



EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR NORTHERN COLLEGE

2020-2025



northerncollege.ca

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
New College Vision And Mission	4
Principles and Commitments	5
Guiding Principles	5
Indigenous Statement of Commitment	5
Institutional Commitments	5
New Strategic Directions	6
Strategic Objectives	7
Conclusion	9
Appendices	10
Appendix A: Timing of the Planning Process	11
Appendix B: Outreach Process	13
Appendix C: Strategic Planning Committee Process	17

We acknowledge the lands of the Ojibway, Cree, Algonquin and Metis Peoples that our campuses occupy. The First Nation communities now located on these lands include Beaverhouse, Flying Post, Wahgoshig, Taykwa Tagamou, Mattagami, Matachewan, Temagami, Timiskaming, Moose Cree, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Attawapiskat and Weenusk.



INTRODUCTION

A Strategic Plan is an organization's way of defining strategy for future direction. It is a process to guide those connected to the institution, and beyond that, determine how to allocate resources to pursue a specific and robust strategic journey, with a constant eye on the organization's Vision and Mission.

Organizations approach a Strategic Plan as a new venture to review an existing plan and incorporate change within and external to the institution. In the case of Northern College, the Strategic Plan was ready for review and revitalization, and came at a time of a rapidly changing external environment.

The retirement of the President of Northern College, the hiring of a new President for Northern, and the completion of the former three-year Strategic Plan, precipitated the need and positioned the College well, for an exciting, new strategic planning cycle.

Having achieved success in many aspects over the past three years of its former plan, Northern College's strategic planning cycle coincided with increased uncertainty and change in the post-secondary sector as well as all other environments.

A global pandemic, coupled with continued unrest from marginalized populations, and a massive disruption to economies and established political systems, has shown the ever-increased importance of fluidity as a College. Being nimble helps an organization adjust to a changed world and quickly respond to new circumstances in a continually shifting landscape.

This Strategic Plan for Northern College defines new direction, considering the insights and feedback of those who support and seek out the organization for transformational growth in their lives, businesses, and communities. Key to the College's success is aligning these synergies for maximized growth and optimal performance.

The articulation of the Northern College Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 proposes new and exciting opportunities to achieve the Vision and Mission of the institution, and to go beyond previous expectations. We will better serve Indigenous learners, engage communities, partner with business and industry to an even greater extent, play a significant role in mutually beneficial initiatives within the region, and most importantly, provide the most rewarding learning experience to students, who are the heart of our existence.



NEW COLLEGE VISION AND MISSION

In October and November of 2020, the Board of Governors began an exercise to determine revisions to the College's Vision, Mission, Motto, Guiding Principles, and Commitments in alignment with the timing and renewal of the organization's strategic planning process. These statements were shared with the Northern College Indigenous Council on Education (NCICE), who then reviewed, revised, and added to them through an Indigenous lens. The perspective of the new Strategic Directions served as the foundation of the refreshed institutional statements:

VISION

Empowerment through learning to build a better world.

MISSION

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

MOTTO

Proud to be North.
Proud to be Northern.

PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS

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.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS

At Northern College we will:

- Support, nurture and celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of learners and employees
- Connect our learners and communities through the application of accessible and innovative technology
- Foster and encourage a friendly, caring and respectful organizational culture
- Establish an organizational culture that reflects the diversity of our communities
- Work respectfully, in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and communities
- Pursue partnerships and entrepreneurial opportunities to better serve community
- Enhance the quality and access to college education through global initiatives
- Engage in applied research in the pursuit of northern development and continuous improvement
- Use our natural and built environments observing conservation and sustainable practices
- Practice ethical decision making that engenders trust while safeguarding the College
- Be open, consultative and accountable
- Act with personal responsibility and integrity
- Exceed expectations

NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The new Strategic Directions incorporate the following considerations as reflected in community feedback:

- The previous strategic directions were honoured in principle and built upon as they reflect the continued direction of the College; the new directions are synthesized versions of the earlier ones.
- Indigenous perspectives were placed at the forefront of our efforts to allow the College to respond with a greater sense of urgency to the ever-growing need to move the organization forward in inviting learners from regional communities to the table for decision-making to further support Indigenous learners.
- Combining two of the previous strategic directions, access and programming, addresses the barriers of learners together with the offering of appealing programs that respond to learners' wants as well as align with just-in-time industry needs.
- Reimagining the identity of and sunsetting the use of the phrase "signature programs" allows us to update, rebrand, and refresh the positioning and impact of areas of strength that are highly regarded and well-recognized.
- Staying true to, and deepening, the College's commitment to a Northern Experience provides the continued opportunity to embody and highlight the unique brand promise of the organization among its competitors.
- Reducing the number of strategic statements from four to three gives a streamlined focus, strengthened by the power of a triad versus the previous four-pronged approach.
- Increasing the strategic destination by one year to a four-year strategic scope provides longevity of the plan, and more closely aligns with the new President's first term in office.

Given these insights, the new Strategic Directions and Objectives for Northern College are as follows:

NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

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

- **Indigenous Education and Empowerment**
- **Innovative Approaches to Access**
- **Invigorating Northern Experiences**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT



We recognize the disparity caused by a lengthy national history of inequality and injustice toward Indigenous peoples of Canada, and we will address the long-term impacts of this colonization upon the organization and the learners. To do so, we will actively seek to identify and dismantle the existence of racism systematically and operationally as it arises, and we will take steps to decolonize the organization at every turn.

Objective 1.1: Northern College will fully engage Indigenous communities.

Objective 1.2: Northern College will include programs of study that recognize all aspects of the Indigenous learner, their environment and their future success.

Objective 1.3: Northern College will demonstrate inclusiveness with Indigenous students.

Objective 1.4: Northern College will respond proactively to change and the changing environment in a collective manner.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ACCESS



We acknowledge the barriers to learning that exist and the privilege of those decision-makers not experiencing such barriers as we reduce and eliminate these very real challenges by engaging in honest and open discussion about both policy and operations that either support or further inhibit learners. We will deliver best-in-class programs that entice students from diverse backgrounds and identities wanting to improve their lives.

Objective 2.1: Northern College will enhance the learner's success through focused initiatives.

Objective 2.2: Northern College will be creative and innovative in its programming (content/delivery/methodology) in response to the emerging changes in society.



Objective 2.3: Northern College will prepare students to respond to the rapid and ever-changing economy.

Objective 2.4: Northern College will focus on an invigorated effort to enhance communication and enrich relationships to create a stronger, more effective team.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: INVIGORATING NORTHERN EXPERIENCES



With every one of our post-secondary locations overlooking waterfront, we will maximize the quality of life of our students and staff on Northern College's four campuses by leveraging our proximity to the natural elements by integrating and emphasizing invigorating learning experiences and overall well-being in the communities we serve. Our learning environments will be kind, welcoming and reflect excellence as we deliver exceptional and uniquely northern experiences that allow students and staff to become their best selves and embrace a future forever impacted positively by experiencing life in the North, even after graduating, wherever they may travel.

Objective 3.1: Northern College will leverage its proximity to the natural elements by integrating invigorating learning experiences and overall well-being for students and employees.

Objective 3.2: Northern College will be creative and innovative in programming (content/delivery/methodology) and prepare students to respond to the present and emerging changes in Northern Ontario, and the global environment and offer solutions.

Objective 3.3: Northern College will prepare students to enjoy a northern experience enriched through programs and services intended to enhance the lifestyle of those who live in the north.

Objective 3.4: Northern College will be more collaborative internally and externally to the benefit of the College, its students and its staff.



CONCLUSION

The completion of the College's Strategic Plan within the timelines set, speaks to the solid engagement of community and dedication of the organization's employees and supporters throughout the region.



It is clear at this point in our journey, that Northern is ready for change and poised to build upon the solid foundation created in the post-secondary sector over the past five decades of its presence in the Ontario college system.

The College looks to reposition itself amidst a changed landscape to demonstrate its passion for student learning, innovation, excellence and access, combining to become something more far-reaching and impactful. Together with clear outcomes to accompany aspirational goals set for itself, Northern College will continue to succeed and change lives for the better, remaining a cornerstone of the communities it serves, and growing its presence as an educator of choice for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners.

Preparing our College teams and the students we teach to be resilient and adaptable will be critical to their future, as well as the ongoing success of this plan. Resources to support the important initiatives undertaken, the setting of priorities to account for capacity requirements, and working collaboratively as an aligned organization will all provide the necessary elements to create an environment that maximizes the potential of this College.

Beyond the actions and measurables inherent in any plan of this nature is a foundational piece rarely found in today's world: an authentic and deep culture of caring and excellence accompanied by a sense of humanity in every aspect of the organization from the top down. What sets Northern apart: quality of its programs and dedication of its people. A hunger for social justice and a responsibility to contribute to creating empowered citizens who seek careers with the motivation to give back in meaningful ways – these are the elements that will make a significant difference to our region.

The enthusiasm, dedication, tireless efforts and commitment of this small College and all those who are part of it, will build a stronger, more just, skilled and connected world – one that benefits from a College education and provider in every aspect of society.

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

TIMING OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The timeline the College followed was one which positioned the organization well for the successful roll-out of a new Strategic Plan in early 2021 so that there was no interruption or gap in the strategic direction of the College.

The timing of each stage of the development of the Strategic Plan was as follows:

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 2020	OCTOBER, 2020	NOVEMBER, 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New President in role • Preliminary prep document created and shared • Senior Management Team (SMT) discussion about strategic planning process • Consultations and delegations conducted with Indigenous communities, students (including NCSA), alumni, staff, committees, industry partners, town councils, parents, educators, and community members • Environmental scan undertaken • Additional resources for Strategic Planning process enlisted • Website portal established • Survey and input developed • Hiring of consultant for initial phase of data collection • Survey launched at three different intervals – one week apart • Process established for gleaning input plan once initial draft was created • Meetings scheduled for review process of draft discussions for mid-late October • Any additional data involving landscape/trends/realities collected • An internal Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection completed, compiled and submitted • Strategic Planning Committee review and collate data for input into determining overall themes of the plan • Strategic Directions and objectives of Strategic Plan written and circulated back to key groups using College vehicles (organizational committees, councils, board), where they are reviewed and vetted • Feedback received informs creation of outcomes and metrics document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised and finalized draft copy of Strategic Directions and objectives presented to Board • Revised and finalized Mission and Vision of College presented to Board • Feedback received from Board on draft directions and objectives • Approval from Board sought on draft directions and objectives • Outcomes and metrics identified by Strategic Planning Committee

DECEMBER 1, 2020	JANUARY, 2021	FEBRUARY, 2021	APRIL, 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes and metrics finalized by Strategic Planning Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Northern College Strategic Plan completed • Draft of new Strategic Plan presented to Board for approval • Outcomes and metrics presented to Board for approval • Northern College Strategic Plan sent to design • Communication plan of Strategic Plan developed and finalized • Launch and roll-out of Strategic Plan begins • Launch of College revised Vision and Mission begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication plan of Strategic Plan implemented • Launch and roll-out of Strategic Plan underway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First review of Strategic Plan with a focus on metrics • Follow up reviews to be scheduled on a quarterly basis



APPENDIX B

OUTREACH PROCESS

The outreach effort for input into the Strategic Plan was primarily within the catchment area of the College, which is located in Northeastern Ontario, Canada.

It was the intent of the College to request feedback and insight from students, prospective students, graduates, organizations, partners, employers, board members, councils, businesses, committees, individuals and communities the College impacts through its post-secondary, contract training, innovation, research, academic upgrading and employment services.

All parties were encouraged to share their feedback via a website portal, through individual discussion, consultation and messaging, or through a medium of their choice.

Information was primarily sought during a month-long survey period from September 1 until October 1, 2020 to capture formal data collection for the express purpose of informing the organization's Strategic Plan. Any data or information received after the established date would be taken into consideration for future edits, pivots or iterations of the Strategic Planning document.

The approach taken during the outreach phase was a request to fill out the survey, send it along to other contacts to encourage them to do so, and consider the survey as an opportunity to participate in helping shape the future direction of the organization.

The outreach took place through phone calls, meetings, individual and mass emails or texts, and delegations virtually or in person (wherever possible while adhering to Covid protocols and restrictions).

Invitations to respond to the survey were sent out in three separate e-blasts from the College to 4,000 current contacts.

Leading up to and following the e-blasts, a multi-media campaign was developed and launched to increase awareness of the call for input from community members. The campaign included social media posts, press releases and several media interviews, resulting in articles and radio appearances of the College's President.

Delegations with the President and other key College staff members presented to each of the Town Councils in the College's four campus communities over a period of two months. The presentations served to update each town's citizens on what was occurring at the College, to introduce the organization's new President and to review the College's Academic Plan, which informed much of the College's activity as well as goals and objectives for learning and teaching. The delegations were another way in which to invite input for the strategic planning process, and answer questions around College updates, operations and future plans.

While these forms of outreach were taking place, College employees were asked to individually reach out to their own contacts and connections in an intentional effort to reach and engage additional participants, particularly those who had a wide sphere of influence, who could further assist in efforts to garner as many responses from the broadest outreach possible.

It was the intention of the College to identify those individuals that could distribute the survey both within their own organizations and to other contacts or partners so that they could assist Northern College in getting the survey out to a wide and inclusive audience.

Provision for feedback was made for a period of time beyond the closing of the survey to fully capture the input of all respondents. That input was also considered in the final analysis.



SEEKING INPUT

Due to the vastly changed environment of a Covid reality, the typical in-person large group consultation that had taken place in past strategic planning journeys the College had undertaken was not feasible. As a result, the organization took a primarily digital approach to outreach and calls for feedback.

A survey was developed to garner as many insights as possible from individuals and groups who were encouraged to provide input from whatever perspective they had that would inform the articulation of the plan.

Those included in the organization's outreach plan included, but were not exclusive to current and former students of the College, students in high school and those aged ten or older, leaders and citizens in all of the communities within the College's catchment area, Indigenous leaders and rights holders, educational leaders, future learners, leaders in business and industry, College employees, and a vast array of others whose views ultimately shaped the document.

The information gathered was then used to develop this important guiding document that will direct the decisions made as we move forward over the next several years.



SURVEY QUESTIONS

The survey themes developed for the Strategic Plan were simple yet purposeful and comprehensive, positioning the College to generate the largest number of responses possible. The questions asked and the reasoning beyond them were as follows:

1. What comes to mind when you think of Northern College?

- **Why this question was asked:**
 - Assessed brand strength
 - Allowed for personal knowledge and connections to be shared, including alumni and industry data, family of students and graduates, personal experiences involving Northern
 - Identified programs offered and resulting impact of those programs on lives of learners and employers
 - Measured reputational impact
 - Unearthed any unfortunate interactions that could be considered, addressed, or remedied for continuous improvement

2. What could be Northern College's priority goals for the next 3-5 years?

- **Why this question was asked:**
 - Allowed for idea-sharing
 - Emphasized focus on the future instead of the past
 - Gathered strategic intelligence
 - Factored in feedback gathered in an inclusive manner such as from Indigenous rights holders, newcomers to Canada, LGBTQ insights, and barriers to learning

3. What are the global impacts Northern needs to be aware of as we move forward?

- **Why this question was asked:**
 - Identified overall landscape municipally, regionally, and globally
 - Spoke to trends in non-educational spheres
 - Allowed for placement for strategic document within larger, more expansive context
 - Rooted the plan intrinsically to changes in industry, real-world events and diverse realities

4. When thinking about Northern College's strategy planning for the next 3-5 years, what else would you like to share?

- **Why this question was asked:**
 - Open ended in its approach inviting insights not previously categorized

5. Tell us about yourself, if you wish.

- **Why this question was asked:**
 - Allowed us to collect data on those who submitted feedback to see who was included and who we may have missed and needed to circle back around with.

APPENDIX C

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE PROCESS

The first role of the Strategic Planning Committee was to review the data that had been gathered through the survey and analyze it. To do so, committee members began the process of:

- determining and confirming the suitability of the themes presented,
- developing objectives - general statements indicating what would be done through the Strategic Plan directions,
- editing, recommending changes, and confirming/agreeing that the directions, objectives, outcomes, and metrics were innovative, impactful, attainable, measurable and within the capacity of Northern College.

The Committee met on several successive dates in virtual meetings to do this work, collaborating as a whole as well as within smaller groups of 3-5 members in online break-out rooms to examine the data, create the main tenets of the Strategic Plan and refine the documentation through discussion. The working documents the committee created underwent several revisions based on input from the different members of the group. Each smaller group of the planning committee focused on each key strategic objective and outcomes related to it then they discussed, amended, and agreed with the newly revised documentation.

SURVEY RESULTS - GATHERING AND ANALYZING DATA

The data was gathered after the survey window closed, and the results were impressive. Of the 4,000 invitations sent, **869 responses were gathered representing a response rate of approximately 22%**. A response rate of over 13% is typically considered exceptional in research.

This level of response was more than sufficient to move forward in collating the results by:

- reading each response
- determining commonalities
- collating the responses such that the analysis identified patterns and themes.

The responses were assembled according to their commonalities to eliminate duplication and to synthesize the information so that it allowed for the determination of suggested themes and patterns in the responses that would then inform the strategic directions and objectives.

Once results were collated, several themes emerged in the data. These included:

- The Learner and The Learning Environment
- Responsive/Reactive Change
- Social Justice
- The Environment
- The Economy
- Health and Wellness
- Student Success
- Innovation
- Internal Change

All of the collated responses were placed in corresponding themes that emerged for the purposes of an initial review by the President and the Strategic Planning Committee.

Some responses did not suit the emerging themes, nor did they present any new themes and/or patterns, but they were significant nonetheless as they provided information that was considered in the overall formation of the Strategic Plan.

Many surveys included comments that were positive and complimentary in nature that indicated that the College would be best to continue replicating this success, while others offered suggestions on how the College could become stronger.

In addition to the themes used in the development of the College's new Strategic Directions, objectives, outcomes and metrics, the following were words repeated many times throughout the survey and are notable as they provide inspiration for future discussion and dialogue: trades promotion, mental health, changing technology, equal opportunity, virtual learning, student success, changing industry, be safe (with respect to keeping well during the pandemic), micro-credentialing, communication, and bridge programming.

MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE (SPC)

Since the Board of Governors for Northern College oversees the consultative process of determining a new and refreshed Strategic Plan that will guide the College, a group of employees along with a student representative was assembled to shape the Strategic Plan process for the review of the Board.

To this end, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was struck in September and October under the guidance of the President with the intention of garnering the broadest representation from each of the Northern College campuses, areas of programming and services. This included a diverse group of non-teaching staff (support staff), teaching staff (faculty), administrative staff (management) from both the academic and service areas of the College, student representation, and a member of the senior management team.

There are fifteen members of the Strategic Planning Committee – two from Moosonee, two from Haileybury, three from Kirkland Lake and eight from Timmins, some of whom have responsibility that extends to other campuses and employment sites.

The Strategic Planning Committee members are the following:

■ Emilina Ticknor	<i>Student Representative, Haileybury</i>
■ Jennifer Huggins	<i>Faculty, Timmins</i>
■ Aaron Minor	<i>Support Staff, Kirkland Lake</i>
■ Willard Small	<i>Support Staff, Moosonee</i>
■ Kyle Gennings	<i>Support Staff, Timmins</i>
■ Kayode Arowolo	<i>Faculty, Timmins</i>
■ Janice Ranger	<i>Support Staff, Kirkland Lake</i>
■ Anna Sawicki	<i>Support Staff, Haileybury</i>
■ Aaron Klooster	<i>Management, Timmins</i>
■ Joseph Nakogee	<i>Support Staff, Timmins</i>
■ Diane Ryder	<i>Management, Moosonee</i>
■ Janelle Berthiaume	<i>Support Staff, Timmins</i>
■ Drew Enouy	<i>Management, Kirkland Lake</i>
■ Shanna Lecuyer	<i>Support Staff, Timmins</i>
■ Susan Hunter	<i>Senior Management, Timmins</i>

This group represents four Northern College campuses, off-site locations (Employment Options Emploi), many employee groups, as well as a student representative.



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Questions about this document?

Please write to us at communications@northern.on.ca

We wish to thank Anna Sawicki, Northern College employee and outdoor enthusiast, for many landscape photos of the region included in this document.

