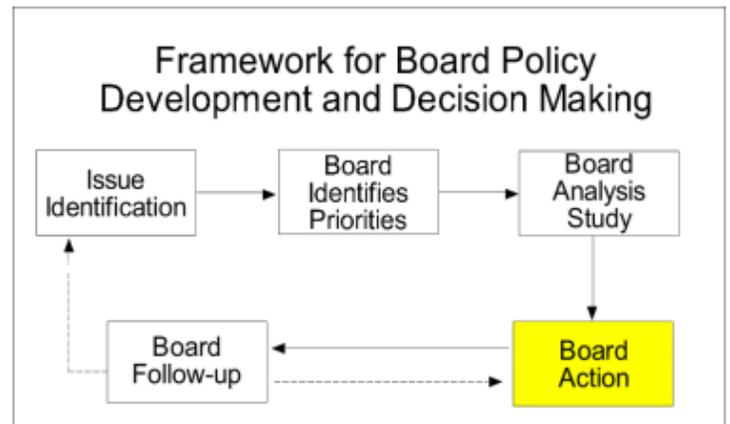


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

January 28, 2021



- Agenda Item:** North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) Interim Accreditation Report—Fiscal Year 2021
- State Board Priority:** Preparing Learners for Tomorrow’s Workforce
- State Board Role/Authority:** Iowa Code section 260C.47(3) grants authority to the State Board of Education to determine whether the programs of a community college shall remain accredited.
- Presenter(s):** Chris Russell, Consultant
Bureau of Community Colleges
- Attachment(s):** One
- Recommendation:** It is recommended that the State Board grant continued accreditation for North Iowa Area Community College. A state comprehensive visit will be conducted in fiscal year 2026.
- Background:** Attached is a report of the evaluation of NIACC for continued state accreditation as an associate degree-granting institution. The Department of Education conducted the interview portion of the evaluation on October 22-23, 2020. This report reflects the review team’s observations and determinations made during NIACC’s interim (virtual) visit. As mandated by Iowa Code section 260C.47, the accreditation team, including two external peer reviewers, assessed NIACC’s compliance with eight Iowa State Accreditation Standards via a structured process of document review and interviews. The team also reviewed the most recent Higher Learning Commission (HLC) regional accreditation report to ensure that any findings have been addressed. Iowa’s process has been designed not to duplicate the HLC accreditation process.

Accreditation Report
Interim State Evaluation

North Iowa Area Community College
October 22 - 23, 2020

FY 2021



**COMMUNITY COLLEGES &
WORKFORCE PREPARATION**
PROSPERITY THROUGH EDUCATION

This page was intentionally left blank.

**State of Iowa
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146**

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Brooke Axiotis, President, Des Moines
Bettie Bolar, Vice-President, Marshalltown
Joshua Byrnes, Osage
Brian J. Kane, Dubuque
Michael L. Knedler, Vice President, Council Bluffs
Mike May, Spirit Lake
John Robbins, Iowa Falls
Georgia Van Gundy, Waukee
Kimberly Wayne, Des Moines
Hannah Groos, Student Member, Norwalk

ADMINISTRATION

Ann Lebo, Director and Executive Officer
of the State Board of Education

**DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
and WORKFORCE PREPARATION**

Jeremy Varner, Division Administrator

Bureau of Community Colleges

Paula Nissen, Acting Bureau Chief

It is the policy of the Iowa Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, sex, disability, religion, age, political party affiliation, or actual or potential parental, family or marital status in its programs, activities, or employment practices as required by federal and state civil rights legislation. If you have questions or complaints related to compliance with this policy by the Iowa Department of Education, please contact the legal counsel for the Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, 400 E. 14th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146, telephone number: 515-281-5295, or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Citigroup Center, 500 W. Madison Street, Suite 1475, Chicago, IL, 60661-4544, telephone number: 312-730-1560, FAX number: 312-730-1576, TDD number: 877-521-2172, email: OCR.Chicago@ed.gov

**Accreditation Team Members
North Iowa Area Community College
Interim Accreditation Evaluation
FY 2021 (Academic Year 2020-2021)**

Chris Russell, Accreditation Visit Team Lead
Bureau of Community Colleges
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Dennis Harden, Chief
Bureau of Career and Technical Education
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Eric St Clair, Education Program Consultant
Bureau of Career and Technical Education
Iowa Department of Education
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Kelly Friesleben, Education Program Consultant
Bureau of Community Colleges
Iowa Department of Education
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) Interim State Accreditation Evaluation FY 2021 – Conducted October 22-23, 2020

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this review was a scheduled accreditation evaluation of North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) by the Iowa Department of Education as mandated by Iowa Code Section 260C.47.

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

College History¹

North Iowa Area Community College in Mason City has the distinct privilege of being the first public community college established in Iowa. In 1917, the Mason City School Board passed a resolution establishing a junior college to be “an extension of the high school to offer two years of advanced study” (college records). In the spring of 1918, the college received full accreditation by the college division of the North Central Association, establishing Mason City Junior College (MCJC) as the 46th public junior college in the United States.

On September 9, 1918, MCJC opened its doors in the newly built Mason City High School building to 28 students, six teachers and five fields of study under the direction of Principal James Rae. Residents could attend at no cost and nonresidents paid \$10 per semester. MCJC’s pre-baccalaureate curriculum was designed to encourage further study on the part of high school graduates as well as to offer higher education to those students who might have otherwise been unable to afford it. The college held its first commencement exercise with four graduates in the spring of 1920, and, during that decade, continued to expand its programs and athletic opportunities. By 1940, enrollment was 265, the tennis team was undefeated for the third consecutive year, a noncredit civilian pilot training program was started and a new radio club was formed.

As with all colleges nationwide, World War II caused enrollments and offerings to decrease in the early 1940s, but after the war, enrollment climbed as service men and women took advantage of the G.I. Bill (i.e., the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944) to further their education. In 1947, the college began a program in adult education for teacher training and recertification. By 1948, noncredit adult education classes became popular and summer school for teachers was offered. The 1960s saw the addition of vocational-technical programs and by 1966, enrollment increased to more than 1,700 credit students. In 1966, the statewide organization of areas to maintain and operate community colleges or technical institutions resulted in the election of a board representing 34 school districts to direct the college. This board named the institution North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) and the main body of the college moved back to the remodeled high school building (Mohawk Square). Planning began for a new 300-acre campus located on the east side of Mason City and William F. Berner became NIACC’s first Superintendent in 1966. The NIACC Foundation was established in 1968, providing an essential avenue for fundraising to help the college grow, structurally and in enrollment.

Many changes were in store for the new community college, including two new programs – Agriculture and Nursing – and new buildings, the first of which were designed primarily for vocational-technical programs and occupied in January 1970. Five temporary buildings were completed during the summer of 1971, and all college programs moved to the campus for the 1971-72 academic year, with dormitories constructed in 1972. By 1974, NIACC reached an enrollment of 2,000 students. The momentum of growth continued during the 1980s and 1990s as NIACC continued to expand and offer services, activities and clubs of interest to students. During this 20-year span, the college opened an activity center, expanded women’s sports, constructed a fine arts wing, provided a home for Buena Vista University on campus, opened the Muse-Norris Conference Center, added more student apartments, formed the NIACC Alumni Association, expanded distance education, opened the Murphy Manufacturing Technology Center and became an

entrepreneurial resource to the region with financial gifts from John and Mary Pappajohn.

Today, NIACC is a progressive, comprehensive institution that serves as the primary educational and cultural center in North Central Iowa. According to the NIACC Alumni Association records, there are more than 29,000 graduates of MCJC and NIACC residing in all 50 states and 13 foreign countries. Over the last 25 years, the association has recognized 52 alumni with the “Outstanding and Distinguished Alumni Award” for their personal and professional accomplishments.

Institutional Profile²

In just over 100 years, NIACC has grown from a student population of 28 to more than 3,800 in fiscal year (FY) 2020, which includes a five-year average decline in enrollment between 2010 and 2015. The college serves a variety of student populations in more than 11 counties in the North Iowa region. With a staff of over 400, NIACC currently has more than 40 one- and two-year career programs, the first two years toward a bachelor’s degree, and an array of continuing education opportunities for professional and personal growth. These credit and noncredit opportunities are provided on NIACC’s main campus in Mason City and at five Community Education Centers located in Charles City, Garner, Hampton, Lake Mills and Osage. The mission of these off-campus centers is to provide opportunities for nontraditional students to acquire employment skills (noncredit-to-credit courses) and participate in lifelong learning to enhance the quality of life throughout NIACC’s service region.

In FY 2019, NIACC’s profile, created by the Division of Community College’s data consultants from enrollment data submitted by the college, had the following college highlights:

- 3,866 credit students (ranked 10th of the 15 Iowa community colleges)
- 55.1 percent female
- 15.6 percent minority
- Median age of 19.3
- 69.4 percent (3rd in state) enrolled in one or more distance learning courses
- 39.2 percent (8th in state) jointly-enrolled students
- awards issued (ranked 2nd in state),
- Majority of career and technical education awards were in health sciences, with business/management being a distant second
- Success rate of 54.3 percent (ranked 3rd in state with transfer rate and graduation rate 4th)

In addition to the credit statistics above, NIACC offers more than 2,500 continuing education courses each year to approximately 11,500 individuals accounting for over 20,000 enrollments and 207,620 contact hours of instruction. Noncredit students rank 7th in the state and 10th in credit hours. These learning opportunities are available in the areas of recreation and leisure, business, health, computers, summer camps for kids (elementary and middle school age), lean enterprise, customized training for business and industry, skilled trades and lifelong learning through the NIACC Lifelong Learning Institute.

¹ Information for this section was obtained primarily from:

² Information for this section was obtained from the NIACC Website and the Community College Profile Report.

ASSURANCE SUMMARY STATE STANDARDS

Compliance with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Criteria

The Iowa Department of Education's state accreditation team (DE team) reviewed the most recent report and information from the HLC available at the time of this evaluation. NIACC's most recent HLC accreditation letter provided adequate evidence that the college has continuing regional accreditation with no issues, concerns or follow-up findings documented. NIACC is accredited through 2023-24 by the HLC.

The college took to heart the HLC recommendations to narrow the number of action projects they are undertaking as well as to create a data repository for the college. They have also started a compliance tracking initiative modeled by another Iowa community college to account for all required submissions to state and federal organizations. The team heard that NIACC uses the college profile and other state benchmark data to help move the college forward. Overall, the college appears to be engaging in a culture of continuous quality improvement that has continued despite the college's move from AQIP to the HLC Open Pathway. Examples of their continuous improvement are noted in their processes for strategic planning, program review, senior year plus and quality faculty planning.

Compliance with Iowa State Accreditation Standards

In the interim state accreditation report of 2015, NIACC had two interim accreditation follow-ups: a finding for more documentation of a consistent nondiscrimination statement with an identified annual statement process and a strong recommendation to improve the college's program review and evaluation process. The DE team found that the college has improved its process of providing the required nondiscrimination statement and has significantly improved the college's program review policies and documentation.

Faculty Qualifications

All community college-employed instructors who are under contract as of July 1, 2011 who teach in career and technical education (CTE) or arts and sciences (including adjuncts) are required to meet minimum faculty standards (Iowa Code, Section 260C.48). The DE accreditation team reviewed a random sample of faculty personnel files provided by the human resources office to ensure compliance with this standard.

The DE team provided a random list of 20 faculty members who taught credit courses in the previous year for whom NIACC provided personnel files regarding qualifications along with supporting documentation such as college transcripts, employment applications to illustrate related work experience and third-party licensure/certification, if applicable. Members of the DE team then examined the files to determine whether the qualifications of each faculty member complied with current Iowa Code faculty standards for the courses he or she taught during FY 2019 (i.e., fall term 2018 and spring 2019).

Following a thorough review of the 20 random faculty personnel files, members of the DE team met with NIACC's human resources director to learn about the college's faculty qualification review process and to discuss a few concerns raised during the review. NIACC has a unique documentation form that combines faculty qualifications with professional development activities and progress. Most of the faculty reviewed were highly qualified in their fields through documented graduate coursework and/or professional experiences in their occupational fields. The team **recommends** the college use their form to document specific prefix disciplines and/or courses that the college has verified faculty are qualified to teach. This includes all PEV applied coaching classes which must be documented for faculty qualifications following the directions shared in the faculty qualifications guidance document. The team **recommends** that the college review and finalize the definition of "recent and relevant work experience" as a part of their qualification processes. Finally, the team **recommends** the college find more ways to automate faculty approval for courses and disciplines utilizing software systems that may ease the manual burden of regularly verifying these approvals.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Faculty Teaching Load

The teaching loads of full-time instructors must not exceed the faculty load limits set forth in Iowa Code. This is the case for CTE instructors, as well as for college parallel (arts and sciences) instructors (Iowa Code, Section 260C.48). To check compliance with this standard, the DE accreditation team reviewed the instructional loads of a random sample of 20 faculty members for whom NIACC provided documentation of their FY 2019 (fall 2018 and spring 2019 terms) teaching loads. All faculty loads appeared to be in order and the college shared that they are implementing a new form to document the “mutual consent” of overload with instructors. The team **recommends** the use of this form to promote improved communication and planning of course coverage.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Special Needs

Community colleges shall provide equal access to the full range of program offerings and services including, but not limited to, recruitment, enrollment and placement activities for students with special education needs or protected by state or federal civil rights regulation. Students with disabilities shall be given access to the full range of program offerings at a college through reasonable accommodations (Iowa Administrative Code 24.5(3)), with information regarding how to access such accommodations provided in a disability statement. In addition, community colleges shall have nondiscrimination statements ensuring access to educational programs and employment for state and federally protected classes. This nondiscrimination statement must list all state and federally protected classes; provide the name/title and contact information of the person(s) designated to coordinate equity, Title IX and Section 504 compliance as well as provide contact information for the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in Chicago, Illinois. The nondiscrimination and disability statements may be separate or the college may choose to combine them.

The DE accreditation team conducted a desk review prior to the onsite visit in which they reviewed NIACC’s Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and nondiscrimination policies, statements and practices in marketing and recruitment publications, handbooks, the college catalog, the college website and sample course syllabi. During the onsite visit, the team reviewed additional documentation and conducted interviews with faculty, students and staff associated with disabilities services to ensure compliance with this standard.

During the onsite visit, the DE team saw evidence of numerous collegewide efforts to create a welcoming environment for all students, provide accommodations for students with special needs and provide opportunities for underrepresented students in particular programs of study. Some of these observed efforts include the following:

- Partnering with Mason City to serve underserved populations through the use of Pappajohn Center venture money.
- Establishing success coaches in housing through a Title III grant and continuing to support after the grant ended.
- Serving a TRIO population of 148 students through the grant.
- Offering a “dimensions of wellness” series of discussions, for student development through a wellness club.
- Building noncredit to credit pathways with short term certificates and supporting adult internet and computer needs. This support could be continued through use of GEER Funds for adult education.
- Leading activity planning through a full-time diversity advisory committee.
- Finding common ground with the local community and businesses for diversity and equity planning

through the college's Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) process in their region.

- Utilizing the guided pathways equity and inclusion subcommittee to review and make recommendations for student success across various subgroups.
- Reaching out to black male students through efforts that include: assigning a second advisor to these students in addition to the usual program advisor; offering "For Us, By Us" workshops, trainings and support and providing race relations discussion workshops for all stakeholders.

The team did not find the usual ADA, nondiscrimination and Title IX policy descriptions in the board policy manual. Instead, NIACC shared that the faculty, staff and student handbooks are considered official parts of board policy and those handbooks include the required statements. The team **recommends** that NIACC include a statement in both the approved board policy and within each of the handbooks that indicates these handbooks are official board documents. Student interviews indicated satisfaction with services provided on campus in each of these areas, but they also commented that they would like more opportunities to give feedback to the college regarding college resources.

In the document review of the nondiscrimination statement, for most NIACC publications, the statement is consistent and present; however, a few instances of statement inconsistencies were found including: statements missing the local equity coordinator email address (some syllabi, the Campusview housing document and the quality faculty plan); the use of a shorter link or statement utilized in some marketing publications and the statement missing in some documents (the strategic plan, the "NIACC first" marketing piece, "Minnesota students pay less" piece and the "Minds On" document). NIACC includes "genetic information" and "veteran's status" as two additional classes beyond state/federal requirements, which is commendable. The college also uses the classes "age (employment)" and "sex (including pregnancy)" in the official statement and should make sure this format is consistent in all publications. The annual nondiscrimination statement is visible on the website and meets reporting requirements except that career and technical program admission requirement differences for students are not included.

Finding: The continuous nondiscrimination statement must be prominent, complete and consistent on the college's website and in major publications, including board policy, handbooks and all admissions, academic, housing, financial aid and student services material directed at students and within employment information directed at employees. The DE team will review this standard again after **April 15, 2021** to ensure that:

1. The continuous statement is prominent in all major college publications and student recruiting material, including handbooks and course syllabi. A shorter statement or link to the statement should only be utilized when room is not available in the document (such as a postcard mailing);
2. The annual statement includes information for students regarding admissions differences among career and technical programs from the general admissions requirements.

CTE Program Evaluations and Timelines

There are a variety of state standards related to the offering of career and technical education (CTE) programs included in Iowa Code, Chapter 258, 281—IAC 46.7(4), and 281—IAC 24.5(4). These standards include numerous requirements related to program and award length, program content, labor market demand, articulation, advisory committees and more. All CTE programs (including new programs and changes to existing programs) must be approved by the DE. Standards for CTE programs are included in the *Program Approval: Guidelines for Iowa Community Colleges* and in the *State Accreditation Guide* on the DE website.

The DE utilizes a web-based platform (CurricUNET) for its CTE program approval process and maintains a database of approved programs and courses. This platform performs compliance checks on all CTE programs offered by each college. The DE accreditation team reviewed this compliance check for NIACC's CTE programs to ensure compliance with the state program standards. For the standards regarding program advisory committees' composition, roles and responsibilities, the DE team reviewed a random sample of CTE advisory committee membership lists and meeting minutes to ensure compliance.

Additionally, community colleges are required to review at least 20 percent of their CTE programs annually, standards for which are provided in the aforementioned program approval guideline on the DE website. The DE team reviewed NIACC's CTE program review process, schedule and a random sample of recent CTE program reviews to ensure compliance with the CTE program review standards.

NIACC has a template that is utilized for program reviews and the summary portion of the reviews was appreciated and helpful to the team. NIACC utilizes annual planning that ties into their five-year reviews so that a fresh look at programs occurs regularly. Faculty have access to monthly trainings on the program review process and use of data. Among the five reviewed programs there were some inconsistency of quality issues with respect to depth of evaluation and usage of data, so the team **recommends** continued discussion by NIACC to establish metrics of thoroughness and completeness in answers as a part of the regular training. The Education Effectiveness Committee (EEC) gives feedback and suggestions to the faculty completing the review, and a rubric with scores details all of the required components for completed program reviews. Review recommendations are tied to both the college's budget process and to equipment upgrades.

Advisory boards also have input into the reviews. The team **recommends** the college find additional ways (website, forums, etc.) to share program reviews with college and community members as other institutions have found this to be a beneficial process for stakeholder understanding of program successes and needs. The standard advisory board minutes form utilized for meetings is commendable, and a useful advisory board manual is also in place. NIACC is working on ways to increase diversity of both advisory board membership and for student program membership. The college has found ways to increase the diversity of committee members from all aspects of the profession.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Catalog/CurricUNET Review

The DE quality program consultant conducted a manual comparison of NIACC's approved CTE programs in CurricUNET's META database with those provided in their college catalog. During this comparison, it was found that the college had a few duplicate programs in META, a few minor name changes and a few course changes that had not been updated. The college will also deactivate a few programs that are no longer offered. The college has also changed the status of a medication aide certificate to be listed only as a course so that it now aligns with CurricUNET. With 11 new transfer majors approved by the state, NIACC has created a separate section in the catalog to document these transfer major articulations created with the regent universities.

Strategic Planning

Community colleges are required to update their strategic plans at least every five years as a guide for the community and its decision-making (Iowa Code section 256.31(4)(a)). The DE accreditation team reviewed NIACC's most recent strategic plan and interviewed selected staff to ensure compliance with this standard. The NIACC plan spans 2018-2023 and includes an updated mission, vision and core values for the college. The college involved internal and external constituents in the building of the plan and utilized UNI's Institute for Decision-Making to help organize the process. The plan development organization included five strategic priority teams with faculty and staff co-chairs to guide the work. The document was approved by the NIACC Governing Board and the board uses a feedback sheet to share additional insights, questions

and recommendations during their board retreats twice a year.

Plan metrics are in place and updates are shared regularly at the president's council and then with other college committees who follow-up with the results. NIACC's all-staff day meetings also include time on the agenda to update movements on the strategic plan so that the entire campus can learn about progress and also provide feedback.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Physical Plant and Facilities

Each community college must present evidence of adequate planning, including a board-approved facilities plan. The community college's plan must meet state and federal requirements as outlined in the state accreditation guide. The DE accreditation team reviewed NIACC's facilities plan and interviewed the NIACC staff regarding the college's facility planning process and decision-making structure to ensure compliance with this standard. The college regularly reviews ADA requirements and has walkthroughs by staff. The team **recommends** that NIACC check out third party and/or college insurance options to help with this ADA review. The college tracks maintenance requests through SchoolDude PMDirect. A classroom technology committee makes campus decisions about the classroom template that has resulted in uniform technology capabilities for instructors to master across the campus. Students indicated satisfaction with campus facilities and resources, but a few asked that the gym and gym floor be upgraded. Finally, several comprehensive safety initiatives were found to be in place for NIACC:

- NIACC has a panic button system to lock all campus doors down if needed.
- An electronic alert system in place which they also used to share COVID-19 information when the pandemic started.
- The campus has a campus-wide public address system available.
- All applicable employees complete "globalized harmonized standard training" which emphasizes the labeling and storage of chemicals and hazardous waste. In addition, relevant staff complete lockout/tagout training, forklift training, disposal training and boiler training etc.
- NIACC has established a compliance folder to hold documentation and processes for keeping records of all federal, state and local compliance activities.
- The faculty division chairs monitor and track required faculty trainings. Examples include training on the dynamometer in the automotive program, OSHA and other requirements.
- All students and staff complete right-to-know training including the new and revised Title IX trainings through SafeColleges. They are informed through the email system.
- A COVID safety awareness and return to campus plan was put together with Cerro Gordo County health board.
- Campus-wide safety plans are reviewed annually.
- The college invested into violence in the classroom, active shooter and ALICE training as well and review it regularly.
- An information technology security audit called "FR secure" has been conducted with scoring metrics to regularly improve technology safety measures.
- The team's virtual tour of facilities demonstrated the college's commitment to ensuring that equipment and facilities are current and state of the art. The "sandbox" rooms are especially cutting-edge.

Finding: While NIACC has individual pieces of the facilities master plan approved by the Governing Board when they are ready to act upon them, current state rules require that the full five-year plan be approved by the Board. NIACC is asked to document Board approval of their full facilities plan by **April 2021**.

Quality Faculty Plan

Iowa law establishes the process for community colleges to plan for the hiring and professional development of faculty. Institutional quality faculty plans (QFP) are required to meet the standards of 281-IAC 24.5(5). The DE accreditation team reviewed NIACC's QFP and interviewed members of the QFP Committee to ensure compliance with this standard.

NIACC's QFP updates were last approved by the board in September 2020 and the team **recommends** that the college document the historical dates to reflect when QFP updates were approved by the board. NIACC does not have a faculty bargaining unit nor a faculty senate, so the faculty members in the committee volunteer. The team **recommends** that NIACC make their membership approval process more official with faculty as new members are selected. NIACC has separate quality plans for adjuncts, counselors and librarians, and the team **recommends** that the QFP fold review of these plans into their discussion and oversight.

NIACC's commitment to faculty and professional development is evident through these team discoveries:

- The college offers three professional development weeks per year which are valuable to the faculty and include survey/reflection pieces. Adjuncts also have specific required portions of these weeks to attend and are paid starting this year.
- One full week of orientation for new faculty is provided prior to the workshop week for all faculty. Topics include helping new instructors understand college policies, standards of academic progress, financial aid, CurricUNET, program review and other specific procedures.
- New faculty are assigned a mentor as a resource during the first year. This process was made more thorough based on feedback from the Perkins comprehensive local needs assessment.
- The "learning lounge" in CANVAS holds all previous college training materials and are available "on-demand" for faculty with included assessments. Adjuncts also have access.
- Regular "Trojan Table talks" are also a good communication vehicle to get faculty and staff input.
- NIACC's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) is a valuable resource.
- NIACC has one of the highest rates of full-time faculty teaching the catalog of courses.
- Specific lists of approved professional development activities in the QFP is helpful to faculty.
- Almost a hundred faculty (part-time and full-time) recently completed an online teaching certification for high-quality distance learning practices.
- NIACC has partnered with the Venture School out of the University of Iowa to train regional entrepreneurs in the basics of business start-ups and/or how to introduce new products or expand businesses into new territories.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Senior Year Plus Programs

There are a variety of requirements for Senior Year Plus (SYP) programs offered to high school students jointly enrolled in Iowa's community colleges. These requirements are included in Iowa Code chapter 261E. Currently, the DE utilizes the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnership's (NACEP) accreditation process to ensure compliance with many statutory requirements (legislated Postsecondary Course Audit Committee). The DE accreditation team reviewed NIACC's accreditation status with NACEP, interviewed selected staff and reviewed documentation to ensure compliance with this standard.

NIACC's concurrent enrollment program is called Career Link and involves 18 school districts and over 1100 students which is around 40 percent of the college's headcount. The college offers concurrent enrollment courses through various methods, including online, in the high schools and at the college. The college is the first in the state to receive a \$1 million grant from the state career academy incentive fund to add to a successful bond referendum to create the Northwest Regional Career Center in Forest City to offer

career academy program courses as well. The center will offer four technical programs starting in fall 2021 in the areas of information technology, health sciences, advanced manufacturing and construction.

Concurrent enrollment faculty must attend fall and spring professional development sessions at the college and they have access to all recorded trainings in the CANVAS learning management system. These faculty also have access to full-time faculty liaisons who mentor and touch base with them on course content, textbooks and other college requirements. NIACC has achieved NACEP accreditation approval for their program through 2025-26. The team **recommends** that NIACC review the concurrent enrollment faculty handbook to add statements regarding background check processes, suspension of licensure processes and resources that the faculty have access to including library databases.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Compliance with Nonaccreditation State or Federal Requirements

Finding: No nonaccreditation compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Evaluation Team Recommendation

The Iowa Department of Education community college accreditation team recommends continued accreditation for North Iowa Area Community College.

A state comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for FY 2026 (i.e., Academic Year 2025-2026).