Strong Foundations – New Horizons:
Continuity and Change at Aurora College 2006 – 2015
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Preface

Our new strategic plan, *Strong Foundations – New Horizons: Continuity and Change at Aurora College 2006-2015*, identifies how we intend to honour the developmental path we have followed and how we will position ourselves for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

This is Aurora College’s third strategic plan and represents both continuity with our past and responsiveness to change for the future. Our first ten years were eventful. The creation of Nunavut redefined the Northwest Territories in our first planning period. The development of diamond mines restructured the NWT economy in our second planning period. The prospect of a Mackenzie Valley pipeline is expected to generate a short-term boom with long-term impacts during our third planning period.

More than just the economy is changing. The emergence of Aboriginal governments is transforming constitutional arrangements, giving new vitality to the aspirations of the people they serve. Beyond our borders, here at home, global forces are impacting society and changing the nature of work. The emergence of the knowledge-based economy requires workers with strong basic skills and higher levels of education than ever before.

All of these forces create challenges and opportunities for Aurora College. We are a virant and evolving institution, with features unique to our Northern population and environment. Our ongoing challenge is to ensure that our programs and services remain responsive to the needs of the Northerners in the years to come.

*Aurora College should reflect the people it serves and the environment in which it operates*
MISSION STATEMENT

Aurora College is focused on Student Success and is committed to supporting the development of our Northern Society through excellence in education, training and research that is culturally sensitive and responsive to the people we serve.

Our Values

Together, we are creating a vibrant, Northern college that is committed to excellence in education and research and fosters understanding and respect among all Northern people. We will continue to do this by:

- serving students in the best way possible, offering a seamless transition between high school, work, college and university;
- nurturing critical thinking skills and problem solving abilities;
- offering a full spectrum of postsecondary education, qualifying Northerners to work or to go on to further education anywhere in Canada;
- respecting and celebrating Aboriginal cultures and linking modern and traditional lifestyles;
- supporting innovation in education and research;
- ensuring research and postsecondary education are well integrated, through strong partnerships with industry, communities, governments and other educational institutions;
- recognizing our role in supporting the governance and economic development of Northern communities;
- attracting and retaining highly qualified Northern staff and faculty; and
- fostering an environment of excellence in which staff, faculty and students can work and learn.
Executive Summary

Aurora College is the public college of the Northwest Territories, established as a Board-governed corporation by the Public Colleges Act. Our mandate is to deliver a broad spectrum of adult and postsecondary programs to meet the needs of individuals, communities and the labour market. Through the Aurora Research Institute, we are also responsible for scientific research activity and innovation that responds to Northern priorities. Committed to excellence, we serve the College mission: Aurora College is dedicated to excellence, leadership and innovation in Northern education and research.

Adult and postsecondary education in the NWT has always been guided by values grounded in Northern experience and by an evolving sense of what is possible. Three core values express Aurora College’s philosophy of education: respect for the diverse needs of our communities, excellence in all aspects of college activity and access to our programs and services.

This is our third strategic plan. Our first two strategic plans, which we called corporate plans, laid the foundations and set the direction for our development to date. Recognizing that we are a maturing institution, we have chosen to extend the timeframe for the new plan to ten years instead of five and to formally call it a strategic plan.

Strong Foundations – New Horizons: Continuity and Change at Aurora College 2006-2015 describes how we have been responsive to the changing needs of the people we serve and to our changing environment.

Chapter 1 describes how a small, decentralized college serves a small, dispersed, multi-cultural population, dynamic economy and diverse client needs in a way consistent with territorial goals.

Chapter 2 describes how the strategic plan, grounded in our corporate values and informed by our past accomplishments, expresses continuity and change. It lays out the framework developed by our Board of Governors for the strategic planning exercise. The framework identified four major elements for attention and four core areas of college activity which serve as filters by which to judge the plan’s contents.
Framework for Deliberations

Areas for Attention

• Student services, facility development and enrolment
• Programming, research and academic development
• College governance and reorganization
• Partnerships.

Four Core Areas of Aurora College

• Students
• Faculty and staff
• Infrastructure and support services
• Communities and society.

Chapter 3 describes the accomplishments of our first ten years. This period coincided with the economic boom generated by the discovery of diamonds in the Western Arctic, which stimulated a demand for more pre-employment and specialized industrial training by the College. The same period was also marked by a growing demand in the public service for baccalaureate-level nurses and teachers trained in the NWT.

Chapter 4 provides an environmental scan of the people we serve and the environment we operate in. This chapter describes how the changing characteristics of the NWT population and labour market and the impact of global forces, are influencing the College’s efforts to be responsive. It also describes how the framework developed by our Board influenced our new strategic goals.

Chapter 5 lays out the eight major goals and objectives for the planning period 2006-2015. These eight goals represent continuity with our past accomplishments and responsiveness to the changes occurring in the NWT. They also express our determination to find a more contemporary role for the Aurora Research Institute within Aurora College and in service to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Goal 1 Excellence in programs and services.
Goal 2 Student success.
Goal 3 A responsive Northern learning organization.
Goal 4 Commitment to partnerships.
Goal 5 A prominent research institute.
Goal 6 Commitment to Aboriginal cultures and perspectives.
Goal 7 Degree opportunities.
Goal 8 A broadly marketed college.
Chapter 6 describes how we plan to implement the goals and objectives identified in *Strong Foundations – New Horizons* and how we plan to be accountable for the outcomes. This chapter also identifies the major indicators by which we will measure our achievements.

Our Board identified a vision for the consultation process, research and development work required to create the plan. The vision that guided the strategic planning process has been: *Aurora College should reflect the people it serves and the environment in which it operates.*

Our new strategic plan reflects the ideas, enthusiasm and support of many contributors. Consultations were held in the fall of 2005 in every region of the NWT. More than 300 college faculty, staff and students, representatives from the public, private and non-governmental sectors, Aboriginal governments, MLA’s and interested members of the public, took part. More than 100 individuals contributed their views by completing a survey questionnaire. All views were heard and considered; many of them are recorded here.
Aurora College serves a small, dispersed population in 33 communities across the Northwest Territories 1.3 million square kilometres. Aurora College responds to the challenge of serving a large Aboriginal student body, many of whom come from small remote communities.

A responsive college in this environment has characteristics unlike those of an urban institution. Aurora College responds to the challenge of serving a student body that is largely Aboriginal. Many of our students come from families that are in transition from a traditional way of life to one that is based on the wage economy. Our programs and services give our students the vocational and professional skills, communication skills and life skills needed for success in their chosen careers.

The people of the Northwest Territories want college services delivered as close to the community level as possible. Responding to their wishes, Aurora College has developed a network of three regional campuses and community learning centres located in all but the smallest communities.

The programs we deliver are also responsive to our dynamic economy. Aurora College serves the NWT’s historical labour market – the public service – and the flourishing industrial sector that has commanded attention over the past decade.

The college is responsive to the 15th Legislative Assembly’s vision of self-reliant individuals and families sharing the rewards and responsibilities of healthy communities and a prosperous and unified Northwest Territories. More directly, Aurora College serves the Department of Education, Culture and Employment’s three major objectives for the adult population – Access and choice for adult learners, a responsive college and an integrated adult learning network.

Aurora College has always worked to provide access and choice for adult learners and we have always placed a high priority on doing so through partnerships. These efforts will continue. Our network of partners includes the Government of the Northwest Territories, Aboriginal and community governments, employers, non-governmental organizations, postsecondary institutions and other training providers.
Aurora College also responds to the changing need for scientific research in the NWT; a role of growing significance that we address as a major element of change in this strategic plan. Through the Aurora Research Institute (ARI), we are active in licensing the environmental research related to the proposed Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline. While this activity ramps up, ARI continues in its established role of supporting physical and social science research and technology innovation and providing services to communities and the College.

Through all of these many diverse activities we serve the College mission: *Aurora College is focused on Student Success and is committed to supporting the development of our Northern Society though excellence in education, training and research that is culturally sensitive and responsive to the people we serve.*
Continuity and Change

Adult and postsecondary education in the Northwest Territories has always been guided by values grounded in Northern experience and by an evolving vision of what is possible. There has been continuity in the form of commitment to values and responsiveness to change that respects those core values. Aurora College is now ready to launch into a new phase of its development, more mature and ready to meet the coming challenges and opportunities.

2.1 Our Evolving History

Aurora College has evolved out of the experience of nearly forty years. From its humble beginnings as the Adult Vocational Training Centre in 1968, through its changing identities as Thebacha College and Arctic College, core values emerged that continue to serve us well. The integration of the former Science Institute of the Northwest Territories into the College, as the Aurora Research Institute, gave us a new dimension – a role in guiding scientific research that meets the needs and interests of the NWT.
2.2 Our Core Values

Our core values include a firm commitment to quality programs and services that are responsive to Northern needs. Delivered wherever possible at the community level, our programs reduce barriers and promote access to learning opportunities. With the creation of Aurora College in 1995, the core values found expression in our previous strategic plans, which we called corporate plans. Our core values find renewed expression now in response to the changing needs of the people we serve and the environment in which we operate.

Our first strategic plan, *A Blueprint for the Future*, identified five corporate values driving Aurora College’s activities:

- Strong communities supported by Aurora College as a partner in learning networks;
- A commitment to access;
- Responsiveness to Northern training needs;
- Quality programs and learning outcomes; and
- Efficiency in the use of public funds.

Our second strategic plan, *Learning and Success in the 21st Century*, refined the expression of our core values to three that represent Aurora College’s philosophy of education: respect, excellence and access to knowledge and learning.

1. **Respect:** Aurora College will recognize and respect the diverse needs of our unique Northern and Aboriginal communities.

2. **Excellence:** Aurora College will strive for excellence in all aspects of programs and services delivery.

3. **Access:** Aurora College will strive to ensure maximum access to our programs and services.

**Respect**

Respect is expressed in the traditional and western knowledge we value; our support for learners, faculty and staff; and our work with our partners in education. Fundamental to respect, we value diversity in knowledge and worldviews. Northern knowledge forms the basis of our programs. It represents a worldview that encompasses traditional knowledge, scientific knowledge and individual and community values and traditions. Through our Northern Knowledge model, Aurora College supports Aboriginal and Northern people in striving to preserve and enhance culture and language.

Respect for the knowledge, skills and aspirations of our students is expressed through recognition of prior learning; relevant, culturally-based learning through on-the-land experiences and the inclusion of traditional knowledge in curricula; responsive counselling
services; attention to the adequacy of student accommodations and other measures that promote student welfare.

Respect for faculty and staff is expressed through a broad range of professional and curriculum development opportunities that support them to pursue excellence in teaching, learning and research. Over the years, our faculty and staff have become more representative of Northern society – an outcome that we will continue to strive for.

Respect for Northern communities and our partners in education is fundamental to the fulfilment of our mission. For this reason we foster community-centred education and research, actively partner in learning networks and pursue community partnerships to support Northern development.
Excellence

We are committed to excellence in the quality of education offered in all our programs and services. Excellence is reflected in our pursuit of high academic standards, program and course credit transferability, responsiveness to labour market training requirements, support for Northern research and accountability to the people we serve. We promote a culture of continuous improvement and an ethic of excellence throughout the College. Our commitment to this principle has enabled Aurora College to build a workforce of dedicated professional educators and support staff who have access to professional development opportunities that enable them to keep their skills and knowledge current in their fields.

The College supports high quality training to ensure that our students have both career mobility and the credentials to pursue further education. Excellence also requires that we design programs in response to the most current labour market information and in partnership with employers. We demonstrate excellence in research through community consultations, research licensing, support for research and coordination of research projects on behalf of Northern groups.

To ensure accountability, we review our programs and services on an ongoing basis through internal and external evaluation processes. The results are reported to our stakeholders – legislators, other funders, staff, students and the public – in various ways.

Access to Knowledge and Learning

We strive to make learning opportunities accessible to the broadest range of Northerners, by ensuring where possible that: the physical location and mode of instruction are accessible to learners; program scheduling allows maximum enrolments; student services are accessible; credits are transferable both internally and to postsecondary institutions across Canada; and barriers to participation are addressed.

We also increase access to knowledge through Northern research. The Aurora Research Institute works with researchers, universities, learners, communities and others to strengthen the participation of Northerners in scientific research. ARI does this by: establishing research priorities in consultation with communities; conducting traditional knowledge research projects for Aboriginal agencies; and arranging for local people to work as research assistants.

By linking the delivery of accessible education programs with the development of Northern knowledge through scientific research, we are ensuring access to relevant Northern knowledge and learning.
2.3 Our Northern Model of Postsecondary Education

The distinctive features of Northern society – the people we serve and the environment in which we operate – call for unique models of education and research. Our Northern models embody the values we strive to express through a uniquely Northern college culture.

Figure 2.3 represents our model of postsecondary education for Northern development. The model recognizes the role Aurora College plays in the interrelated facets of Northern development – human, economic, social and cultural. The model links information and partnerships to the provision of educational services and the satisfaction of community needs. Employers, educational institutions, communities, Aboriginal governments, cultural agencies and GNWT departments all participate in partnership networks with Aurora College. The model links all knowledge resources through information sharing, exchanges of ideas and relevant research.

We rely on information of different kinds and from different sources, to inform our activities. Labour market information is critical to much of what we do. Information from culturally-relevant learning resources, libraries, on-line information networks and the information generated by Northern research is also important.

Drawing on these information sources, we develop and deliver the wide range of programs Northerners depend on, supported by a range of essential student services. Scientific research and traditional knowledge research complement these educational offerings.
Our educational services address the needs of the communities we serve in many ways. Individual learners acquire preparation for careers, educational upgrading and leadership training. Educational supports make it possible for community members to participate in learning activities and to find links to employment when their studies are completed. Communities have needs to be served by relevant scientific research that documents and preserves traditional knowledge. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has an interest in promoting science and technology initiatives in such critical areas as climate change, energy efficient technologies and alternatives to fossil fuels.

Underlying the direct benefits of our educational services to communities are more fundamental goals and outcomes: economic self-sufficiency, human development, community development, Northern governance, the achievement of personal goals and the protection of our cultural foundations.

Aurora College is part of a continuum of lifelong learning and employment in the North. In this continuum, each element of the education process plays a vital role in achieving Northern goals. The college’s role is to respond to the wide-ranging needs of our learners and communities through a responsive mix of educational programs and services.

### 2.4 Our Northern Research Model

Our Northern research model, Figure 2.4, describes how research needs are identified, met and findings disseminated, with benefits to Aurora College and communities.

Community groups and individuals, government agencies and the private sector identify research needs. The Aurora Research Institute brings its resources to bear on research issues through partnerships with universities, funding partners, government agencies, Aboriginal organizations, Northern researchers and communities. The research findings inform community decision-making and may be used to strengthen college curricula.

![Figure 2.4 Blueprint](image-url)
2.5 A Framework for a New College Vision

The development of a new strategic plan involves a careful process requiring the participation not only of college personnel but also of the many stakeholders we serve. Responsibility for the strategic plan lies with the Aurora College Board of Governors. The Board sets the goals and objectives for college senior management, faculty and staff to follow over the next planning period.

Grounded in our corporate values, informed by our past accomplishments, the strategic plan expresses a new vision for the College. Recognizing the institutional development that has occurred over the past ten years, we have extended the planning horizon for this strategic plan to cover the ten-year period 2006-2015.

The Board developed a vision statement to guide the preparation of this strategic plan: *Aurora College should reflect the people it serves and the environment in which it operates.* The vision statement set the boundaries for the deliberations that followed. It gave broad direction to senior management and the staff responsible for completing the task.

The Board also laid out a framework for the public consultations, analysis and decision-making led by senior management. The framework identified four major areas of college activity for attention and four core areas which serve as filters by which to judge the plan’s contents.

**Framework for Deliberations**

**Areas for Attention**
- Student services, facility development and enrolment
- Programming, research and academic development
- College governance and reorganization
- Partnerships.

**Four Core Areas of Aurora College**
- Students
- Faculty and staff
- Infrastructure and support services
- Communities and society.

The framework lays down the structure within which our new strategic plan achieves continuity with previous directions and responsiveness to our changing environment. Our core values – excellence, respect and access – remain the foundation on which our new plan is built.
Our First Ten Years


3.1 The Accomplishments of Our First Strategic Plan

The creation of Aurora College effective January 1, 1995 allowed it to focus attention exclusively on the needs of the Western Arctic prior to the division of the territory in 1999. The first planning period coincided with the economic boom generated by the discovery of diamonds in the Western Arctic. The beginning of new mine construction stimulated a demand for more pre-employment and specialized industrial training by the College.

The same period was also marked by a growing demand for baccalaureate-trained nurses, social workers and teachers, as the NWT's historical labour market, the public service, took steps to “upskill” its workforce. To meet these expanding labour market demands, efforts were made to make the Adult Literacy and Basic Education program (ALBE) accessible in every community. This initiative was needed to give more adults access to the basic education they require for employment, training, or further education.

*Blueprint* also looked beyond the first five years. Our first strategic plan laid down the foundation for the long-term development of Aurora College.

1995-2000 Strategic Plan Goals

*A Blueprint for the Future* laid out seven goals. A major focus was to increase or strengthen established programs and services. Attention was also given to strengthening the leadership role of the Aurora Research Institute (ARI), building a stronger Northern identity for the College and acquiring the capacity to deliver university-level programming.
The seven goals were:

Goal 1: Increase community-based programs in all regions
Goal 2: Continue to focus on career-oriented programs
Goal 3: Strengthen the Adult Basic Education program
Goal 4: Consolidate the role of student services
Goal 5: Establish a Northern Research Agenda
Goal 6: Incorporate Northern Knowledge into postsecondary education programs; and
Goal 7: Prepare to be a university college.

Progress was made towards each of the seven goals. A few of the accomplishments included the following:

- Innovative new programs were launched, including: Electronic Engineering Technology; Computer Specialist Certificate; Community Development Certificate; Mine Trades Access; and pre-employment training for the secondary diamond industry.
- A third year of study was added to the Teacher Education Diploma Program; post-diploma studies were offered in the Natural Resources Technology Program; Career Access programs were developed; and a co-op stream was added to the Management Studies Diploma.
- The college participated in the development of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment’s Adult Literacy and Basic Education curriculum.
- Student support services were strengthened through: investments in the Yellowknife and Aurora Campus libraries; improvements to student housing in Yellowknife; renovations to create cooking facilities for students at Breynat Hall in Fort Smith; and partnership arrangements by Aurora Campus and Thebacha Campus to share recreation services with their municipalities.
- The Aurora Research Institute: prepared a Northern Research Agenda; undertook several research initiatives and traditional knowledge projects; developed a curriculum of Inuvialuit history and culture; and published research information in plain language.
- A Traditional Knowledge Implementation Plan was developed that includes: the incorporation of traditional knowledge into College programs and services and support for traditional knowledge research; curriculum planning for Aboriginal language instruction; and the development of Aboriginal language courses and instructional materials.
- A Human Resource Strategy was prepared to support staff development.
- As an alternative to pursuing university-college status, the College chose instead to give our students greater access to degree programs in the North. Funding was acquired to plan degree delivery options for Nursing and Social Work in association with university partners and research was initiated to find a partner for the delivery of a Nurse Practitioner Program.
3.2 The Accomplishments of Our Second Strategic Plan

*Learning and Success in the 21st Century* built on the directions set in *Blueprint* and identified new directions for college development. Like *Blueprint*, it identified seven corporate goals and under these seven goals an ambitious package of 35 objectives and 132 specific actions.

**The seven goals were:**

Goal 1: Strive for Excellence  
Goal 2: Increase Enrolment, Retention and Achievement  
Goal 3: Develop a governance structure and organizational design that supports our corporate goals  
Goal 4: Work with industry to maximize employment opportunities  
Goal 5: Increase funds for education, training and research  
Goal 6: Create partnerships in the delivery of Adult Basic Education  
Goal 7: Increase degree opportunities for Northerners.

The goals reflect ongoing attention to established areas of programming and services. *Learning and Success* also introduced a higher-level approach to goal-setting. Goal 1 – *Strive for Excellence* – embodies this more conceptual approach. Five key areas of activity were identified as targets of excellence: evaluation, marketing, human resource development, cultural relevance and campus specialization. The first objective – *Promote an Ethic of Excellence* – set the target of achieving a culture of excellence throughout Aurora College.

A new approach to support services was identified. The goal was to improve outcomes for students by promoting enrolment, retention and achievement.

Another new goal spoke to a growing concern with college governance and organization. This concern was prompted in part by the College's physical growth and by the emergence of the non-renewable resource sectors as major college clients. The college’s growing capacity as an academic institution offering degree-level programs also encouraged reappraisal of our organizational structure. The constraints experienced by the College as a board-governed institution within the public service played a part as well.

Our commitment to partnerships was renewed with the goal of maximizing employment opportunities for Northerners through industry training programs. Striving to broaden our fiscal base, we identified a goal to acquire new sources of funding for education, training and research. We also expressed our willingness to enter partnerships with communities that wanted to manage their community learning centres and ALBE programs.

The seventh goal renewed the commitment to increase access to degree-level programs in the NWT.
2001-2005 Strategic Plan Accomplishments

Goal 1: Strive for Excellence

Significant progress was made towards accomplishing Goal 1 in each of the five key areas – evaluation, marketing, human resource development, cultural relevance and campus specialization.

- One major outcome was the development of an annual evaluation process for certificate and diploma and recently Developmental Studies (formerly ALBE) programs. The evaluation process was pilot tested in 2001-2002. Following revisions in 2003, it is now a regular feature of college business.
- Corporate recognition walls are being established at each campus and appropriate signage installed on college buildings.
- A marketing campaign was implemented using alumni posters, calendars and program information brochures.
- A Human Resource Strategy was developed.
- Culture camps were established for the Teacher Education and Social Work programs.
- Culturally relevant course content was developed for Teacher Education, Nursing and other programs.
- The lead campus model of program delivery was introduced, whereby program heads coordinate regional deliveries.
- The Diamond Cutting and Polishing Program received the Yves Landry Award for excellence.

Goal 2: Increase Enrolment, Retention and Achievement

Mixed results were achieved for Goal 2. Limited resources restricted the College's ability to accomplish some of our objectives, such as the provision of student daycare and recruitment services.

- Student Success Centres were established at each campus to provide tutorial and other support services. The centres have been maintained, following a substantial reduction in funding for this service.
- A recruiter made community visits in 2002.
- A Campus Life Coordinator was hired for Aurora Campus and a Campus Wellness Coordinator for Thebacha Campus.
- The college library system was upgraded to include an on-line catalogue service that gives students access to the College – and other – collections.
- Community learning centres host the Department of Education, Culture and Employment’s Virtual Library service.
- An additional twelve student housing units were acquired for the Yellowknife/North Slave Campus.
• Progress was made towards an on-line student application process. Application forms are now downloadable from the College website.

• Partnerships have been established with the South Slave Divisional Education Council to share staff and facilities in Lutsel K’e, with the Yellowknife Catholic Schools to deliver trades-related programs at the Kimberlite Centre. The number of trades-related programs also increased dramatically in the Beaufort-Delta region, delivered in partnership with Aboriginal groups and funded through their ASEP dollars.

• Partnerships have been established with the University of Victoria and the University of Saskatchewan to deliver bachelor degree programs in the NWT.

**Goal 3: Governance Structure and Organizational Design**

The objectives for Goal 3 have been partially met. Organizational changes were introduced that improve college governance, management and administration. Integrating the Aurora Research Institute fully into the College’s academic life remains a challenge. The requirements of ARI’s mandate and the funding constraints facing ARI make this objective difficult to achieve.

• College organizational models were studied for possible adaptation by Aurora College.

• The Board of Governors was restructured to hold all meetings as committee of the whole.

• The Director, Policy and Programs position was redefined as Vice-President, Academic.

• Forty-three term positions were converted to indeterminate and a process of revising job descriptions is ongoing.

• The lead campus model of program delivery was introduced for the School of Education, the School of Health and Human Services and Developmental Studies.

• The College Functional Review was carried out, leading to substantial fiscal reallocations affecting all areas of college activity.

**Goal 4: Work with Industry to Maximize Employment Opportunities**

Extensive outcomes were achieved for Goal 4. Partnerships have been established with the mining and oil and gas industries and with the technical institutes in Alberta, for the development and delivery of industrial training programs. These programs have been offered at worksites, on campuses and as combined campus/worksite deliveries. Aboriginal groups invested training funds into the College, contributing to its growth and development.

• Industrial training programs were developed for the mining and oil and gas sectors: Mill Processing, Process Control/Instrumentation and Mineral Processing Operator, Pipeline Operations Training and the Rig Training course.

• The Pre-technology Program was revised to increase the technology career options open to students.

• The Diamond Cutting and Polishing Program was revised and extended from 16 to 22 weeks and the number of seats was doubled, in response to requests from the secondary
• The Aviation Diploma Program was developed and delivered in partnership with Big River Air in Fort Smith.

• Partnerships with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) were enhanced through renewed Memoranda of Understanding.

• Professional affiliations were established with organizations such as the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO).

• Distance learning capacity was enhanced in collaboration with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, most recently with the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. Aurora College is a member in the Alberta/North consortium of northern Alberta colleges. We participate in program delivery from Northern Lakes College and eCampusAlberta and from the University of the Arctic, on which we hold a Council seat. The college also participates in the Knowledge North Project with CANARIE, Canada’s advanced internet research service. CANARIE’s CA*Net4 high-speed network will enhance distance learning capacity in the NWT.

• In the Beaufort-Delta, as a result of partnerships with governments industry and Aboriginal groups, a permanent 200 Metre cased hole was developed to allow for future drilling and service rig training.

**Goal 5: Increase Funds for Education, Training and Research**

Only partial progress was made towards achieving Goal 5. Some success has been achieved in marketing the College as a contract delivery agency. Since the opening of the Aurora Campus, the Gwich’in and Inuvialuit have been strong supporters, funding Certificate; Diploma and shorter programs and courses. Over the last several years, delivery of short-term courses in the Sahtu has increased significantly. The College works actively with the Mine Training Society and with the Pipeline Operations Training Committee. The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) program is generating new contract training revenue for the College.

A multi-year business plan was developed to facilitate programs and services planning, but longstanding college concerns about forced growth and other funding issues remain unresolved. The College receives charitable donations for scholarships and other activities, but the annual total is small. Objectives that would give the College a fundraising capacity remain unmet.

• Initiatives were taken to stabilize the College’s revenue base:
  • A multi-year program delivery plan was developed.
  • The Programs and Services planning cycle was brought into line with the GNWT business planning cycle.
  • A draft four-year business plan for the years 2005-2009 was submitted to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in 2005.
Third-party contract training was delivered on behalf of:
- the Beaufort-Delta/Sahtu Regional Training Committee;
- the Mine Training Society (administering ASEP funding);
- the Pipeline Operations Training Committee (also administering ASEP funding).

Fundraising objectives that were not met included the establishment of:
- the Aurora Education Foundation;
- an alumni association; and
- a fundraising process for scientific research.

**Goal 6: Partnerships in Adult Basic Education**

Goal 6 required less action than expected. During the planning stage, there had been indications that some communities might want to take over responsibility for administering their Adult Literacy and Basic Education programs – as the Hay River Reserve had been doing for several years. Events proved otherwise, but new partnerships for delivering ALBE through distance education were established.

- Responsibility for managing the Rae-Edzo learning centre and the ALBE program was delegated to the community. This arrangement was later discontinued.
- New diploma Access programs were developed and active steps taken to promote them.
- A Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) service is available on campuses. PLAR enhances student access to further education and facilitates the granting of credits.
- On-line and asynchronous high school courses are being delivered through the Alberta Distance Learning Centre at a number of learning centres.
- On-line synchronous high school courses from Northern Lakes College in Alberta and an on-line Office Administration program from Alberta-North, have been delivered at the Hay River Learning Centre.
Goal 7: Increase Degree Opportunities for Northerners

Little more could have been done to achieve Goal 7. Significant academic development has given Aurora College the capacity to deliver undergraduate programs in Education and Nursing. Access to provincial universities has also been enhanced. All but one of the College’s diploma programs now give students the option of completing a degree through a brokered arrangement in the NWT or through a block transfer agreement to a university.

- The Bachelor of Education program from the University of Saskatchewan is now being delivered at Thebacha Campus.
- The Bachelor in the Science of Nursing program from the University of Victoria is now being delivered at the Yellowknife/North Slave Campus.
- The Nurse Practitioner Program from the Centre for Nursing Studies, St. John’s, Newfoundland has been delivered at the Yellowknife/North Slave Campus, on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Services.
- Block transfer agreements allow Social Work, Management Studies and NRTP students to ladder into university degree programs.
- The Bachelor of Business Administration program from Athabasca University is available to NWT students at a distance.
4.1 The People We Serve

Our Changing Population

The population of the Northwest Territories has been on the rise since 2001, following several years of decline. The total population reached 42,810 in 2004 and is projected to reach nearly 46,000 by 2009. The number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents is almost identical.

The age structure of the NWT population is changing. Population trends include a declining birth rate and an aging population (Figure 4.1).

The birth rate in the NWT remains above the national average but is falling. The population under 15 years of age declined over the period 1996-2004 at an average annual rate of 1.3 percent. The working-age population 20-39 years of age also declined, at a lower rate, between 1991 and 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Annual Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>7,847</td>
<td>6,845</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>6,196</td>
<td>7,177</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-39</td>
<td>15,774</td>
<td>14,489</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>7,039</td>
<td>11,305</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>2,994</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38,746</td>
<td>42,810</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 NWT POPULATION GROWTH, BY AGE 1991-2004

2005 NWT Socio-Economic Scan

Sources: Statistics Canada Population Estimates
Persons in the older worker category, age 40-59 and seniors 60 and older, are the fastest-growing segments of the population. Advocates for seniors have told us they want to see more college programming that meets the needs and interests of older residents.

The aging trend notwithstanding, the population of the NWT is younger than the Canadian average. It is expected that as high school graduation rates increase, this young population will demand more access to postsecondary education.

**Community Population Trends**

A long-term trend of urbanization is evident in community populations. Only Yellowknife has experienced a growing share of the NWT population. The regional centres – Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik – and the smaller communities as a group, have experienced declines in population share, although this trend has slowed since 1996 and has not occurred in every community (Figure 4.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 4.2 POPULATION SHARE (PERCENT) BY COMMUNITY TYPE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, 1976-2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yellowknife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Census of Canada, 1976 - 1991
2005 NWT Socio-Economic Scan

* The 2004 values are based on population estimates; other values are from the Census.

**Education Levels**

Education levels continue to improve in the NWT but remain below the national level. In 2004, 66 percent of the NWT population 15 years of age and older had achieved at least a high school diploma as their highest level of schooling, up from 59 percent in 1989. However, the comparable value for Canada was 75.9 percent in 2001.

Aurora College plays a significant role in helping adults achieve this level of education, since the high school graduation rate for the NWT is substantially lower. The graduation rate reached its highest aggregate level of 50.7 percent in 2005, up from 45.3 percent in 2004. All of the increase was due to the large increase by Aboriginal students, up from 31.1 percent in 2004 to 42.9 percent in 2005. The graduation rate for non-Aboriginal students fell over the same period from 64.7 percent to 61.4 percent (Figure 4.3).
The prevailing education levels are a strong signal to us that Aurora College must continue to help people with Developmental Studies (Adult Basic Education) programs. The trend of improvement in education levels is positive, but much remains to be done (Figures 4.4 and 4.5).

Many NWT residents complete high school after the age of 19. Then they go on to acquire postsecondary certificates or diplomas at a rate that is close to the national level (Figure 4.5). A large proportion of the Aboriginal certificate and diploma holders acquired their credentials through Aurora College.
**Figure 4.5** HIGHEST LEVEL OF SCHOOLING, BY ETHNIC GROUP NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>percent Aboriginal</th>
<th>percent Non-Aboriginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than Gr. 9</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9 - 11</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Certif. or Diplomas</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

**Culture and Language**

The communities we serve are culturally diverse. Aboriginal language usage has been declining in the NWT, but as of 2004, 44 percent of the Aboriginal population continued to speak their first language. We strive to give language, culture and traditional knowledge a central place in the College's activities. The preservation, promotion and enhancement of languages is a critical priority for the NWT's Aboriginal language communities.

**A Postsecondary Education Profile**

Approximately 60 percent of NWT postsecondary students receiving Student Financial Assistance (SFA) choose to pursue their education at southern colleges and universities, with their unlimited choice of programming. The remaining nearly 40 percent choose to remain in the NWT, where most of them enrol at Aurora College.

Aboriginal postsecondary students are somewhat underrepresented as recipients of Student Financial Assistance, at 44 percent of approved SFA applications in 2002-03. These students are more likely to remain in the NWT than non-Aboriginal students. About half of all Aboriginal students receiving SFA, regardless of gender, enrolled at Aurora College in 2002-03. Approximately 75 percent of our student body is Aboriginal.

Female postsecondary students outnumber male students by a ratio of more than 2:1. Many of these students are parents relocating to a campus, where they need childcare and other services.
4.2 The Environment In Which We Operate

Our Communities

NWT communities range in population from less than 100 to approximately 18,000 people. They range from Fort Smith, situated just north of the sixtieth parallel on the Alberta border, to Tuktoyaktuk, the most northerly community on the mainland of Canada and further north to Sachs Harbour on Banks Island, at 71 degrees 59 minutes North latitude, the most northerly community in the NWT.

The majority of Northerners live in the regional centres of Inuvik, Fort Smith, Hay River and the capital, Yellowknife. The majority of non-Aboriginal residents are found in these centres, while the smaller communities are primarily Aboriginal.

Many of the smaller communities have only winter road access or annual barge supply to transport fuel, equipment and bulk freight. Subsistence hunting and trapping remain important aspects of the local economy in these locations.

Our Booming Economy

The economy of the Northwest Territories has been growing nearly six times faster than the Canadian economy in recent years. Between 1999 and 2004, the NWT economy grew by 69.0 percent. Most of that growth occurred in the non-renewable resource sector, where the share of territorial economic activity increased from 28.8 percent in 1999 to 53.0 percent in 2004.

Mineral production continued to grow in 2004, reaching $2.7 billion. Diamond production increased to $2.1 billion and the value of oil and natural gas also increased. Capital investment in the NWT grew by 45.6 percent in 2004 and was expected to increase by 36.4 percent in 2005.

With the anticipated opening of the Snap Lake Diamond Mine in 2006 and the potential construction of a Mackenzie Valley pipeline later in the decade, strong economic growth is expected to continue through the planning period. Construction of a natural gas pipeline would create the greatest short-term economic boom in the history of the NWT.

Our Dynamic Labour Market

The boom created by diamond mine construction and operations and the recent upswing in exploration for natural gas, has given the NWT the hottest labour market in Canada. The NWT employment rate was 71.6 percent in 2004 for the population 15 years of age and older – up from 70.3 percent in 2003, when the NWT led Alberta with the highest employment rate in Canada.

The employment rate in the regional centres and the smaller communities together was 63.1 percent in 2004; in Yellowknife, the employment rate was 80.8 percent (Figure 4.6). The overall employment rate for Canada in 2004 was 62.7 percent.
The employment rate for Aboriginal people in the NWT – 50.6 percent in 2004 – was well below the national average but higher than historical rates. The employment rate for non-Aboriginals was well above the national average in 2004 at 82.4 percent (Figure 4.7).

The new employment opportunities resulting from industrial activity have created new training requirements. Aurora College has responded by developing a range of pre-employment and skill-based programs to prepare workers for industrial jobs and to expand options for students interested in technology and trades/apprenticeships careers.
Employment by Education Level

Education level remains the greatest barrier to employment in the Northwest Territories. The employment prospects for those with less than high school graduation are quite poor, even in the NWT’s booming economy (Figure 4.8). Employment for high school graduates is relatively high, but their earnings lag behind the earnings of those with higher levels of education.

![Figure 4.8 EMPLOYMENT RATE (PERCENT), BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF SCHOOLING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, 2004](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>percent of Population</th>
<th>Employment Rate (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than Gr. 9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9 - 11</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Certif. or Diplomas</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey

The average income for full-year, full-time university graduates in Canada in 2002 was $62,900, compared to $39,200 for those whose highest level of education was a high school diploma – a difference of $23,700. The 2001 Census data showed that incomes in the NWT were somewhat higher at that time. University graduates in the NWT earned an average of $67,283, while NWT high school graduates earned an average income of $45,058 – a difference of $22,225.

Employment by Sector

Even with the current boom in mining, oil and gas and construction, the public sector remains the dominant employer in the NWT. Government administration, health and education services represented 38.8 percent of NWT employment in 2004. Mining and oil and gas represented only 8.7 percent of total NWT employment – about five times the Canadian average (Figure 4.9).

Aurora College continues to deliver programs that meet the needs of government departments. Today these programs include Heavy Equipment Operator, Teacher Education, Trades, Natural Resources Technology, Recreation Leaders, Management Studies, Nursing, Nurse Practitioner and a range of paraprofessional programs.
Figure 4.9  SHARE OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT, BY INDUSTRY
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & CANADA, 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Northwest Territories</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mining, Oil &amp; Gas</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail &amp; Wholesale</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accom. &amp; Food Svs</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t, Health, Educ</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Indus.</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey

4.3 Global Forces and Northern Choices

The Northwest Territories is affected by global and national forces as well as by public policy choices. The information technology revolution is driving the spread of the knowledge-based economy. The impacts of climate change on the North and the growing need to monitor the environmental impacts of development focus scientific attention. Demographic changes are influencing public policy and fiscal resources. All of these forces and constitutional change, affect how Aurora College responds to our changing environment.

The New Economy

The underpinnings of the new economy are education, learning and innovation. The number of jobs in Canada requiring a university degree increased three times faster than the growth rate of the Canadian workforce between 1991 and 2001. Meanwhile, the demand for many skilled occupations grew much more slowly than the workforce. This “upskilling” has occurred across all employment sectors, industries, regions and urban/rural areas. The proportion of science-trained professionals has also increased across most industries.

The Northwest Territories has experienced growth in the knowledge-intensive occupations at about the same rate as the Canadian average. It is not surprising, therefore, that Northerners want more access to university-level courses delivered in the NWT.
The Role of Literacy in the New Economy

A sound basic education and good literacy and communication skills are essential in the new labour market. Young people today need a high school diploma to qualify for even the lowest-skill jobs.

The literacy scores from the recent International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) show mixed results for the NWT. NWT Aboriginals with less than postsecondary education had average literacy and numeracy scores similar to the average scores of Aboriginals across Canada, but NWT Aboriginals with postsecondary education had lower scores. The impact of low literacy on employment in Canada was highest in the three northern territories.

The Aging Labour Force

The aging trend in the Canadian population is creating a shortage of skilled workers in many occupations. The potential for labour shortages is most acute nationally in the health care, education and construction sectors. All of these occupations are in high demand in the NWT, which historically relies on in-migration of skilled workers. Training Northerners to offset the skill shortages caused by retirements is a growing task for Aurora College.

The Constitutional Environment

The emerging Aboriginal governments need professionals and technical specialists to administer programs, manage lands, monitor industrial activity and shape the course of social change in their communities. The anticipated devolution of land and water resources from the federal government to these governments and the GNWT creates a new focus for education and training. The college has a role to play in preparing Northerners for leadership in our increasingly complex system of governance.

4.4 Our Framework for Change

Being responsive to our environment and the people we serve calls for careful analysis and planning. Our new strategic plan is built around the four elements in the framework developed by our Board of Governors (see page 4).

Student Support Services, Facility Development and Enrolment

Student support services are not easy for the College to enhance at present funding levels. We recognize, however, that our student body and their families, often being unfamiliar with a postsecondary environment, need higher levels of support than southern institutions provide.

A major infrastructure project was completed during the 2001-2005 strategic plan period – the Aurora Campus facility in Inuvik. Notwithstanding this achievement, facilities planning remains a major task. Yellowknife lacks a dedicated campus facility and replacements are needed for aging family housing in Fort Smith and Inuvik. Some community learning centres
and the Aurora Research Centre in Inuvik also require replacement or upgrades.

Enrolments in college programs are robust overall in spite of the lure of attractive jobs and competition from other postsecondary institutions. Still, we intend to renew our marketing efforts by developing a master marketing strategy.

**Programming, Academic Development and Research**

An environmental scan suggests that Aurora College cannot rest on its current accomplishments. The unprecedented activity in the non-renewable resource sectors is creating employment opportunities and driving social change. Communities are being impacted by complex mega-projects and pressure to accept others. The labour market has changed dramatically, offering many well-paid industrial jobs. Fortunately, Aurora College has developed a high capacity for program development. We respond effectively to many kinds of training demands.

For Northerners with appropriate occupational skills and the personal readiness needed in the workplace, the future is bright. For those with low educational levels, the need for academic upgrading has become acute. Preparing early school leavers for work in the new economy poses a significant challenge.

The college’s capacity to engage in scientific research has been modest, due to limited funding and staffing and the demands of the research licensing function on the Aurora Research Institute. That situation appears to be changing, as a result of the federal government’s new Innovations Strategy. The strategy’s goals of producing and supporting more scientists, commercializing research knowledge and improving community-based innovation, opens new opportunities for ARI.

**College Governance and Reorganization**

A continuing task will be to define the scope of future institutional development. This effort will require the Board and senior managers to work closely with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and – for the Aurora Research Institute – with other GNWT departments, federal funding agencies and the research community. It is time to create a contemporary role for ARI and to raise its profile.

**Partnerships**

The college has had much success in developing partnerships involving program development and delivery, resource sharing and community service. Our partners include government departments, employers, universities and colleges, municipalities, the public school authorities and nongovernmental organizations. Our partnerships with Aboriginal communities are entering a new phase, as Aboriginal governments join the constitutional framework.
Goals and Objectives

We have set eight major goals to guide college activities over the next ten years. These eight goals build on our strengths and achievements to date. They represent continuity with our past accomplishments and responsiveness to the changes occurring in the Northwest Territories. They also express our determination to find a more contemporary role for the Aurora Research Institute within Aurora College and in service to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Goal 1: Excellence in programs and services.
Goal 2: Student success.
Goal 3: A responsive Northern learning organization.
Goal 4: Commitment to partnerships.
Goal 5: A prominent research institute.
Goal 6: Commitment to Aboriginal cultures and perspectives.
Goal 7: Degree opportunities.
Goal 8: A broadly marketed college.

Goal 1: Excellence in programs and services.

We strive to achieve excellence in all college programs and services. Our aim is that students, staff and employers of graduates will affirm that excellence in their relations with the College.

Our commitment to excellence begins with the conviction that we must promote the intrinsic value of education. We will develop indicators of institutional success to measure the excellence of our programs and services. To support our efforts to achieve excellence in all of our activities, we will promote a philosophy of continuous improvement and an ethic of excellence as the foundation of our college culture.

Concrete steps will be taken to expand the annual program evaluation process to include the Developmental Studies program and college services. Steps will also be taken to strengthen professional development activities that support teaching and learning.
A commitment to excellence requires that we adequately resource our educational initiatives. We will avoid taking on new commitments alone, or in partnerships, for which adequate resources are not available.

We will also renew our efforts to celebrate the accomplishments of our students, staff and partners.

**Objective 1.1**

*Promote the value of education.*

- Encourage faculty and staff to promote lifelong learning in class and through professional development and other college activities.
- Promote a philosophy of continuous improvement and an “ethic of excellence” throughout the College community during orientation sessions, staff meetings, in class and through the Student Success Centres.
- Increase awareness of the expectations of employers in the NWT.
- Promote life-long learning in communities.

**Objective 1.2**

*Develop indicators of institutional success.*

- Conduct research into best practices used by postsecondary institutions as indicators of institutional success and incorporate the findings into a model of Northern institutional excellence.
- Monitor the Annual Review reports and Graduate Survey responses to identify changes to programs and services that should be made.
- Monitor transfer rates and student performance after transfer.
- Pursue additional transfer agreements in western Canada.

**Objective 1.3**

*Expand the annual programs and services evaluation process.*

- Continue the annual evaluation of all certificate, diploma, degree and Developmental Studies programs.
- Plan and implement an annual evaluation process for the trades programs.
- Review assessment processes to ensure they are meeting the needs of college programs.
- Conduct research into institutional best practices and plan and implement an annual evaluation of college services.
Objective 1.4

*Foster an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.*

- Encourage and provide professional development for all faculty and staff, including those not eligible for support from the Aurora College Instructors Professional Development Committee (ACIPDC).
- Conduct in-service training for faculty and staff (e.g., client service skills for all frontline staff, crisis management for residence staff).
- Recognize the educational development and professional advancement of faculty and staff publicly and within the College.
- Foster more teamwork and communication across the College.
- Develop a plan for improving the residential experience for students and enhancing campus spirit at each campus.
- Support residence life activities that encourage teamwork and communication.

Objective 1.5

*Adequately resource quality education.*

- Work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to develop an equitable model of funding programs and services at the College campuses.
- Identify short- and medium-term action plans and funding requirements through a multi-year business plan updated annually.
- Incorporate the annual Programs and Services Proposal process into the multi-year Business Plan.
- Support alumni development and explore alternative sources for funding College initiatives.

Objective 1.6

*Continue to strengthen the Developmental Studies program areas.*

- Continue working with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) to develop the ALBE curriculum and curriculum resources.
- Continue to implement the ECE *Best Practices* document in the Developmental Studies program areas.
- Continue to foster learning opportunities through distance learning and develop a comprehensive student support structure for distance learners.

Objective 1.7

*Remain responsive to the wide range of programming needs and interests identified by Northerners and other stakeholders.*

- Explore ways to enhance access to program opportunities for specialized client groups.
(e.g., youth in transition, special needs adults, seniors, lifelong learners with personal interests, small communities).

- Explore ways to enhance access to program opportunities for specialized sectors (e.g., tourism, customer service, small business operators, artists).
- Explore ways to enhance delivery approaches (e.g., mobile trades training, community-based deliveries, etc).
- Explore ways to support capacity-building by the new and emerging Aboriginal governments.

**Objective 1.8**

*Foster the use of distributed (distance) learning to enhance access to education and training for Northerners.*

- Develop a short- and long-term distributed learning strategy.
- Maintain current partnerships and explore opportunities for new ones.
- Expand availability of distributed learning opportunities into all NWT communities.
- Train instructional and support staff in the use of instructional technologies.
- Work with program managers to develop appropriate distributed learning initiatives.
- Continue to provide information about distributed learning opportunities to students, faculty, staff and the public.
- Fund and maintain the necessary Information Technology infrastructure to support evolving college requirements.
- Fund and foster continuous upgrading of support staff skills.

**Objective 1.9**

*Examine and redefine the changing role of Continuing Education in the College.*

- Conduct a review of Continuing Education offerings available through the College, the GNWT and other service providers.
- Explore ways to expand the delivery of Continuing Education opportunities to regions and communities.
- Offer courses and programs that are relevant and responsive to the learning needs of communities.
- Offer courses for career advancement and personal development.
- Work with other delivery agencies to support access to their services.
Objective 1.10

Celebrate student and staff achievements, graduations and employer satisfaction.

- Construct walls of recognition celebrating achievements at all campuses.
- Conduct employer satisfaction surveys and report the results.
- Publicize student and staff achievements to the general public and our partners in the GNWT and industry through the media, the College website and in other ways.
- Support alumni development and explore alternative sources of funding college initiatives.

Goal 2: Student success.

Aurora College exists to serve its student body. The test of our efforts is the success that students achieve in completing their programs and in finding relevant employment or continuing to study after graduation. A range of student services is needed to make their success possible.

Objective 2.1

Resource student success initiatives.

- Seek additional funding to enhance the delivery of the Student Success Centres.
- Explore ways to extend Student Success Centre services into communities.
- Explore ways to introduce mentoring programs for first year students (e.g. faculty advisors and access to senior students’ experiences in various aspects of college life).
- Work with community partners to strengthen counselling available to students.
  - Explore possible funding partnerships with community governments and local Aboriginal authorities.
  - Develop information technology supports for students to promote enhanced computer literacy.

Objective 2.2

Support early childhood initiatives for college students.

- Work with community agencies to support the availability of daycare services for college students.

Objective 2.3

Support initiatives to address adequate student funding.

- Work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to make the cost-of-living at each campus as equitable as possible for students.
**Objective 2.4**

*Strive to provide suitable and affordable student accommodation.*

- Work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to provide an equitable standard of accommodation and accommodation services at each campus.

**Objective 2.5**

*Expand recreation and wellness opportunities for students.*

- Continue to pursue arrangements with municipal authorities and community clubs and organizations to extend affordable recreational opportunities to college students.
- Ensure that college students are aware of wellness services provided on campus and in the community.
- Support Campus Student Associations with initiatives that promote recreation and wellness activities.
- Provide a residential environment which actively promotes the whole-person development of student residents.
- Encourage the active participation of students in extra-curricular activities.

**Objective 2.6**

*Improve facilities to support student success.*

- Take steps to make each college facility inviting and relevant to students and visitors through displays, signage, furnishings, equipment, caretaking and maintenance.

**Goal 3: A responsive Northern learning organization.**

Our ability to deliver excellent programs and help students achieve successful outcomes depends upon effective college administration. Effective administration begins with sound governance and requires an appropriate organizational structure. Careful attention to governance practices, organizational design and administrative procedures enables the College to anticipate needs and plan well for the future.

**Objective 3.1**

*Continue the development of an organizational structure to support college goals.*

- Continue to implement the lead campus model and program specialization.
- Update the Human Resource Strategy.
Objective 3.2

*Review and enhance college governance.*

- Continue to explore institutional governance practices at other institutions that might be adaptable to the College.

Objective 3.3

*Establish a formal process with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for capital planning.*

- Develop a long-range framework for capital planning through the multi-year business plan.
- Establish capital development priorities with ECE.
- Establish priorities for the replacement and acquisition of heavy equipment that meets current industry standards.
- Work with ECE to identify the required funding for heavy equipment.
- Continue to identify college priorities for information technology upgrades.

Objective 3.4

*Formalize an annual labour market needs analysis process.*

- Participate in regional and community program needs assessments with regional training committees and other partners.
- Participate in sector-specific training needs assessments as and when required.

Goal 4: Commitment to partnerships.

Aurora College has a long history of working successfully with stakeholders in many types of partnerships. Our partners include GNWT departments, business and industry, Bands and regional Aboriginal governments, other postsecondary institutions, the public school authorities, municipalities and nongovernmental organizations.

Major changes in our operating environment have persuaded us that we should take a more formal approach when entering partnerships. These changes include: the emergence of new opportunities for partnerships with Aboriginal governments; the accelerating pace of industrial activity; the impact of an aging workforce on public and private sector employers; the rising entry requirements for public sector professions; and the emergence of private vocational institutions.

Through participation in the University of the Arctic, our partnerships have become circumpolar in scope. The consultations for this strategic plan told us that we could be doing more to celebrate the successes partnerships achieve.
**Objective 4.1**

*Draft and implement guidelines for program and service partnerships.*

- Prepare a policy on program and service partnerships.
- Prepare an information package to guide discussions with potential new partners.

**Objective 4.2**

*Work with industry, communities, governments, school authorities, other postsecondary institutions and non-government organizations to address training and education needs for the labour market.*

- Develop a Contract Training Strategy and actively market the College’s contract delivery services.
- Continue to develop and deliver training programs in partnership with industry.
- Continue to submit training proposals to the industry/government partnerships responsible for mining and oil and gas training.
- Continue partnerships with NAIT and other technical institutes for the delivery of pre-technical training and specialized industrial training.
- Continue partnerships with other colleges and universities to address specific educational and training needs.
- Increase professional affiliations to advance graduate opportunities.

**Objective 4.3**

*Foster circumpolar program delivery and partnerships.*

- Explore ways to obtain GNWT financial support for Aurora College’s participation in the University of the Arctic.
- Continue membership in the University of the Arctic Council.
- Continue to partner with other University of the Arctic member institutions to increase postsecondary opportunities for Northerners.

**Objective 4.4**

*Celebrate successful programs and partnerships.*

- Document and share through newsletters and other media our successful multi-partner achievements with industry and business.
- Create a partnership package that can be used to inform and promote our existing and future partnerships.
Goal 5: A prominent research institute.

Aurora College is determined to pursue a new vision for the Aurora Research Institute during the course of this plan. The environment in which ARI operates today has changed greatly since the passage of the Scientists Act in 1978. Without neglecting the interests of southern scientists, it is time for Northern interests to take their rightful place on the Research Institute’s agenda.

The new vision is one in which ARI:
- Coordinates most GNWT research;
- Ensures that research projects in the NWT reflect the priorities of a Territorial Research Strategy;
- Continues to play a regulatory role;
- Coordinates the involvement of the GNWT and southern academics in program delivery and college development;
- Continues to represent the GNWT on national and international boards and agencies;
- Leverages funding for NWT research priorities;
- Acts as a liaison between academic institutions, governments and communities;
- Supports regional programming;
- Is recognized by academics, industry and governments for its leadership and expertise.

To achieve this new vision will require:
- Expanded human and financial resources to meet the larger mandate;
- Expanded facilities;
- Revisions to the Aurora College Act (formerly the Public Colleges Act) and the Scientists Act;
- Development of a Territorial Research Strategy in cooperation with government, academic partners and self-government authorities;
- Establishment of an advisory council with director-level authority in government departments;
- Creation of a reporting structure at the Cabinet level; and
- Creation of an inventory of human resources and in-house expertise to plan for growth.

The new vision includes an expanded role for ARI within Aurora College in the areas of:
- Curriculum development;
- Institutional research and coordination of research;
- Coordination of the participation of external experts within the College;
- Establishment of a framework for funding northern research through the Tri-council (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research).
Our goal for the new corporate plan is to create a new role for ARI within the College and government. We will work to achieve this goal by:

- Reviewing the mandate of ARI;
- Developing a discussion paper on the future of ARI's role;
- Holding a territorial forum with key funders, stakeholders and political decision makers;
- Revising the governance of ARI to fit its expanded mandate; and
- Seeking changes to appropriate legislation based on the identified vision for ARI.

**Objective 5.1**

*Review the mandate and governance structure of the Aurora Research Institute (ARI).*

- Prepare a discussion paper outlining a contemporary vision for ARI for consideration by the GNWT.
- Establish an NWT Research Agenda in cooperation with key funders, stakeholders and political decision makers.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the research licensing function to ensure that the licensing process is effective.
- Ensure that ARI continues to act as the central point of information on research in the NWT.

**Objective 5.2**

*Identify and resource ARI’s capacity for research supportive of Aurora College.*

- Establish a framework for seeking partners within the scientific research community and in concert with GNWT departments and other agencies.
- Resume the delivery of educational programs in schools and communities.
- Encourage government agencies and educational institutions to conduct traditional knowledge research through ARI.

**Objective 5.3**

*Explore avenues whereby college staff and students can participate with ARI in research activities.*

- Explore possible relationships between northern and southern research professionals and college programs, faculty and students.
- Continue support for community-based research projects.
- Do more to promote the role of ARI.
- Do more to promote ARI scholarships and bursaries in the North.
• Do more to introduce ARI publications into college programs.

• Ensure that national funding programs are well communicated to Northern students who qualify.

Objective 5.4

Maximize benefits to Aurora College from research partnerships.

• Expand research partnerships with the scientific research community.

• Endeavour to access research funding programs in concert with GNWT departments and other agencies.

• Continue publication of the Compendium of Northern Research.

• Continue to participate in Northern research forums.

Goal 6: Commitment to Aboriginal cultures and perspectives.

Out of respect for the role of traditional knowledge in Northern society, the Aboriginal perspective is integrated into curricula, student services and ARI’s research projects. Traditional knowledge is also reflected in college hiring practices and the use of Aboriginal elders wherever possible in program delivery. Through these measures, the College strives for cultural relevance in all of its activities.

Objective 6.1

Undertake an in-depth research project which includes consultations in all regions of the NWT and prepare a discussion paper with recommendations on how to include traditional knowledge and elders in Aurora College programs and services.

• Develop terms of reference for the research project and assign the project leader, a project budget and timelines for completion.

Objective 6.2

Develop and implement a traditional knowledge strategy.

• Develop policy guiding the role of elders on campus in counselling, instruction and research.

• Continue to integrate cultural perspectives into program curricula.

• Consider appropriate methods for coordinating cultural activities on campus and ensure there are appropriate budgets.

• Establish an ongoing process of asking students about their needs and ideas with respect to the cultural environment of the College.
Objective 6.3
A college workforce representative of the population it serves.
• Continue to seek and develop faculty and staff representative of the population of the NWT.
• Build interdepartmental faculty collaboration.
• Establish cultural awareness training throughout the College using qualified college faculty, elders and other cultural experts.

Objective 6.4
Curricula reflective of Aboriginal and Northern perspectives.
• Develop and offer relevant cultural content and activities in college programs.
• Offer culture camps and/or experiences to promote respect for Aboriginal and Northern perspectives in the learning experience.

Objective 6.5
Continue to support Aboriginal language revitalization.
• Continue to deliver Aboriginal language courses in the ALCIP program.
• Continue to deliver Aboriginal language instruction in community learning centres where appropriate instructors are available.
• Where possible hire instructional staff able to teach Aboriginal languages.
• Where possible support the efforts of the Language Communities to preserve and revitalize Aboriginal languages.

Objective 6.6
Build stronger links with communities and Aboriginal governments.
• Include Aboriginal governments in community and regional training needs assessments.
• Hold an annual meeting in each community to discuss college plans for the community and to celebrate student success and program accomplishments.

Objective 6.7
Establish on-campus facilities for cultural activities.
• Identify a role for a culture room on each campus and ways to staff and resource the culture rooms.
• Identify a dedicated location for a culture room on each campus.
• Develop a college statement of philosophy and program guidelines for the culture rooms.
• Promote awareness of the culture room activities to students, faculty and staff.
Goal 7: Degree Opportunities.

Northerners have told us they want more access to university-level studies in the NWT. The major developmental initiatives of the previous planning period have resulted in partnerships for the delivery of nursing and education degrees and the Nurse Practitioner program at the College. With block transfer arrangements to universities in place for other diploma programs, our next initiatives will take the College into new areas of activity. First Year Liberal Arts and Sciences, often referred to as General Studies by postsecondary institutions, has been identified for study as a possible area of program expansion. On a more exploratory level, we are also planning to investigate ways to achieve national recognition for Aurora College as a degree-granting institution in its own right.

Objective 7.1

Pursue additional transfer agreements for college certificate and diploma programs.

- Review and where needed renew existing transfer agreements.
- Explore opportunities for new transfer agreements with postsecondary institutions in western Canada.

Objective 7.2

Expand access to the Liberal Arts and Sciences through Aurora College.

- Explore options for delivering a General Studies (Liberal Arts and Sciences) certificate or diploma program suitable for university transfer.
- Identify a suitable model for a General Studies program to be delivered by the College.
- Identify the funding required to deliver the General Studies program.

Objective 7.3

Research options for membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

- Explore opportunities for membership or affiliation with the AUCC or its members that would gain national recognition for degrees awarded by Aurora College.

Goal 8: A Broadly Marketed College.

Aurora College’s reputation for excellence is nurtured by its ability to market programs and services and celebrate the accomplishments of students, faculty, employers and other stakeholders. The public has confirmed our own awareness that marketing Aurora College as an institution of choice requires an ongoing effort and a substantial commitment of resources.
Objective 8.1

*Develop and resource a marketing strategy for Aurora College.*

- Review college marketing practices and funding levels and develop a master marketing plan that is responsive to the College's operating environment and addresses marketing, communications and recruitment.
- Schedule marketing to attract students when they are making educational decisions.

Objective 8.2

*Build public recognition for Aurora College as a high quality institution.*

- Identify marketing themes that celebrate the strengths of Aurora College to encourage students to aspire to attend Aurora College.
- Develop promotional material that informs potential students, parents and others about the merits of college programs and services.
- Highlight new and revised college programs, services and activities on the Aurora College website.
- Improve public recognition of Aurora College's partners through promotion and advertising.
- Encourage graduates to publicly recognize their institution of learning and training.

Objective 8.3

*Improve student recruitment practices.*

- Begin intensive marketing of programs each year in January.
- Market programs directly in communities and to government and industry most affected by specific programs.
- Continue efforts to make the student application process as streamlined as possible.
- Expand program marketing to youth.
  - Attend high school graduations and give out an Aurora College award for academic excellence.
  - Conduct junior and senior high school visits.
  - Identify students to be ambassadors/recruiters for the College at events in the schools.
  - Take a leadership role in supporting more cooperative activities with the high schools through shared facilities, library resources and expertise.
  - Actively promote Aurora College programs to high school counsellors and teachers.
- Promote professional affiliations in information packages as part of the Aurora College marketing strategy.
- Reinforce the strong links between our programs and the needs of NWT employers.
Implementation and Accountability

As a responsive institution, Aurora College is committed to careful implementation, ongoing assessment of outcomes and transparent accountability practices. The steps we take to be accountable are grounded in our core values of excellence in programs and services, respect for clients and partners and access to information through full disclosure about our activities.

Senior management is tasked with achieving the goals that express our new vision for 2006-2015. Program managers are tasked with achieving the objectives for their program or service area. The Board of Governors relies on the corporate plan to monitor the success of the implementation effort. The Board looks for evidence of continuous improvement and an ethic of excellence throughout the College community.

The steps we take to implement our goals and objectives are found in our multi-year business plan and annual Programs and Services proposal approved by the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The business plan, revised annually, is our workplan for achieving long-term goals and short-term objectives. It identifies performance indicators. The annual audit performed by the Auditor-General of Canada, published in our Annual Report, ensures financial accountability and provides advice on our financial management practices.

Our new vision confirms our resolve to strive for ever higher standards of excellence in everything we do, with performance indicators for each goal. We intend to pursue the highest possible levels of excellence, student success, organizational responsiveness and partnership activity.

Annual evaluation results, employer satisfaction and transfer agreements are indicators of the excellence of our programs and services. The core function of the College is to help students achieve successful learning outcomes that prepare them for successful careers and personal lives. Core measures of success include graduate employment and graduate satisfaction with college programs. Other indicators of student success include admission and registration rates and program completion rates.

Several indicators will provide evidence that Aurora College is a responsive learning organization: our strategic plan, business plan and other institutional plans; the annual labour market needs analysis; the lead campus model of program delivery; our Human Resource Strategy; and our provision of instructional resources. Our commitment to partnerships can be measured by the number of initiatives we have with industry, postsecondary institutions
and professional associations and the number of third party contracts.

We are committed to focusing more attention than ever before on the Aurora Research Institute – creating a new role for ARI as the leader of a Northern Research Strategy. This effort will redefine ARI's relations with governments, with the scientific community, with territorial and circumpolar communities and within the College.

We intend to reshape our commitment to Aboriginal cultures and perspectives. Indicators will include a renewed Traditional Knowledge Implementation Strategy and efforts to incorporate elders and cultural awareness training more formally into college programs and services. Efforts will be made to designate space for cultural activities within college facilities. We will also forge new links with Aboriginal communities and governments.

We are determined to continue to broaden access to degree-level programming. Attention will be given to the feasibility of delivering First Year Arts and Science in the NWT. Providing access to a liberal arts program will allow students to begin university-level studies in the North. It will also give them flexibility in choosing their field of study.

We will be ramping up our marketing efforts across the NWT. Indicators will include a marketing plan; public recognition for the College, our students and partners; new promotional material and enhanced student recruitment efforts.

A Blueprint for the Future took a long range view of what Aurora College could become by 2010. That vision, made fifteen years ago, is within reach. It included a college that is a recognizably Northern institution – with communities playing a meaningful role in defining and addressing educational needs; offering a wide spectrum of educational opportunities, including university-level programs; making opportunities available in all communities; delivering a curriculum rooted in Northern knowledge derived from scientific research in the North, traditional knowledge and community values.

A Northern scientific community would be making a significant contribution to global and circumpolar research. Communities would have a pool of qualified northern researchers to draw from.

The college staff would be Northerners and the administrative structures would meet Northern needs. The college would be a supportive learning organization in which all staff and students can fulfil personal and career goals. The college facilities would reflect NWT cultures and communities. Aurora College would be viewed nationally and internationally as an institution of higher learning that profiles and celebrates our unique cultures and Northern knowledge.

Our new vision to 2015 is to bring that long term vision to completion. Our commitment is to the continuing development of Aurora College as a mature institution, the postsecondary institution of choice for Northern students, our partners and communities – with whom our vision begins and ends.
References


## Indicators of Success

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<tr>
<th>Core Business</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Core Benchmarks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Student completion rates</td>
<td>Will remain at or above current levels</td>
<td>75 percent overall College average</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate employment</td>
<td>Percentage of students employed 6 months after graduation</td>
<td>75 percent overall College average</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate satisfaction</td>
<td>Percentage of students expressing satisfaction with the quality of their program</td>
<td>95 percent of graduates will express satisfaction with their program</td>
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<td>Employer satisfaction</td>
<td>Employers will express confidence in the performance of college graduates</td>
<td>90 percent of employers will express satisfaction with graduate performance</td>
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| Excellence | **Excellence in programs** | Approved programs and services  
Model of excellence  
Annual evaluations  
Employer satisfaction  
Transfer rates |
| Access | | |
| Access | **Student Success** | Student completion rates  
Student Success Centres  
Daycare services  
Graduate employment  
Graduate satisfaction |
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<th>College plans</th>
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The Consultation Process

The strategic plan consultation teams held 20 meetings in 13 communities in every region between September 13 and October 27, 2005. Approximately 316 individuals participated in the consultations – college faculty, staff and students; stakeholders representing the public service, Band Councils and regional governments, municipalities, business and industry and the public school system; MLA’s and interested members of the public. PowerPoint presentations were made to the consultation teams in Kakisa and Fort Simpson and a delegation from the Mine Training Society in Yellowknife briefed the consultation team on its activities.

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*Visits were also made to government offices (Norman Wells, Inuvik), the Gwich’in Band Office (Aklavik) and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (Inuvik).
In addition to the comments made at the consultation sessions, input was received from respondents to a survey questionnaire. The survey was distributed at the consultation sessions and was available through the campuses and learning centres and on-line. A total of 102 surveys were received.

Respondents identified many specific needs – and many different types of needs – they would like Aurora College to respond to. The needs varied substantially by region and community. The respondents in every region generally spoke positively of their experience with the College and expressed support for the College’s future.
Aurora College

- Regional Centre & Research Centre
- Regional Centre
- Community Learning Centres

Northwest Territories

- Inuvik
- Tuktoyaktuk
- Sachs Harbour
- Ulukhaktok

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