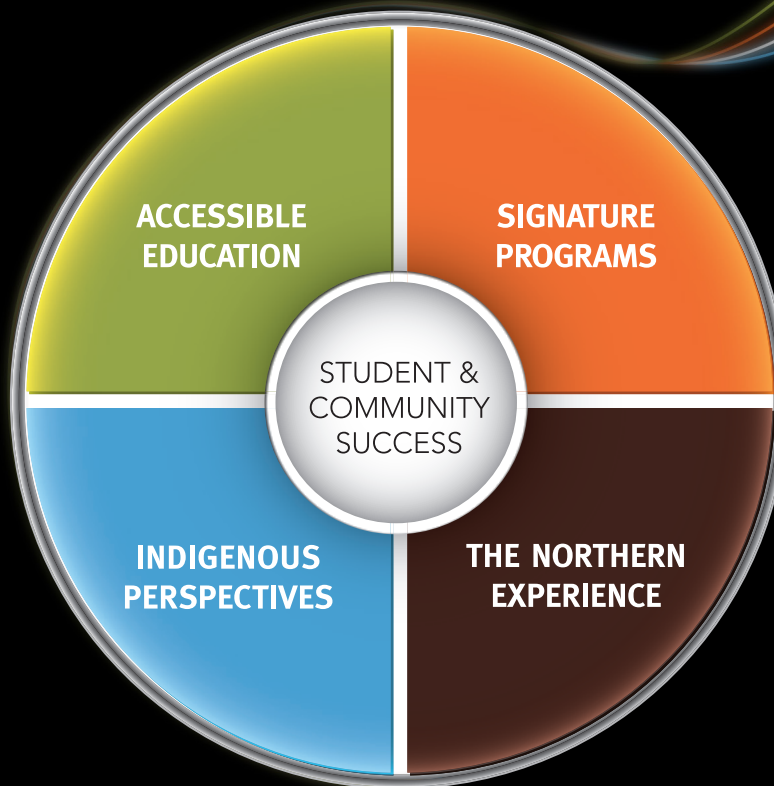


# AN OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR 2013-2016

We are committed to maximizing educational access, engagement and choice for our communities.

We help our learners succeed by integrating innovative delivery methods with technology and a comprehensive suite of student support services.

We appreciate and respect the Indigenous worldview and its contribution to contemporary thinking. We facilitate opportunities in which different perspectives are presented, valued and understood, so our learners are prepared for an increasingly diverse workplace.



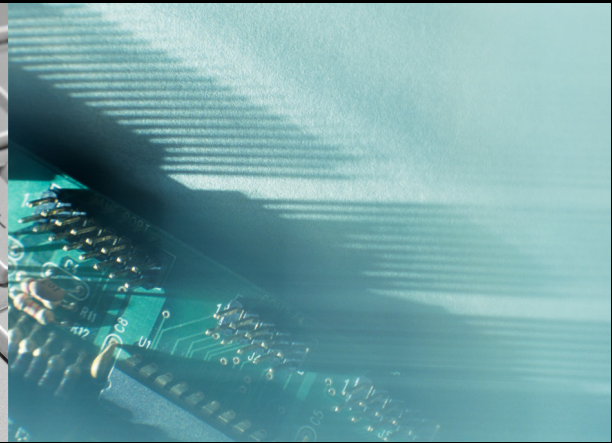
We are building a reputation as a world-class provider of selected programs that leverage the strengths, partnerships and assets of each campus, while continuing to respond to the specific education and training needs of our northern communities.

Our goal is to help learners achieve their full potential by providing unique academic, social and real-world experiences. We are committed to providing an environment that embraces continuous improvement, innovation and ongoing quality management.

## PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

- ▶ The planning process and its recommendations are consistent with the college's vision and mission statements, its commitments and values.
- ▶ Each of the four strategic directions is guided by four planning principles: innovation, partnerships, accessibility and relevance, values that are already firmly rooted in the culture of Northern College.
- ▶ Our focus is on providing the service quality, choice and access needed to facilitate learner and community success in postsecondary education.
- ▶ All four campuses have an important role to play in implementing our shared strategy and goals.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION



*We are committed to maximizing educational access, engagement and choice for our communities. We help our learners succeed by integrating innovative delivery methods with technology and a comprehensive suite of student supports.*

Access is a cornerstone of the Northern College philosophy. In the context of this strategic direction, we view access from two different perspectives: program entry and program flexibility.

We are proud of our efforts to make our programs equally open to all students, and of developing innovative support services to help them succeed. We understand that program entry is just the first step on the path to success. We are committed to providing learners with the greatest possible flexibility and choice in shaping their academic experience with us. To this end, we are continually working on processes that combine existing and emerging technologies with best practices in teaching, learning and administration.

Northern College will continue to offer a range of program entry points, admission structures and support services for its learners, whether they are mid-career professionals. It will explore means of addressing challenges that might otherwise make it difficult for individuals to pursue higher education. We will investigate opportunities for developing new training and education models that accommodate a wider range of learner and industry needs.

We recognize that the quality, scope and flexibility of information technology-supported systems can be a key driver in education decisions.<sup>6</sup> This has enormous implications for how we present ourselves to potential students, and how we meet growing expectations for technology-enabled education. Research suggests that technology can actually personalize the college experience by offering more choices that align with individual learning preferences, schedules and abilities.

<sup>6</sup> IR Knowledge Series. (2009). "Voice of the Student Report." IntelliResponse. Accessed July 4, 2012. Available at <http://www.intelliresponse.com/files/resources/2009-voice-of-the-student-report.pdf>.





## ACCESSIBILITY IS KEY TO BOTH RETENTION AND ENROLLMENT

According to a 2010 survey of community colleges, “The programs believed to make the highest contributions to retention at community colleges focus on academic support/guidance, targeted interventions for specific student populations, and easing the transition of students to the college environment.”

Association of Community Colleges (2010), “What Works in Student Retention: 2010 Study, Community Colleges.” Accessed August 15, 2012 at <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/droptables/CommunityColleges.pdf>.

### 1. ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION: BROAD OBJECTIVES

- 1.1. Facilitate learner self-serve opportunities using information technology.

We are investigating advances in technology that facilitate greater access – in terms of geography, distance and time – to postsecondary education.

- 1.2. Refine non-academic services that support program entry, retention and success.

We are committed to providing a comprehensive suite of non-academic learner services in such areas as housing, student loans and bursaries, career development, work placements, and community service referrals.

- 1.3. Collect individual learner progress data to improve support services.

By measuring baseline and outcome data for those accessing various student services, we can engage in continuous improvement that will allow us to better address learner needs.

- 1.4. Identify programs in which delivery modifications might impact learner success.

We will explore innovative processes to customize program delivery, so that we can accommodate a wider range of academic, personal or professional learner needs.

- 1.5. Develop and implement a comprehensive internal communications strategy.

We recognize that enhancing our organizational communication processes will have a positive impact on all of our stakeholders, and we are committed to finding more and better ways to communicate.

- 1.6. Develop a program-wide learner and client recruitment strategy.

We have developed some world class programs, and we offer a range of experiences that few other institutions can match. We want to promote our brand story and our assets more effectively so that we can continue to grow and share our knowledge with a wider audience.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: SIGNATURE PROGRAMS



*We are building a reputation as a world-class provider of selected programs that leverage the strengths, partnerships and assets of each campus, while continuing to respond to specific education and training needs in our northern communities.*

Northern College is positioning itself as a friendly, supportive learning environment offering relevant courses and signature programs that anticipate and address labour market needs. Program relevance is a critical factor driving graduate employment, for which Northern College has one of the highest rates in the province.

Signature programs “epitomize [an] institution’s mission and define its distinctiveness in the marketplace.”<sup>7</sup> They are supported by unique facilities and equipment, professional accreditation and innovative industry connections. Signature programs do not diminish the importance of broader college offerings, but enhance them. Their facilities and services are shared with other campus programs for applied studies purposes, providing opportunities for students from all disciplines to collaborate and share knowledge.

Such programs differentiate Northern College from other institutions, building its brand and reputation among learners, industry partners and the communities it serves. They build credibility, facilitate investment and partnerships, and create compelling reasons for learners to choose Northern College.

Quality management and continued attention to providing hands-on experiences will be key success factors in delivering on our promise to offer practical applied studies that translate into meaningful careers. Signature program development represents a new approach to program development at Northern College. It reflects the emerging importance of branded education products, and speaks to the need to develop processes that facilitate continuous improvement, community responsiveness and increasing industry partnerships.



## SIGNATURE PROGRAMS WILL BUILD AND SHAPE THE NORTHERN COLLEGE BRAND

Colleges and universities must make their value proposition absolutely clear in the minds of the public and in the marketplace. When an institution can effectively define and communicate its essence, it retains more control over its image and reputation. Otherwise, the marketplace creates its own perception of the institution, through word of mouth, gossip, and misconceptions.

Academica Group Inc. (2012). Strategic Enrolment Intelligence, 109. Available at <http://www.academica.ca/strategic-enrolment-intelligence>

## 2. SIGNATURE PROGRAM: BROAD OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. Identify key program offerings and competitive advantages for each campus.

By building an inventory of strengths and assets at each campus, we are better positioned to understand which unique, hard-to-imitate advantages can be leveraged into best-in-class programs.

- 2.2. Establish signature programs for each campus that align with the brand story.

We recognize that each campus has a role to play in building and enhancing the Northern College brand, and will explore how each can contribute to a portfolio of signature programs.

- 2.3. Position signature programs to highlight program relevance and brand.

By aligning signature programs with not only campus strengths, but also industry requirements, we will generate greater recognition and legitimacy as both an education provider and a community partner.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: THE NORTHERN EXPERIENCE



*Our goal is to help learners achieve their full potential by providing unique academic, social and real-world experiences in an environment that embraces continuous improvement and ongoing quality management.*

We are committed to offering a suite of distinctive educational products and services that no other college can offer quite as well: we call this strategy *The Northern Experience*.

Providing an engaging and high-quality educational experience is key not only for learner recruitment, but also for retention. Research consistently demonstrates that it costs more to attract new learners than it does to retain existing ones. Since retention is linked to learner satisfaction,<sup>8</sup> it is essential that we focus on – and promote – the quality and nature of *The Northern Experience*.

Each Northern College campus will facilitate opportunities for the academic, personal and social development learners seek. We will continue to offer small class sizes, leading edge curricula, and a range of work placement opportunities.

We are exploring innovative processes in which professors and learners can engage in collaborative learning relationships. For example, our growing applied research program is not only a part of what makes Northern College relevant to local industry, but also complements our focus on individual learner success.

*The Northern Experience* is about giving students an opportunity to customize their education with personalized attention, real world work experience, flexible learning solutions and a range of social engagement opportunities. We recognize the importance of implementing processes that ensure we deliver on our promises. We must ensure that our brand promise is developed, executed and communicated appropriately as we grow closer to accomplishing the goals in this strategic plan.

<sup>8</sup> Oscar W. DeShields Jr, Ali Kara, Erdener Kaynak, (2005), "Determinants of business student satisfaction and retention in higher education: applying Herzberg's two-factor theory", International Journal of Educational Management, Vol. 19 Iss: 2 pp. 128 - 139



## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT MAKES A CRITICAL CONTRIBUTION TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Student engagement has two key components that contribute to learner success. The first is the amount of time and effort the student spends on college activities, both academic and extra-curricular. The second component is the extent to which the college or university organizes opportunities that encourage students to benefit from these activities. Instructor-student and peer-to-peer interactions can have a significant impact on learner outcomes.

Kuh, George D., Jillian Kinzie, John H. Schuh and Elizabeth J. Whitt, (2010) *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter*. John Wiley and Sons: San Francisco.

### 3. THE NORTHERN EXPERIENCE: BROAD OBJECTIVES

#### 3.1. Implement quality management program.

Quality management is an essential component of continuous improvement, and we will investigate processes to measure our program and service delivery performance.

#### 3.2. Refine and implement capital improvement plan.

We will evaluate our long-term capital improvement plan in the context of this strategic plan and make appropriate adjustments, so that we can move forward with these goals.

#### 3.3. Integrate more placement and applied research opportunities.

We are increasing our efforts to build applied research capacity throughout our campus system. We will continue to build relationships and partnerships with local industry to facilitate more opportunities in this area.

#### 3.4. Launch and support a Northern College branding and identification strategy.

As part of our commitment to consider more entrepreneurial practices, we will explore the college brand's impact on learner commitment and loyalty, and its implications for current and potential stakeholders.

#### 3.5. Build more social interaction and engagement opportunities for learners.

Research suggests that learners' educational outcomes are better when institutions also provide opportunities for social, personal and career development. We are working towards ensuring that such opportunities are an integral part of *The Northern Experience*.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES



*We appreciate and respect the Indigenous worldview and its contribution to contemporary thinking. We facilitate opportunities in which different perspectives are presented, valued and understood, so that all of our learners are prepared for an increasingly diverse workplace.*

Indigenous people make up approximately 3% of the population of Ontario, but upwards of 15% in northern Ontario. In the decade prior to 2006, the Indigenous population grew faster than the non-Indigenous population, increasing 45%, or nearly six times faster than that of the non-Indigenous population. At Northern College, the percentage of the student population that is Indigenous has remained steady at 12% since 2009.

In addition to obvious factors such as poverty, lack of academic preparedness, and discrimination, many Indigenous learners also face less overt barriers to higher learning. These include the challenges of entering the postsecondary education system as an adult learner; the absence of Indigenous role models; and institutional insensitivity to Indigenous histories, cultures, world views, values, and Northern College recognizes these barriers and is determined to break them down. The College will continue to hold meaningful dialogue and develop partnerships with Indigenous leaders, learners, communities and employers, building on those strong relationships that have already been established.

The college is committed to facilitating a responsive and respectful learning environment that enhances Indigenous learners' success and their readiness for the labour market.

### BARRIERS TO EDUCATION IN THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION

Indigenous learners face a range of social, cultural, financial, and geographic barriers to postsecondary education. For example, the 2006 Census reports:

- ▶ 9% of Ontario's Indigenous population aged 25-64 had a bachelor's degree and 36% were college or trades graduates, compared to 31% and 26% in the non-Indigenous population.
- ▶ Their unemployment rate (13%) was over four times the rate for non-Indigenous people.
- ▶ A higher proportion of Indigenous families (31.2%) lived in low-income situations, compared with the average for all Canadian families (12.9%).





#### THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Incorporating forms of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ATK) encourages us to question traditional assumptions, and to avoid the constant impulse to objectify and simplify complex issues. ATK is frequently invoked in public and private sector discussions of environmental and community sustainability. Understanding and respecting Indigenous worldviews contributes towards an increasingly important ability to function effectively in workplace settings characterized by cultural and intellectual diversity.

Reid, A., Teamey, K. and Dillon, J. (2002)  
"Traditional ecological knowledge for learning with sustainability in mind," *The Trumpeter*, 18:1-27.  
Francisco.

#### 4. INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: BROAD OBJECTIVES

##### 4.1. Investigate best practices for building and enhancing Indigenous relations.

We will continue to engage in consistent, meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous peoples, communities, and organizations. We recognize and appreciate the importance of incorporating Indigenous knowledge and worldviews in all of our programming.

##### 4.2. Develop and implement a campus plan for Moosonee.

We are committed to exploring new program concepts that leverage the unique cultural and geographic assets at the Moosonee campus.

##### 4.3. Continue to refine cross-cultural understanding opportunities.

More than ever before, the contemporary workplace is characterized by diversity. One of our goals is to help learners understand how cultural differences can be mobilized for the benefit of the individual, the workplace, and society as a whole.

#### TIMMINS CAMPUS

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South Timmins ON P0N 1H0  
MAILING ADDRESS  
P.O. Box 3211,  
Timmins ON P4N 8R6  
705.235.3211

#### KIRKLAND LAKE CAMPUS

140 Government Rd. East  
Kirkland Lake ON P2N 3L8  
705.567.9291

#### HAILEYBURY CAMPUS

640 Latchford St. Box 2060  
Haileybury ON P0J 1K0  
705.672.3376

#### MOOSONEE CAMPUS

James Bay Education Centre  
First Ave. Box 130  
Moosonee ON P0L 1Y0  
705.336.2913

