



# HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500  
Chicago, IL 60604-1411  
312.263.0456 | 800.621.7440  
Fax: 312.263.7462 | [hlcommission.org](http://hlcommission.org)

January 30, 2022

President Chato Hazelbaker  
Northland Pioneer College  
2251 East Navajo Boulevard  
Holbrook, AZ 86025

Dear President Hazelbaker:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on strategic and integrated planning. No further reports are required.

The institution's next Assurance review is scheduled for 6/3/2024.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2029– 2030.

For more information on the interim report process contact [interimreports@hlcommission.org](mailto:interimreports@hlcommission.org). Your HLC staff liaison is Gigi Fansler ([gfansler@hlcommission.org](mailto:gfansler@hlcommission.org)).

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: 1/13/2022

STAFF LIAISON: Gigi Fansler

REVIEWED BY: Lee Bash

INSTITUTION: Northland Pioneer College, Holbrook, AZ

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Chato Hazelbaker, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 12/17/2021 on strategic and integrated planning.

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The Northland Pioneer College interim report offers a 7-page narrative that addresses the 7 areas of focus articulated in the Final Report from the 2019 Comprehensive visit. The narrative is supported by an Appendices that contains 31 Appendix entries with over 500 pages of supporting evidence. In addition to the 7 entries that relate directly to the specific expectations articulated in the Final Report, the narrative includes a brief Introduction and Conclusion. Because there are so many expectations cited (7), the design is helpful in keeping the overall Core Component organized and manageable, which adds to the overall quality of the report. The material is thorough and comprehensive. Given the complexity of the assignment, the interim report is written cohesively and cogently.

REPORT SUMMARY: The Northland Pioneer College interim report, as noted above, is designed to explicitly address 7 expectations articulated in the Final Report. Each expectation or area of focus becomes a section heading in the narrative, which, given the complexity of the task, helps address a single component rather than try to manage the Core Component in its entirety. The areas of focus are indicated in the section below (Report Analysis), where each is analyzed. Each section then explains the details associated with the area of focus, and its current status, further supplemented with appendices that provide documentation and support for the narrative.

The design of the interim report (i.e., breaking the core component into 7 segments) allows the analysis to focus on each portion of the overall expectation to ensure that all concerns are addressed in the entirety of the report.

REPORT ANALYSIS: The Northland Pioneer College interim report is extremely complex narrative that is helpful to the reader in the manner that it essentially provides a story of how these areas of focus are assembled. It contains several challenges that the institution encountered in its pursuit of compliance. When there are complications or

unexpected challenges that slow down the progress of this massive undertaking, the narrative demonstrates how the institution is able to persevere. Although this Report Analysis section is extensive here, it ensures that each component has been fully addressed since it is impossible to analyze the entire project without determining that each constituent part is addressed and satisfied.

The Introduction section notes that the timing of the institution starting this overall initiative coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which complicated the institution's efforts since much of the work (e.g., in-person group discussion, community outreach), involved interpersonal activities that, suddenly, were less likely to happen. Furthermore, Northland Pioneer College also experienced an additional complication during this formative period due to major staff turnover at the senior leadership level. Nonetheless, the institution persevered and, in many cases, created alternative strategies to obtain the necessary results. The analysis for each area of focus is provided below.

*1) Identify the process owner for College-level (strategic) planning:* Upon receipt of the Final Report from the November 2019 Comprehensive Visit, the institution, with the leadership of the President and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, who frequently worked together to provide overall leadership throughout, engaged in meetings, convocations, workshops and other forms of communication to ensure that all stakeholders were engaged, and began building, with the assistance of the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee and the Leadership Council, the framework and foundation for the college planning process. These preliminary efforts helped the institution address the expectation articulated in this area of focus.

*2) Review and rewrite the College's vision statement so that all stakeholders are clear about what the institutional long-term goals (i.e., the vision) are moving forward (vision statements should use future tense and should not be confused with mission statements):* While the areas of focus outlined by the Comprehensive Visit Team were detailed and helpful, they did not allow for external factors (like interruptions in the timeline, the resignation of the President, and the pandemic), so that this portion of the process was impeded and took longer than anticipated. In December 2020, a small group of the Leadership Council was able to present the final proposed mission, vision, and shared values to the full Council, after which a final draft was shared with the District Governing Board in January 2021 for adoption, leaving Northland Pioneer College less than 11 months to complete the remainder of their tasks.

*3) Identify key institutional long-term goals that are clearly linked to the vision statement, explain how the goals have been vetted and approved:* Because area of focus #2 needed to be completed before next steps could be introduced, this portion of the process wasn't initiated until late February 2021, when the Leadership Council appointed the Strategic Planning Task Force to review all input previously gathered before sharing three proposed strategic areas linked to the vision adopted in focus area #2. These included: a) "Increase Enrollment," b) "Improve Student Success," and c) "Improve College Sustainability" which were introduced to the Board in May 2021 and

adopted in June. Therefore, these strategic areas define the long-term goals for the institution from this point onward.

Concurrently, however, the institution was experiencing the appointment of a new president and updating a Facilities Master Plan, which had begun prior to the 2019 HLC visit, and these activities provided additional factors to consider within the context of the ongoing Strategic Plan work, as the institution and its Board sought to achieve an alignment among these initiatives, as determined in a September 2021 Board Retreat. Although this may have represented a layer of complication to the process to complete the Core Component 5.C., it may have also helped the institution align its work with even greater focus.

*4) Create key performance indicators (KPIs) to benchmark the current state and create target goals for strategic planning within a specified time frame (e.g., 3-5 years), how that KPI data will be collected and who is responsible for collecting it:* As noted in the interim report, “the Task Force worked through the summer of 2021 to complete this task.” Given the specificity of the items in the areas of focus, there was much to be done in a short time and it is evident that the Task Force worked with urgency and efficiency in order to produce a 26-page document, “Proposed Key Result Indicators Recommended by the Strategic Planning Task Force to Leadership Council” in August 2021. Although the Task Force conceded that this element was incomplete and still required some work to achieve full completion, this document still helped put things in motion and served as a foundation for further discussion that resulted in a recommendation from the President to the Leadership Council that the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee work with designated departments or collaboration teams in charge of the strategic initiatives to develop key performance indicators associated with these initiatives. The narrative also noted that key result indicators are lagging indicators and there was still time before the incomplete work was needed.

*5) Determine a transparent process on how progress will be communicated to the greater college community:* The Northland Pioneer College interim report notes that the institution has used 5 venues for communicating its strategic planning progress: 1) the Leadership Council, which is comprised of a broadly diverse constituency across the campus; 2) a semi-annual convocation event where strategic planning is a standing item in the agenda, 3) the President and Director of Institutional Effectiveness maintain close communication with the President’s Cabinet, Leadership Council, Instructional Council and Student Success Alliance, 4) weekly All College meetings every Wednesday where the President provides updates, and 5) the President’s interactions with community leaders, tribal events, community meetings, etc., where he emphasizes the strategic plan in relationship with the institution’s partnerships. Finally, the Northland Pioneer College’s website remains a focal point for updates to be posted in a report-card type format.

*6) Explain how other continuous improvement plans (e.g., program reviews and academic assessments) are being utilized in the strategic planning process:* As noted in this section of the interim report, although Northland Pioneer College “departments

have (already) been expected to use program or department review reports to develop improvement projects and justify changes in department budgets,” the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee drafted a college planning procedure in Fall 2020 and shared with the Leadership Council. However due to changes in college senior administration for 3 key positions, and the revision of the Leadership Council’s function and operation, the review process was only adopted in July 2021. Because some key positions have yet to be filled, this portion of the process is still somewhat delayed, although meaningful work continues that provides confidence that sufficient progress is already in place to ensure that it will be completed shortly, based on all the other work that has been accomplished.

*7) Explain how the integrated planning process will be sustained into the future:* The Strategic Planning Oversight Committee has developed a college planning procedure to create a structure and a process to help departments, committees, and shared governance groups develop a common knowledge of the process. It contains a requirement for new initiatives that will heighten collaboration and efforts to be aware of managing and evaluating strategic initiatives that will also improve sustainability.

Finally, the Conclusion section notes that the College is drafting its 2021-24 strategic plan to be finalized and shared with the college community in early Spring 2022. The institution’s vision is clear: “...as NPC focuses its technological, human, and cultural resources to improve college sustainability, the college will be better prepared to incorporate internal and external changes to fulfill its mission.”

It appears that a critical factor in seeing this become a reality may be partially dependent upon who the institution selects as its new Vice President of Learning and Student Services, since that role is likely to have, in close cooperation with the President and Director of Institutional Effectiveness, to oversee and manage the ongoing success of this initiative, and ensure that it continues to grow and become a central feature of the institution’s identity and operation.

**ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT:** The Northland Pioneer College interim report is, as noted repeatedly in this document, extremely complex, with many parts that are dependent on other focus areas to satisfy this Core Component. While not every “T” is crossed or “I” dotted, the College has provided extensive evidence that each area of focus has been carefully considered and addressed to the point that its completion appears to be inevitable. On the other hand, the expectation of satisfactorily meeting this Core Component is only achieved through a change of the institutional culture, that is clearly developing but perhaps not yet fully realized. That can’t be fulfilled now, but it should be observable by 2024 at the time of the Assurance Review. Because the interim report acknowledges that not every single item has been completed at the time of this analysis, Northland Pioneer College is encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to redouble and sustain its efforts so that its progress serves as a model for other institutions struggling with their ability to systematically improve their performance in the future.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 5.D.

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.

Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on strategic and integrated planning. No further reports are required.

The institution's next Assurance review is scheduled for 6/3/2024.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2029– 2030.