

Strategic Mandate Agreement (2014-17)

Between:

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

&

Northern College of Applied Arts and Technology

ONTARIO'S VISION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Ontario's colleges and universities will drive creativity, innovation, knowledge, and community engagement through teaching and research. They will put students first by providing the best possible learning experience for all qualified learners in an affordable and financially sustainable way, ensuring high quality and globally competitive outcomes for students and Ontario's creative economy.

NORTHERN COLLEGE VISION/MANDATE

Vision

Success for all through learning and partnerships.

Mission

To ensure quality, accessible education through innovative programs, services and partnerships for the benefit of our Northern communities.

PREAMBLE

This Strategic Mandate Agreement between the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (the Ministry) and Northern College of Applied Arts and Technology (the College) outlines the role the College currently performs in the postsecondary education system and how it will build on its current strengths to achieve its vision and help drive system-wide objectives articulated by the Ministry's Differentiation Policy Framework.

The Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA):

- Identifies the College's existing institutional strengths;
- Supports the current vision, mission, and mandate of the College within the context of the *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002*, and outlines how the College's priorities align with Ontario's vision and Differentiation Policy Framework; and
- Informs Ministry decision making through greater alignment of Ministry policies and processes to further support and guide the College's areas of strength.

The term of the SMA is from April 1, 2014, to March 31, 2017. The SMA proposal submitted by the College to the Ministry has been used to inform the SMA and is appended to the agreement.

The agreement may be amended in the event of substantive policy or program changes that would significantly affect commitments made in the SMA. Any such amendment would be mutually agreed to in writing, dated, and signed by both signatories.

NORTHERN COLLEGE KEY AREAS OF DIFFERENTIATION

Northern College is committed to the economic success and well-being of Northeastern communities by maximizing educational access, providing relevant signature programs and supporting learner engagement, retention, choices, and success. This is accomplished through innovative technology enhanced delivery methods, complemented by student supports, applied learning opportunities, as well as integrated Aboriginal Perspectives.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE DIFFERENTIATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

The following outlines areas of strength agreed upon by the College and the Ministry, and the alignment of these areas of strength with the Ministry's Differentiation Policy Framework.

1. JOBS, INNOVATION, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This component highlights institutions' collaborative work with employers, community partners, and regions, or at a global level, to establish their role in fostering social and economic development, and serving the needs of the economy and labour market.

1.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Northern College focuses on jobs, innovation, and economic development:

- Primarily a teaching institution, Northern College also engages in applied research programs through the Northern Office for Applied Research and Innovation (NOARI), participation in government funded programs Colleges Ontario Network for Industry Innovation - CONII), and relationships with regional small to medium enterprises (SMEs) within its signature program areas:
 - Apprenticeship;
 - Trades and Technology;
 - Animal and Human Health and Wellness Sciences;
 - Welding;
 - Electrical;
 - Mining;
 - Environmental Technology; and
 - Emergency Services.
- Applied research activity with forestry companies, Hydro One, and small manufacturing companies supports students and entrepreneurial efforts and encourages graduate retention in the region and SMEs. For example, Vet Tech and Companion Animal Rehabilitation students work with MediTech International.
- Northern College supports international economic development through delivery of programming in mining related fields.

- Northern is a partner in establishing Impact Benefit Agreements between local Aboriginal communities and industry.
- Northern establishes partnerships with other Northern colleges to support regional labour market needs.

1.2 Additional Comments

- 2012-13 Ministry data notes strong employment rates (87.5%, above the sector average of 83.1%) and strong employment rates in a related field (51.7%, above the sector average of 45.1%).

Institutional Strategies

- Northern College is working with Confederation College to increase blended learning models in its mining programs.

1.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of employers per program engaged/partnering with Northern • Program Advisory partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate employment rates • Employer satisfaction rates • Number of graduates employed full-time in a related job

2. TEACHING AND LEARNING

This component captures institutional strengths in program delivery methods that expand learning options for students, and improve their learning experience and career preparedness. This may include, but is not limited to, experiential learning, online learning, entrepreneurial learning, work integrated learning, and international exchange opportunities.

2.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Northern College offers programs through a number of delivery methods, including:

- Well-established expertise and strengths in blended technology-enabled learning.
 - Strong partnerships with Contact North, utilizing distance learning offerings to communities across the province that may not have access to a main or regional college campus.

¹ Additional system-wide metrics focused on applied research, commercialization, entrepreneurial activity, and community impact will be developed in consultation with the sector.

- Improving student engagement by offering small class sizes, leading edge curricula in signature programs, work placement opportunities, and applied research programs in support of the College's Northern Experience.
- Improving student retention and understanding by experiential learning.
 - Welding students learn a variety of welding techniques through community projects.
 - Students participate in integrated applied research projects, co-op terms and student placements, practicums and clinical practices.

2.2 Additional Comments

- Ministry data notes a significant increase in the number of e-learning courses and programs between 2010/11 and 2012/13, supporting Northern's focus on distance learning as a key area.
- The number of e-learning courses increased from 2 in 2009-10 to 730 in 2012-13.
- The number of e-learning programs increased from 8 in 2009-10 to 87 in 2012-13.
- Ministry data notes a decline in retention rates between 2009-10 and 2012-13 from 80% in 09-10 to 74.0% in 12-13).

Institutional Strategies

- The Ministry notes Northern's plans to increase online blended and mobile learning across programming in order to improve student enrolment (targeting growth of 2% each year over the next three years in this area).
- The Ministry supports Northern's Learning Excellence Innovation Department's strategy to enhance processes for instructional and program design improvements across all campuses in on-the-ground and online programming, focusing on improving learner outcomes.
- The Ministry supports the College's focus on realizing the goals stemming from its Northern Experience by implementing a quality measurement program; refining and implementing a capital improvement plan integrating more placement and applied research opportunities, and expanding on social and engagement opportunities for learners.
- The Ministry notes that Northern reports that due to current growth in the mining industry, many students move from education to the labour market.
- The Ministry acknowledges Northern's new Student Success and Retention Policy that recognizes the responsibility to provide students with success strategies. Retention strategies focus on:
 - Providing Aboriginal students with one-on-one mentoring, sharing cultural teachings, supporting curriculum and learning, and participating in events that encourage awareness of Aboriginal knowledge and culture.
 - Ensuring online tutoring, advising services and electronic resources that augment text books are available for distance learning students.

2.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of faculty with Universal Instructional Design credential • Employer satisfaction • Success in certification exams or professional designation exams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Satisfaction Survey results • Graduation rates • Retention rates • Number of students enrolled in a co-op program at institution • Number of online course registrants, programs and courses at institution

3. STUDENT POPULATION

This component recognizes the unique institutional missions that improve access, retention, and success for underrepresented groups (Aboriginal, first generation, students with disabilities) and francophones. This component also highlights other important student groups that institutions serve that link to their institutional strength. This may include, but is not limited to, international students, mature students, or indirect entrants.

3.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Northern College focuses on improving access and success for underrepresented groups:

- The College states that access to education as a key priority, with a focus on removing barriers to participation.
- The College integrates Aboriginal Perspective into various facets of Northern College to fosters a diverse learning environment including incorporating Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge into curricula and student support services.
- Well-established partnership and collaboration with the Aboriginal Council on Education, Elders and community leaders in Northeastern Ontario and along the James Bay coast.

3.2 Additional Comments

- According to system-wide data Northern was consistently among the top six colleges in terms of Aboriginal students as a percentage of total enrolment between 2009-10 and 2012-13 (average of approximately 12% over this time period).

Institutional Strategies

- Northern is working to implement a tracking system to measure graduation rates and success outcomes of its students in identified under-represented groups.

3.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of students who are indirect entrants (excluding those with some postsecondary education)• Remote point of origin• Overall graduation rate in identified underrepresented groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number and proportion of Aboriginal, first generation, students with disabilities, and francophone students at an institution• Number and proportion of international students enrolled in Ontario (as reported in annual institutional enrolment reporting)• Proportion of an institution's enrolment that receives OSAP

4. PROGRAM OFFERINGS

This component articulates the breadth of programming, enrolment, and credentials offered, along with program areas of institutional strength/specialization, including any vocationally oriented mandates. This component also recognizes institutions that provide bilingual and/or French-language programming for students.

4.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Current program areas of strength include:

1. Apprenticeship
2. Trades and Technology
3. Animal and Human Health and Wellness Sciences
4. Welding
5. Electrical
6. Mining
7. Environmental Technology
8. Emergency Services

Proposed program areas for growth include:

1. Veterinary Sciences
2. Wellness and Health Sciences
3. Mining
4. Technology/Trades

4.2 Additional Comments

- Northern has plans to expand its credential offerings in existing areas of program strength that are generally supported by student outcomes and program infrastructure, particularly in the areas of Veterinary Sciences, Wellness and Technology/Trades.
- The College is growing its programming in the mining field including the expansion of vocational and corporate learning opportunities to build on the strength of its Haileybury School of Mines. This includes the development and implementation of a collaborative Bachelor of Technology in Mining degree with Queen’s University.

4.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of students served that are not funded through the general purpose operating grant.• Enrolment in niche programs as a percentage of institutional enrolment• Percentage of students who move from access programs into postsecondary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proportion of enrolment at colleges by occupational cluster and by credential• Institution’s system share of enrolment by occupational cluster and by credential• Number of apprentices in each trade

5. INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT STUDENT MOBILITY

This component profiles partnerships between institutions that ensure students have access to a continuum of learning opportunities in a coordinated system. This may include, but is not limited to, credit transfer pathways and collaborative or joint programs between or within sectors.

5.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Northern College focuses on improving collaboration, pathways, and student mobility:

- Northern and five other Northern colleges form the Northern Colleges Collaboration, which is committed to improve sharing in the development and delivery of curriculum, courses, programs and learner support services and professional development.

- Partnerships with Laurentian University and Algoma University diversify credential offerings for students through undergraduate degree programs offered onsite in:
 - Nursing
 - Social Work
 - Community and Economic Development

5.2 Additional Comments

- Northern College indicates it has 19 articulation agreements with different universities.

Institutional Strategies

- The Ministry recognizes Northern’s partnership with other Northern colleges and Fleming College to work towards co-ordinated collaborative environmental and natural resource programming.
- The Ministry supports Northern’s exploration of collaborating with Queen’s University to deliver a mining focused engineering program, building on Northern’s Mining Technician Program.

5.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students enrolled in collaborative partnerships with postsecondary education institutions (domestic) • Number of programs offered through joint delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of college and university pathways and/or articulation agreements (college-college, college-university, university-college) • Number of transfer applicants and registrants • Number of college graduates enrolled in university programs

ASPIRATIONS

The Ministry recognizes the importance of supporting institutions to evolve and acknowledges the strategic aspirations of its postsecondary education institutions; the SMA is not intended to capture all decisions and issues in the postsecondary education system, as many will be addressed through the Ministry's policies and standard processes.

a) Expanded Credentials

The Ministry has noted the College's aspirations to expand degree granting activity and this will be examined as part of the Ministry's policy review of Ontario's credential options.

b) Capital Expansion

Requests for capital project funding are outside the scope of the SMA process. However, future capital projects should be aligned with the College's areas of strength highlighted in their SMA. Decisions regarding approval and/or funding for capital projects will be made within the context of the Ministry's long-term capital planning process and the Major Capacity Expansion Policy Framework, released December 20th, 2013.

c) Other Policy

The Ministry has noted Northern's request for Ministry support for the Study North initiative and a Northern Tuition Tax Credit. Northern notes the Ministry's commitment to streamlining reporting and financial sustainability requirements (see Ministry/Government Commitments below) that will be supported by sector collaboration and consultation on metrics and data formulation.

ENROLMENT GROWTH

The strategic enrolment and planning exercise is in the context of a public commitment in the 2011 Budget to increase postsecondary education enrolment by 60,000 additional students over 2010-11 levels. This government has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to ensuring access to postsecondary education for all qualified students.

Northern College's planned enrolment forecast as expressed in this baseline eligible enrolment scenario is considered to be slightly above Ministry expectations, based on the current and projected demographic and fiscal environments. Northern College may choose to consider these factors in its future plans. However the Ministry notes that due to program sustainability and availability of student placements in industry at its smaller campuses, many programs alternate intakes every two years resulting in large fluctuations in first-year enrolment in consecutive years.

The Ministry also acknowledges the College is in the process of reviewing results from its Strategic Enrolment Management planning process and the SMA will be amended to reflect any significant changes as a result of this review.

Baseline Projected Eligible Full-Time Headcounts

Level	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Certificate/Diploma	1,074	1,180	1,215
Degree	152	160	165
Northern Total	1,226	1,340	1,380

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Ministry and the College recognize that financial sustainability and accountability are critical to achieving institutional mandates and realizing Ontario's vision for the postsecondary education system. To this end, it is agreed that:

- It is the responsibility of the governing board and Senior Administrators of the College to identify, track, and address financial pressures and sustainability issues. At the same time, the Ministry has a financial stewardship role. The Ministry and the College agree to work collaboratively to achieve the common goal of financial sustainability, and to ensure that Ontarians have access to a full range of affordable, high-quality postsecondary education options, now and in the future; and
- The College remains accountable to the Ministry with respect to effective and efficient use of resources to maximize the value and impact of investments made in the postsecondary education system.

The Ministry and the College agree to use the following metrics to assess the financial health and sustainability of the institution.

1. Annual surplus/deficit
2. Accumulated surplus/deficit
3. Net Assets to Expense Ratio
4. Debt Servicing Ratio
5. Quick Ratio
6. Debt to Asset Ratio
7. Net Income to Revenue Ratio

MINISTRY/GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Over time, the Ministry commits to align many of its policy, process, and funding levers with the Differentiation Policy Framework and SMAs in order to support the strengths of institutions and implement differentiation. To this end, the Ministry will:

- Engage with both the college and university sectors around potential changes to the funding formula, beginning with the university sector in 2014-15;
- Update the college and university program funding approval process to improve transparency and align with institutional strengths as outlined in the SMAs;
- Streamline reporting requirements across Ministry business lines with the goals of (1) creating greater consistency of reporting requirements across separate initiatives, (2) increasing automation of reporting processes, and (3) reducing the amount of data required from institutions without compromising accountability. In the interim, the Multi-Year Accountability Report Backs will be adjusted and used as the annual reporting mechanism for metrics set out in the SMAs;
- Consult on the definition, development, and utilization of metrics;
- Undertake a review of Ontario's credential options; and
- Continue the work of the Nursing Tripartite Committee.

The Ministry and the College are committed to continuing to work together to:

- Support student access, quality, and success;
- Drive creativity, innovation, knowledge, and community engagement through teaching and research;
- Increase the competitiveness of Ontario's postsecondary education system;
- Focus the strengths of Ontario's institutions; and
- Maintain a financially sustainable postsecondary education system.

SIGNED for and on behalf of the
Ministry of Training, Colleges and
Universities by:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Deborah Newman
Deputy Minister

March 31, 2014

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of The
Northern College of Applied Arts
and Technology by:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Fred Gibbons
President

April 10, 2014

Date