

EDUCATION PLAN 2008 | 2011

UPGRADING | BUSINESS | FINE ARTS | HEALTH | TOURISM | TRADES | UNIVERSITY TRANSFER



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	3
THEMES AND DIRECTIONS	4
GOALS AND STRATEGIES	7
GOAL 1: TEACHING AND LEARNING	7
GOAL 2: PROGRAM MIX	9
GOAL 3: DISTRIBUTED LEARNING	9
GOAL 4: ADULT LEARNERS.	10
GOAL 5: TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY TO POST SECONDARY.	11
GOAL 6: ABORIGINAL EDUCATION	11
GOAL 7: SERVING THE COMMUNITY	12



PREFACE

This is the third NIC Education Plan, following the previous two which covered the periods 2001- 2005 and 2003/04 – 2006/07 respectively. Former versions of the Ed Plan were wide-ranging and tended to concentrate on creating an infrastructure for change. As was noted in the second version of the Plan, many of its actions “relate to the creation of processes and projects by which [its] strategies can be achieved”.

As a result, a wide array of policies, procedures, mechanisms and committees were established to prepare the ground for such things as program evaluation, budgetary management, partnership initiatives, enrolment management, distributed learning, self-funded programming, new program priorities, program mix review, and FTE target setting.

A number of critical outcomes were achieved; however, given the College’s previous pattern of development and the external challenges it faced from 2001 on, it was necessary to do a considerable amount of work on policy and process prior to undertaking change of the scope required.

The College continues to face significant challenges, and a fresh approach is needed to address them. The Education Plan set forth below differs from the previous versions in two ways: it is focused more on activity and less on process; and concentrates on a few critical, strategic objectives, rather than trying to encompass the full range of NIC’s education activity.

In other words, this plan does not attempt to include every type of change that is needed over the period of the next three years. There is a difference between describing what you see as likely to happen, and identifying those things that absolutely have to happen for the College to grow and flourish. This Plan focuses on the latter. It is based on the issues raised and views expressed in a series of discussions within Deans Council, Dean’s Advisory Committees and departments, as well as in President’s Council and at the Faculty Roundtables conducted during 2006/2007. The central consideration throughout is student learning and student success. The better, more innovative we are in engaging the residents of our region in postsecondary education, the more fully we will meet the obligations and ideals implicit in our role as a community college.

THEMES AND DIRECTIONS



The starting point is the work done under the last version of the Plan to define NIC as a 'Learning College'. The guiding principles were stated as follows:

- Everyone at NIC is a learner;
- NIC's prime role as an institution is to educate its students;
- Learning, in an educational setting, requires the learner to engage, to recognize and accept that learning may be a challenge, and to be responsible for one's own change and growth;
- Learning in a formal educational setting is best accomplished through education that is demonstratively effective;
- Education is a moral and ethical process that requires the development of an honest, authentic relationship between educator and learner;
- Through learning we gain the skills and understandings to value and seek further learning;
- An authentic relationship requires the co-creation of a safe and supportive learning environment;
- We value the richness that diversity adds to our learning experiences.

Building on these principles, we have identified five overarching themes which run through the goals, strategies, activities and outcomes of this Plan.

- **ACTIVE AND SUPPORTED LEARNING**
- **MULTIPLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**
- **WIDENING PARTICIPATION**
- **PATHWAYS**
- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Taken together, these themes are interconnected in a way that supports the mission of a community college seeking to maximize its opportunities, as a multi-campus, teaching-oriented institution, to promote student engagement, innovative programming and service to its region as a whole. NIC's major educational purpose is to support transformation and growth for its students, and indirectly for its region. It provides a place for everyone to start, and serves as an agent of change, both for the individual and for the community.

NIC classes are relatively small, something that facilitates active and supported learning (Theme 1). International authority Patricia Cross reminds us of the need to make the most of this fact:

“Researchers report ‘a very strong relationship’ between the number of small classes ... taken by students and their satisfaction with overall academic experience (Light, 2001). Thus, community colleges might do well to capitalize on one of their biggest advantages over large state universities. That advantage is that smaller class size makes student-to-student interaction

in the classroom quite feasible—and quite desirable.”

(The Role of Class Discussion in the Learning-Centered Classroom, The Cross Papers, Number 6, League for Innovation in the Community College/ Educational Testing Service, 2002, p. 16)

Don Doucette makes a convincing argument that providing exceptional support for students in need of it is in fact the community college's niche:

“Community colleges will prosper if they do what they do best: provide high-quality support services to help students learn – regardless of where they get their information.... In other words, community colleges that will survive the frontal assault waged on their mission by information-age higher education providers will be those who understand their niche as learning colleges.... They will draw upon years of experience in student support services, developmental education, and personalized instruction to become the best learning-support organizations in the world.”

(The Community College Niche in a Competitive Higher Education Market, Leadership Abstract, Feb 1997, p.3.)



THEMES AND DIRECTIONS (CONTINUED)

NIC is thus well positioned to perform a number of critical functions supportive of its overall mission. Firstly, NIC's legacy of providing different learning environments (Theme 2) positions the College to become a leader in the provision of distributed learning delivery methods. This facilitates access across our region through the expanded use of information and communication technology. Secondly, the aim of widening participation (Theme 3) carries with it a commitment to serve the full range of needs and aptitudes of the NIC adult population. Service to adult learners, especially those in the at-risk category, is a core function of a community college. Defining pathways (Theme 4) for students, especially for those making the transition from secondary to postsecondary education or from college to university, serves the broader community by raising participation rates, as well of course as those seeking to improve their lives and career prospects. Finally, NIC can help the communities (Theme 5) in its region to develop their human and social capital by serving as a knowledge resource, by sponsoring events and activities, and by providing research, consulting and training services.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

What follows is a list of the key Goals of this Plan, along with a set of related Strategies for their attainment. For each Goal, a narrative is provided outlining the governing concepts and ends in view. The aim is to provide a meaningful picture of what change would look like and the larger purpose it serves.

GOAL 1: TEACHING AND LEARNING

NIC establishes itself as a leader in education which promotes active and supported learning.

The College takes full advantage of classes of a size that encourage the development of authentic relationships between educators and students, where personalized instruction does occur, and where students get to know each other and share their experiences. It promotes teaching and learning that attends to students' differences and that facilitates openness, growth and new ideas. The College encourages scholarly reflection of its instructional practices, organizing events which focus on this theme, and providing resources to assist faculty in developing innovative approaches. Above all, it helps students to be successful in their chosen courses and programs.

STRATEGIES

- Implement the Student Success Plan strategies for Goal B (Educational Planning, Career Planning and Early Intervention) and Goal C (Create a Teaching and Learning Centre at NIC).
- Develop strength in the area of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to distinguish NIC's pedagogical niche.

- Promote and support integrative learning by encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, internationalization of curriculum, interprofessional practice, and explicit discussions of the learning process.
- Promote and support the use of 'hybrid' or 'blended' delivery methods in all program areas.





GOALS AND STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

GOAL 2: PROGRAM MIX

NIC's mix of programs strikes an appropriate balance between short term demands and longer term needs.

The College reflects changing patterns of demand but is careful to maintain a balance between the short- and longer-term. Immediate student demand does not necessarily reflect longer-term community need. On the one hand, NIC identifies and responds to current course and program needs. On the other, NIC offers programs that are forward-looking in anticipation of future demands, that are more proactive than reactive. The program mix also reflects a balance between offerings that are commonly found within the BC postsecondary system, and one-of-kind programming, uniquely tailored to the population of the NIC region.

STRATEGIES

- Develop, cost and identify high-priority new programs on an annual basis, for integration into the budget planning process by Fall of the year prior to their initial offering.
- Work within our Post Secondary Island Partnership agreement to provide a mix of programs together that avoids duplication and competition and where fiscally responsible sharing of resources is key.

GOAL 3: DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

NIC seeks to deliver education as close to home as possible despite the challenges of geography across the North Island. To that end NIC encourages and supports the use of a variety of different information and communication technologies and methods.

Distributed Learning is central to providing access and expanding choice for NIC students. While some students choose to take courses entirely by distance, others benefit from courses using a variety of different "distributed" delivery methods (print, ITV, online, CDs). The College provides staff and faculty with the necessary support and training for developing and delivering distributed learning courses, programs and services, and ensures that all NIC students, regardless of delivery method, receive the same level of service.

STRATEGIES

- Develop a business plan for distributed learning across the NIC region.
- Promote and enhance faculty training and upgrading in distributed learning technologies and techniques.
- Seek partnerships with other stakeholders, including other post-secondary institutions, Band Offices, School Districts, and VIHA to extend and enrich distributed learning opportunities.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)



GOAL 4: ADULT LEARNERS

NIC develops services and programs geared to facilitate access and strengthen support for adult learners in its region.

The College recognizes as a priority the need to address the demonstrated under-representation of adult learners of the NIC region in postsecondary education. Only 50 % of those in the region aged 25 to 54 have completed post-secondary education, while nearly half that number (22.5%) have not completed secondary school. This goal is to be achieved in part by reaching out to the “unengaged” population in new and creative ways, and then providing the kind of support and learning activities designed to meet their particular needs and circumstances. The barriers facing adult learners, be they educational, financial, domestic or psychological, are identified and specific solutions are created with the aim of increasing levels of participation and ensuring that such learners see NIC as “their college”. For some, this means the provision of developmental and upgrading programs; for others, professional development opportunities and postsecondary credentials. For all, the programming must be flexible and accessible enough to meet their requirements as lifelong learners.

STRATEGIES

- Create and implement a plan for “Reaching Out” to widen the participation of potential adult learners.
- Develop career/occupation-oriented ABE programming.
- Develop and implement the concept of a “Weekend College”, and other means of attracting learners seeking professional development opportunities.

GOAL 5: TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY TO POST SECONDARY

The College provides a comprehensive series of programs and services geared to making the transition from secondary to postsecondary educations as seamless as possible.

NIC engages regularly and closely with the schools and school districts of its region to develop pathways for secondary students to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. With dual credit a topic of discussion at all levels involved in education, there is an opportunity for secondary students to participate in NIC's postsecondary programming. A high school student having an opportunity to experience a college course or program with such a rich learning experience can lead the student to decide to continue at the College following graduation.

STRATEGIES

- Align timetables/scheduling between secondary schools and NIC, when possible.
- More program-focused upgrading and transitional education to create new pathways (e.g. specialized math directed at program entry in some disciplines).

GOAL 6: ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

NIC is an innovator in the development and implementation of courses and programs of study that acknowledge and respond to the unique needs of aboriginal learners.

The College becomes known across the province as a leader in meeting the needs of aboriginal learners, both within their communities and on campus. This is achieved partly through the development of specific courses and programs with an aboriginal focus, and partly through the provision of various services and support mechanisms to ensure that NIC is a learning place where everyone feels valued for what they bring, open to what they hear and learn and inspired by what they are a part of.

STRATEGIES

- Support the College's Aboriginal Service Plan
- Continue to build cross-divisional partnerships in order to provide relevant educational opportunities for aboriginal students.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

GOAL 7: SERVING THE COMMUNITY

NIC Helps Its Communities Plan for the 21st Century.

NIC plays an active and integral role in the communities we serve. NIC is not only the primary provider of post-secondary education, but a gathering place within the community. NIC makes a significant contribution to the cultural makeup of our communities through participation and support of a wide range of cultural activities. The College is a catalyst for new initiatives and community-based research. Employers in the North Island College region and throughout the province recognize the quality of NIC graduates and they frequently contact faculty when they have positions to fill.

STRATEGIES

- Develop and implement regular consultation processes with local, regional and First Nations communities
- Ensure strong linkages to employers and local non-profit agencies by instituting work experience and service learning activities that are program based.
- Identify established groups such as Elder College to expand college access to the 50+ demographic.
- Promote and support community-based research initiatives.
- Develop effective communication strategies and materials that communicate the importance of post-secondary education in general, and NIC specifically.



