**MISSION**
The Northeast Higher Education District will provide quality, higher education to the communities throughout northeastern Minnesota by developing a regional structure that will preserve college autonomy and align programs and services to better prepare residents for learning, employment, citizenship and life.

**VISION**
The NHED will enhance student access and learning options throughout the region and will focus on each member college’s connection to the community.

**PURPOSE**
The NHED creates an environment that
- Increases access and improved learning opportunities for students;
- Focuses presidential leadership, at both the regional and institutional community levels;
- Increases coordination and joint planning among colleges;
- Improves alignment with regional business, industries, organizations and education providers;
- Ensures full, independent Higher Learning Commission accreditation for each of the member colleges.

**PRINCIPLES**
The NHED is built on the following principles:
- Student and community needs drive planning and institutional structures;
- A unique blend of regional collaboration and local decision-making results in collective resource use, coordination and planning for Northeastern Minnesota;
- Long-term institutional stability is a prerequisite for effective institutional planning, decision-making and educational program implementation;
- Benchmarking, assessment and on-going refinement of programs and services are vital to institutional effectiveness and success.

**INTRODUCTION**
The following document provides an institutional profile of the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED/District). The document introduces the Northeast Higher Education District, its distinguishing features, key descriptive elements, the District’s current and future planning, and its resource deployment. Following the introduction, the document provides individual profiles on each NHED college.
“When we look back, we want to know that we have made a difference in the region by positively impacting the lives of our learners and the prosperity of our communities.”

Dr. Sue Collins
NHED President

**HISTORY: The Northeast Higher Education District**
The Board of Trustees of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities approved the creation of the Northeast Higher Education District in 1999. Under this new organizational model, the District would serve as governance structure for five independently accredited colleges in rural northeast Minnesota – Hibbing Community College in Hibbing; Itasca Community College in Grand Rapids; Mesabi Range Community and Technical College in Virginia and Eveleth; Rainy River Community College in International Falls; and Vermilion Community College in Ely. Each of the colleges provides a wide range of educational programs and services to students, as well as focusing on its own unique areas of academic distinction. The District serves more than 4,600 full-year equivalent learners and covers approximately 13,000 square miles of geography consisting of seven counties and many small, isolated communities.

Students enrolling in NHED colleges experience robust, independent colleges that are strengthened through their sharing of resources and programs, connections to communities, and participation in the economic development of the entire Northeast region.

The NHED President, in partnership with the college Provosts, leads the colleges, invests resources to strengthen instruction, creates an alignment of programs, expands workforce development, and achieves true ‘Centers of Distinction’ across northeastern Minnesota. In this way students and communities benefit from well-rounded education opportunities. They are continuously assured of access to excellence through NHED’s investment of resources and the colleges’ collective commitment to meet the needs of northeastern Minnesota.

**REGIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS: Serving our Constituencies**

*Who We Are:* The Iron Range of Minnesota is home to an historically diverse population representing many ethnic identities, people who brought a strong work ethic and appreciation for education to the region. Immigrants from 43 ethnic groups helped build a regional economy driven by its natural resources that has resulted in three areas of economic prosperity: mining, timber, and tourism. Mines flourished in Babbitt, Mountain Iron, Virginia, Eveleth, and Hibbing. Cliffs Natural Resources (United Taconite, Hibbing Taconite, and Northshore Mining), United States Steel, ArcelorMittal, and others have evolved from the mining operations of the early 1900s. Timber operations spanned from the northern borders of NE Minnesota across the region with major industry partners settling in International Falls (Boise), Grand Rapids (UPM Kymmen – Blandin Paper Company), Sappi (Cloquet), New Page (Duluth) and others. Across the region, the natural environment draws thousands of tourists throughout the year who come to enjoy the recreation of our lakes, forests, and trail systems.

This rich tradition of culture and heritage plays an important role in defining and maintaining the tenets of autonomy and independence that characterize the alignment of District colleges.

Geographically, the rural region consists of seven contiguous counties in northeast Minnesota that serve an estimated population of 328,320. Compared to other regions of the state, the District serves an economically disadvantaged population with poverty rates well above state averages. For this reason, the District’s commitment to access remains a hallmark strategic goal. In addition, for the small communities the District serves, the colleges are viewed as important “cultural centers” that provide facilities and resources for theatre, music, historical museums, and art-related activities.
**Governance Structure:** The District structure consists of five independently accredited colleges under the leadership of one President. The District’s Administrative office houses the President, the Vice President of finance, and one administrative Assistant. Each college hosts a Provost who reports to the president. The President holds monthly cabinet meetings with Provosts through which the business of the District is managed. This structure provides unique opportunities to share resources while maintaining institutional autonomy in academic mission.

Since its founding, the District colleges have focused on sharing resources to improve efficiencies and create opportunities. Shared services include Human Resources, Information Technology, Business Services, and Customized Training. In addition, the District has been diligent about creating shared instructional programming across the five colleges to improve the efficiency of instruction and better position the District colleges in the allocation framework.

**Leading Edge Academic Programming and Services for Students:** With a mission to provide quality higher education to the communities it serves, the Northeast Higher Education District embraces a learner-centered philosophy, fostering critical thinking, developing information and communication skills, expanding the breadth and application of knowledge, and promoting community and global awareness. To help students achieve their goals, the colleges collectively offer residential student housing in addition to learning support services, liberal arts transfer courses, and career and technical programs leading to certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees. The colleges of NHED are actively engaged in creating and redesigning world class technical education programming. Since 2005, enrollment in technical education across the five colleges has grown 75%. In addition, Customized Training and Continuing Education departments offer learners the opportunity to renew and expand their learning experiences through noncredit vocational, basic skills, life skills, and enrichment classes.

Each college boasts signature programs considered “Centers of Distinction.” Where possible, the Chief Academic Officers collaborate in resource sharing and in preventing program duplication.

**Centers of Distinction by college include:**
- Electrical Maintenance, Law Enforcement, and Nursing at Hibbing Community College
- Engineering, Natural Resources, Applied Psychology, and Education at Itasca Community College
- Industrial Mechanical Technology, Welding, and Process Automation at Mesabi Range Community and Technical College
- Industrial Technology Maintenance and Nursing at Rainy River Community College
- Wilderness Management; Fisheries and Wildlife Management; Natural Resource Technology Forestry/Wildlife; and Wildland Wildlife Law Enforcement at Vermilion Community College

**Innovation in Action / Points of Pride:** Beyond the distinctiveness of the District’s governance structure, and the programs of distinction, the District boasts an impressive track record of innovation. A few specific examples include:

**Applied Learning Institute (ALI)** – In 2007, with a legislative appropriation of $1 million, the District colleges partnered with 17 charter member school districts and 26 high schools in launching the Applied Learning Institute to renew career and technical education programming focused on the economic drivers of the region. Since its inception,
“Applied Learning Institute has become the process where students, parents, teachers, community colleges, and the mining industry come together to deliver an education that prepares today’s student for the careers of their future.”

Craig Pagel, President, Iron Mining Association of Minnesota

ALI has funded more than $3 million to member school districts and colleges for programming and equipment. Enrollment (400 students in the program’s pilot year) has grown to more than 1,400 students.

- **A founding member of Minnesota Center for Excellence in Manufacturing and Engineering (MnCEME)** – A consortium of academic institutions, MnCEME serves industry as a first-contact resource for continuing education, emerging technology, and workforce development. MnCEME supported the expansion of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) camps and the purchase of highly specialized equipment. High schools in Itasca County adopted the Project Lead the Way curriculum, and most notably, a new engineering education model – Iron Range Engineering – was established. This Minnesota State University–Mankato program partners with the District colleges, business, and industry to offer the third and fourth year of engineering with unique hands-on learning experiences.

- **TRIO / Student Success**: The colleges of the District work collaboratively to secure federal TRIO funding to better serve underrepresented students throughout the region. This grant funding – over $2.67 million annually – provides support for “promising practices,” including the Summer Bridge Programs, intrusive advising, and first-year experience curricula. NHED TRIO Student Support Services serves more than 1,800 students each year across all five community colleges. Over the last 23 years, more than 15,000 low-income, potential first-generation college graduates of the NHED have benefited from the TRIO programs. Programs presently include Upward Bound (high school), Talent Search (middle school) and Upward Bound Math/Science programming (one of two in the State).

**Customized Training and Continuing Education**: The District colleges host a significant enterprise in customized training and continuing education (CT/CE). NHED colleges provide training through customized or continuing education to approximately 30,000 individuals (duplicated headcount) during FY 2011. Collectively, the colleges generate approximately $3 million annually in CT/CE revenue. In addition, custom training representatives have forged valuable training relationships through the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership grant program, workforce development grants from Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board, and other external funding sources for custom training activities.

**Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts**: Aside from partnerships involving the development and delivery of courses and programs, shared services and NHED’s central institutional research office, additional collaborations serve to enhance and expand the opportunities to learners and increase effectiveness.

- **Arrowhead University** – Since 1989, Arrowhead University (AU), a legislatively commissioned entity, has partnered for over 20 years with Bemidji State University, College of St. Scholastica, and University of Minnesota-Duluth to deliver Bachelor’s and Master’s level programming in business, education, psychology, nursing, criminal justice, engineering, and management across the region. AU has graduated more than 1,200 students.

In 2009, Arrowhead University unveiled Iron Range Engineering (IRE), a professional four-year engineering degree hosted by Mesabi Range Community &Technical College that builds upon the two-year pre-engineering program at Itasca Community College. Students successfully completing the course work earn an engineering degree from Minnesota State University-Mankato. Described as “education-based economic development,” IRE’s unique
The leadership team of the Northeast Higher Education District acts responsibly, ethically, effectively, efficiently, and in an accountable manner to maximize its fiscal and human resources.

**Fiscal Resources** The Northeast Higher Education District’s strategy is to ensure future financial sustainability by maintaining structurally balanced budgets and allocating resources to the highest priorities. A significant area of focus is improving overall operating efficiencies in order to stay current with revenue resources. An efficient operating budget is of critical importance with the expected decline in public revenue and the need to ensure affordability and accessibility for our students.

The District’s total revenues in fiscal year 2010 were $63 million and expenses of $59 million.

**External Resource Development**

The District has been very successful in obtaining external resources to support instruction, student services, research, and workforce development activities. Annually the District colleges receive $1 million in private grants from partnerships with Blandin, Itasca County, Minnesota Power, Bremer, and Center for Rural Development; $3 million in federal grants for TRIO programs, mine safety and health training, and Perkins for career technical programs; and $2 million in state operating grants from IRRRB, Minnesota Job Skills Partnership, and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.
A project-based curriculum is a first of its kind in Minnesota and one of few such educational opportunities in the nation. Iron Range Engineering was recognized by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and awarded the Excellence in Curriculum Programming Award in 2010 and the MnSCU Board of Trustees Chair Celebration of Innovation Award in 2011.

- **Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRBB)** – The District’s relationship with Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board has flourished with the addition of a shared Regional Workforce Development Director. Collaboration between the IRRRB and NHED assists in aligning educational programs at all five colleges with the workforce needs of regional industries.

- **Alignment with Business and Industry** – The Board and Chancellor Emeritus McCormick’s “Leadership Reaches Out to Business” initiative has provided impetus to expanded relationships with CEOs of the major industry drivers of the regional economy. In 2009, representatives from companies were invited to come together around an ‘academic planning table’ to create “a comprehensive plan for providing post secondary, upper division, and graduate education in northeastern Minnesota.” The District’s General Program Advisory Committee was formed to advise the President on matters that strengthen business and industry alignment and relationships and keep curriculum offerings on the path to world-class status. Five specialized technical programs including Process Automation, Industrial Systems Technology, Chemical Technology, Industrial Construction, and Executive Office Management have been developed in response to industry’s input.

## DATA PROFILE
### Enrollment and Student Demographics

Over the past five years, enrollment in the District has seen a growth of 9% in Full-Year Equivalent (FYE) – an increase of 389 students. Students served by the District are primarily traditional aged students (65% under 25) of Caucasian descent (88%), with a fairly equal representation of men and women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Enrollment Characteristics</th>
<th>Persistence &amp; Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credit Headcount – 7,405</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underrepresented - 79%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation (Federal/TRIO) - 74%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pell Eligible - 69%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color - 12%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Office of the Chancellor Research, Planning and Effectiveness; NHED Institution Profile*
Effort has been put forth to improve the financial health of the District. Reserves are between 6 and 7 percent of the general fund operating revenues and the Composite Financial Index (CFI) has shown significant improvement.

With a focus on instructional cost management, the District has made significant financial improvements. Financial metrics are a key component of the academic program review process. Attention to cost analyses of class size and faculty/student ratios has resulted in decreased cost per student. Between fiscal years 2008 and 2010, the District cost reduction resulted in a significant positive shift in the allocation framework [-$2,100,000 to -$570,000]. The District will continue its efforts in the area of instructional cost management.

The District operates in excess of 1,000,000 square feet of facility space and is committed to showing good stewardship of facilities by decreasing deferred maintenance. The decrease in the facilities condition index, which is a measure of effective stewardship, is evidence of the District’s commitment.

Human Resources

NHED strengths are found in the exceptional capability and performance of its people. Working together, NHED’s 654 employees provide instruction and services to create high-achieving learning environments.

Fiscal Year 2011 NHED Employee Headcount and Full-time Equivalent (FTE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% of Total Count</th>
<th>FTE</th>
<th>% of Total FTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total FTE</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>506.6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>275.9</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service &amp; Support</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>104.3</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers/Admin</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I would say the colleges that make up the Northeast Higher Education District are one of the leading groups that have its pulse on what industry needs. It’s refreshing to work with them.”

Jeff Brown, Rockwell International
The District will:

- Provide high-quality academic programs
- Provide students with the newest instructional technology
- Provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff
- Maintain structurally-balanced budgets
- Designate 6-7% reserve to general operating revenue ratio
- Generate positive operating margins
- Increase net assets
- Seek external funding sources through strong business and industry partnerships
- Expand shared business operations
- Engage in right-sizing of facilities

**Accountability** The Northeast Higher Education District is committed to continuous excellence and quality assurance. An alignment of institutional, District, and MnSCU goals fosters and advances a culture of accountability – the unifying thread which laces together the processes and systems contributing to the overall development and success of the District.

Quality assurance mechanisms, monitoring, and evaluations become part of all processes and systems. Performance indicators of selected key measures, as depicted in the MnSCU Accountability Dashboard below, are linked to MnSCU priorities and goals; allow students, legislators, business leaders, and other stakeholders to view progress toward these goals; and serve as a powerful tool for performance improvement.

**Integrated Planning** In 2009, driven by a sense of urgency created by a struggling state economy, the District initiated a strategic planning process entitled “Creating a New Reality for the Northeast Higher Education District.” A steering committee, comprised of key regional and internal stakeholders, was convened to structure the planning process, identify key regional issues that would frame the planning conversation, and make recommendations regarding strategic planning team membership. The team utilized the Board of Trustees “Strategic Actions” document as well as existing District planning documents to ensure that relevant past, present and future actions would be designed for the 2010-2015 timeframe.

The following strategic actions were identified by the team as critical to the future success of the District and its colleges:

**Strategy 1: Affirm and Strengthen District Alliance**

- Demonstrate that the NHED model of interdependent, autonomous colleges produces quality educational outcomes for the region
- Champion and promote cross-college communication to increase a shared understanding of the organization and deepen the ability of students, staff and communities to leverage District relationships
- Align resources and priorities that drive cross-college improvements and increased efficiencies
- Advocate for NHED learners, communities and institutions in regional economic development and other policy-setting deliberations

**Strategy 2: Strengthen the Quality of District Programs**

- Accelerate cultures of academic and service excellence through continuous quality improvement of NHED’s academic and support programs
- Advance efforts to market and recruit students to NHED colleges and sustain their commitment to the region after graduation
- Actively listen and respond to current and emerging needs of regional employers
- Develop and advance strategies for ongoing external financial support, including college foundation fundraising
- Share and implement the District’s promising practices to ensure student engagement and success
Strategy 3: Expand Public/Private Partnerships
- Develop and execute a coordinated, cross-college plan to support appropriate regional, state, national, and international public/private partnerships
- Engage P-16 partners in developing a more integrated education system for northeast Minnesota
- Position the District colleges to be the “providers of choice” for regional business/industry seeking ongoing training opportunities
- Promote mutual accountability among NHED colleges, communities and employers in the region

Strategy 4: Innovate for a Changing World
- Expand advanced offerings that meet the needs of NHED learners and support regional economic development opportunities
- Share resources to capitalize on economies of scale using the principle of “interdependent service organizations”
- Target emerging technologies and optimize utilization and coordination across NHED
- Advance technology-based communication

In addition to this Strategic Action Plan for 2010-2015, the integrated planning framework for the District includes the Diversity Plan (developed in 2009-2010), a “Communications and Marketing Plan” (under development), and individual college strategic, facilities and academic master plans. A significant addition to this integrated planning framework will be the addition of NHED Master Finance and Facilities plan currently being developed.

Futures Planning: 2020
The tenets of access and equity in opportunity to pursue higher education, the very tenets at the heart of the community college movement in the United States, remain the foundation for current and future planning within the District. While the Northeast Higher Education District colleges are keenly aware of a sense of urgency for change, they are also cognizant of the strengths, opportunities, and innovations that can position them for sustainability and vitality in light of ever-changing external environments.

A significant step to planning for the long-term future of the NHED colleges lies in the development of a District Master Finance and Facility Plan that will serve as a comprehensive compilation of forecast and analysis data. Many factors will be included in this plan, such as enrollment projections, revenue and expense trends, factors influencing financial health for District colleges, facility conditions, utilization and debt analysis, current and projected staffing levels, and revenue and expense forecasts for auxiliary enterprises, custom training, etc. This compilation will inform all future planning efforts of the District and serve as a useful tool as we endeavor to lead with innovation, collaboration, and accountability.
Hibbing, Minn., was one of the first cities in the nation to expand educational opportunities by opening a two-year college in 1916, establishing Hibbing Community College (HCC) as one of the country’s oldest two-year colleges.

HCC serves a diverse population of learners with more than 2,200 students in credit courses each year, in addition to more than 14,000 registered students (enrollments) in customized training and continuing education annually. As a relatively small college, HCC prides itself in the responsive and personal attention devoted to students and learners and a welcoming learning environment to compliment its expanse of excellent academic offerings.

HCC places emphasis on three primary goals to best serve its community:

- **Technical Programs** – More than 20 technical programs, accounting for 55% of enrolled students, provide students with direct pathways for entry into the workforce. Two of HCC’s distinguished programs are Law Enforcement, a program ranked in the top 7% of all colleges and steeped in over 30 years of tradition; and Nursing, known for nearly 50 years of successful training of registered nurses. The Nursing program is currently in candidacy status for voluntary accreditation by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission. HCC Nursing students report a 97.3% pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination, compared to a national average of 86%. Also noteworthy is HCC’s long history of bringing the Nursing program to distance sites in Northeastern Minnesota.

- **Liberal Arts** – Transferable courses, offered face-to-face, online, day and evening, leading to an Associate Degree. A wide variety of online educational offerings are available, with 17% of HCC credits available online, including the Associate of Arts Degree.

- **Customized Training for Workforce Development** – A proven leader in training for workforce development, HCC provides over 123,000 hours of MSHA, OSHA, EMS training annually to more than 600 businesses, and generates more than $1.5 million in annual revenue.

In addition, HCC enjoys numerous and varied partnerships, creating opportunity and building support for programs and departments.

- HCC provides space to Arrowhead University, a group of colleges and universities including Bemidji State University, The College of St. Scholastica, the University of Minnesota-Duluth, committed to providing bachelor’s and master’s degrees on location to the communities of Northeast Minnesota.
HCC’s Law Enforcement program provides skills training to more than 600 law enforcement officers in NE Minnesota’s Arrowhead Region through Arrowhead Region Law Enforcement Training (ARLET).

The University of Minnesota (U of M) dental clinic, housed on the HCC campus, offers dental services to community members who may be underinsured. Through this unique partnership, enhanced teaching and learning opportunities benefit U of M dental students and HCC dental assisting students alike, as well as their clientele.

HCC’s membership in the Applied Learning Institute (ALI) brings K-12 and college faculty together to design, enhance, deliver and revitalize career and technical curricula to area high schools, often sharing facilities and instruction. This educational partnership creates enhanced learning opportunities for students, actively responds to the evolving indicators driving our future, and fills the need for a well-educated workforce.

HCC’s central geographic location within the NHED colleges, and demographic composition of the area presents challenges to recruitment efforts, enrollment numbers, and diversity of staff and students. The City of Hibbing is significantly dependent on the economic well-being of the local taconite mining industry, which historically enjoys as well as endures a ‘boom and bust’ economy and has a direct and indisputable impact on the college. This has led to a decrease in the number of local high school graduates and an increase in the average age of HCC students, which is currently 26. The community’s blue-collar economy is reflected in HCC’s mix of liberal arts/transfer courses plus well-established and recently added technical and career programs.

HCC’s integrated and future planning is based on the fundamental goals of its founding fathers, the NHED and the Office of the Chancellor. HCC promotes and fosters open access and opportunity to higher education. Academic priorities and institutional planning are linked to support the function and operations of the college; fiscal sustainability; comprehensive student services; a well-maintained, safe and accessible facility; continuous quality improvement; and effective utilization of human resources. This is evidenced in HCC’s recent update of the Strategic Plan, Enrollment Management Plan, and Master Facilities Plan.

To effectively sustain current and future resources, HCC balances the effective utilization of talents and contributions of each employee and its portfolio of program offerings and student services with fiscal efficiency. A three-member administrative team supervises and works collaboratively with more than 190 employees. HCC enjoys a high level of employee loyalty: 53% of employees have been at HCC for more than 10 years.

Working together, HCC effectively provides access to a dynamic learning environment that fosters excellence, opportunity, responsiveness and innovation in meeting the diverse educational and career goals of our students and community.
Itasca Community College is a comprehensive two-year “learning community” college established in 1922. ICC’s distinguishing mission and vision speak to a strong sense of place, engaging and empowering learners, excellence in teaching and learning, and partnerships within our community and region.

Approximately half of Itasca’s students come from Itasca County and three-quarters from northeastern Minnesota. Seventy percent of Itasca’s approximately 1,000 students are traditional age. ICC serves a large number of underrepresented students (61%) many of whom are low income (53% Pell eligible), first generation students (63%). ICC’s enrollment of students of color has grown from 10% to 14% in the past 5 years. Even as regional high school graduating classes have declined, enrollment has held steady or grown slightly in the past decade through expanded recruiting efforts and the development of innovative programs. New offerings have addressed the training needs of the region’s major industries – paper, mining, energy, and healthcare. In addition, ICC has focused on increasing the number of non-traditional students served, particularly those affected by high unemployment and poverty rates within Itasca County.

The College's success at serving students and the community is demonstrated by students’ persistence and completion rates (73.8%) and graduate’s related employment rate (80.6%).

ICC offers transfer preparation and career programs in a supportive learning community model that fosters retention and success. Its largest program is the Associate in Arts program (40%). The college’s Engineering program is a center of distinction, nationally recognized for fostering student success in a residential living and learning community. ICC’s engineering retention rates exceed 70% at the two-year level; the Bachelor of Science completion rate greatly exceeds national averages. Other distinguishing learning community programs include the long-standing Natural Resource program, the unique online/on-ground LPN program, the college’s successful FastTrac START
program targeting underemployed adult learners, the Class Act teaching preparation program, the Applied Psychology program and others. Responding to the workforce development needs, ICC’s enrollment in technical programs such as Nursing, Power Generation, Natural Resources, and Pulp and Paper Technology is reflected in the 75% increase in students in the NHED colleges between 2005 and 2010.

ICC has a long and strong history of partnerships with local and regional industries and educational entities. Examples include industry partnerships with MN Power which has resulted in a highly successful Power Generation program and our long standing relationship with UPM/Kymenne-Blandin Paper Company, which now requires incumbent workers to obtain ICC’s Pulp and Paper Diploma as a condition of employment. These partnerships have garnered national recognition for the region.

ICC’s Applied Psychology program provides undergraduate research opportunities for its students, many of whom have participated in national studies and presented at national conferences. ICC is a charter member in the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative, made up of seven area school districts and ICC. This unique partnership has allowed for career pathway development, joint articulations and unique opportunities for high school students, such as Project Lead the Way.

For 2010, ICC’s institutional profile boasts “gold” ratings student engagement (60.5%) and student enrollment (+4.6%), which the college attributes to its learning community philosophy and commitment to first year students. Moving into the future, ICC will continue to build on its strong relationships with its K-12 partners and four-year transfer institutions, capitalizing on its strengths and commitment to “place”, engagement, and success. We expect to expand our borders in terms of recruiting, focus on increasing completion rates through strategic partnerships. Workforce needs of our region will drive program development and outreach.

ICC has completed a comprehensive planning process that links facilities, technology, academic needs, and student services priorities. ICC plans to resize its campus and has a projected bonding project for a state of the art teaching and learning facility. In 2009 the College redesigned its student services into a “One Stop Model” focused on improved efficiencies and student access to services. We anticipate the need for expansion of technology services to meet the evolving learning and social needs of our students, providing a place where students thrive. The ICC Foundation is spearheading a capital campaign to modernize the campus titled “ICC 2022”.

Moving forward, Itasca will focus on expanding partnerships, seeking external funding and collaborating to increase efficiencies as we realize the impact of limited resources. Our attention will be on improving quality, delivering what we do well, and seeking new educational opportunities that will serve our students and community.

“ICC is a warm, welcoming and beautiful college where I feel very comfortable as I begin my college career. It is very evident that faculty and staff put students first, and students feel that attitude as soon as we arrive on campus.”

– Maria Peluso, first year student
Located in the heart of the Iron Range of Minnesota, 120 miles south of the Canadian border, Mesabi Range Community & Technical College (MRCTC) is a comprehensive two-year college with distinctive transfer curriculum courses and occupational programs. Two co-located campuses at Eveleth and Virginia serve approximately 1185 full-time enrolled (FTE) students. The virtual campus offers 25% of the college’s courses to learners. In addition, the College partners with regional high schools to offer dual enrollment courses through its Concurrent Enrollment and Applied Learning Institute (ALI) programs.

Mesabi Range Community & Technical College’s mission states its commitment to two core constituencies: its learners and its communities. The College’s vision statement further identifies learners—their needs, challenges, and successes—as the focal point for the College. Subsequently, the “community” acknowledged in the mission statement includes not only those cities and towns within the College service region, but also the community of learners who desire a transfer or technical education.

College Programs. Mesabi Range College offers transfer curricula, career programs, and developmental courses. Students can earn two-year Associate in Arts (A.A.) or Associate in Science (A.S.) transfer degrees. The programs consist of lower division requirements for a variety of major fields. Thirty-eight percent of MRCTC students graduate with an Associate in Arts degree.

Career programs are designed to prepare students for immediate employment in a career by providing technical skills that can be acquired in one-year Certificate, two-year Diploma, or two year Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S) programs. The largest technical programs include Industrial Mechanical Technology (IMT/Millwright), Nursing, and Welding.

For over 40 years, the IMT program has led students into the mining and other related industries. The program is currently boasting the highest enrollment MRCTC has seen: 140 students in the diploma program and 16 students in the A.A.S. degree. The program moved into its new 5.4 million dollar addition to the Eveleth campus this fall.

MRCTC has also designed new programs during the past three years to attract nontraditional unemployed and underemployed residents. Retirement trends in local industries have given MRCTC opportunities to attract learners to newly designed and redesigned programs, particularly in the mining, project management, and wind energy sectors. MRCTC’s most recent program additions include Executive Office Management,

**Regional Connections.** The College seeks to serve the region and state through the use of its educational practices, resources, and training opportunities. An active College Advisory Council provides feedback and ideas regarding the strategic plan and anticipated challenges for the College and community. The College also collaborates with regional K-12 schools, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, City of Virginia, Adult Basic Education, Student Veteran's Assistance Center, College for Kids, STEM camp, and Mesabi Musical Theatre.

The College offers several programs with area high schools which provide college credit to students. The programs include Concurrent Enrollment (CEP) and the Applied Learning Institute (ALI). Areas of study in ALI include Medical Fields, Welding, Building Trades, Graphic Arts, CAD, and Industrial Mechanical Technology. In 2010, MRCTC provided technical education opportunities to 17 high schools with 694 ALI registrations and 300 Concurrent Enrollment registrations. The College partners with seven high schools to offer courses in Trigonometry, College Algebra, Economics, College Writing, Chemistry, Physics, and Human Biology. MRCTC is certified by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). NACEP is a professional organization for high schools and colleges that fosters and supports rigorous concurrent enrollment courses and programs.

The **Center for Ideation and Innovation (CE/CT).** In accordance with its mission, Mesabi Range Community & Technical College seeks to engage actively with multiple and overlapping communities. The Customized Training division offers four main programs based on the region’s largest industry and organizations: Business & Industry; Emergency Medical Services (EMS); Fire, and Health & Safety. The program also engages PK-12 education, social and civic sectors, and non-profit organizations. In 2010-2011, this department served 8,449 students which equates to 881 classes; 738 credits; 148,097 CEU’s; and 39,081 hours of hourly customized training classes. Additionally, the eFolio program reached a milestone of 10,000 students trained in the use of eFolio.

**Strategic Foundation and Goals.** Mesabi Range Community & Technical College has planned for continuing social and economic changes, demonstrating that the College anticipates the challenges of the next decade through its strategic planning process and proactive outreach. The College recognizes the value of organizational strategic planning at all levels: operational, instructional, and financial. As a result, the College operates under a strategic plan that reflects needs and goals identified through College-wide meetings and community involvement. This plan influences College programs, processes, and future direction. With the College’s strategic goals, it continues to create rich, meaningful, and transformational learning and college experiences.

**Grants.** Careful planning and a strategic focus allows the College to make investments to support its financial and community resource base, while maintaining and growing its educational programs and services. Grant resources have been instrumental in investing in new programs, staff development, and K-12 connections and outreach.
Rainy River Community College is located in International Falls (pop. 6,703) just minutes from the Canadian border and Voyageur's National Park. Founded in 1967 by a group of dedicated individuals, Rainy River Community College offers post-secondary education opportunities to this rural, geographically remote area, where the next closest college campus is 100 miles away.

The College, originally designed to serve its rural regional communities and local economy, continues to provide quality higher education and services to its constituents. The service market area for Rainy River Community College encompasses a geographic circle with a radius of about 50 miles, half of which is in Canada. There are seven small, rural high schools within the market circle. This small size is unique to Rainy River, guaranteeing students the individual attention they deserve, and the hands-on learning they desire.

The College has risen to the challenge of more responsibilities with fewer resources, and employees have made an art of multitasking and teamwork. This culture of working together for the betterment of the college and value to the community allow the college to thrive during difficult economic times.

The diversity of Rainy River Community College's student body provides the campus a wide variety of intercultural experiences. This diversity exceeds that of the local community, and is greater than the average MnSCU campuses.


The largest academic programs include Liberal Arts and Practical Nursing. Programs unique to RRCC include Green and Sustainable Construction and Industrial Technology (Maintenance). An exciting new initiative in the academic area is the Science and Math Education Program. In response to the need for more STEM educators, this initiative focuses on recruitment and retention of students preparing to become science and math educators.

RRCC, in partnership with Hibbing Community College, serves area business and industry with customized training opportunities. RRCC's apprenticeship program at Boise (the area's largest employer), provides incumbent workers with skill training preparing them for promotional opportunities. This apprenticeship program is linked to, and supplements, our Industrial Technology Diploma program.
Various events and activities offered to the local community range from the Fit for Life classes (for our senior-citizen population) to College for Kids; and various faculty-led, thought provoking presentations (e.g. historical and sociological perspectives of the Holocaust; the Pacific Theater of World War II as told through history and art).

Due to RRCC’s geographic isolation and small size, planning processes, organizational strategies, and action plans are coordinated and aligned using representatives from each level in the organization. All processes, strategies, and action plans must align with the overall Mission of the College as well as address the immediate challenges and opportunities the College is facing.

Rainy River Community College is committed to ensuring student success and to the goals of all Minnesota community colleges: postsecondary education, economic development, and community enrichment.

Over the next 5-10 years, specific improvements will result from:

- a strategic planning process that is constrained by tight budgets and demographic predictions of an aging and declining population
- the challenge to develop a strong reputation for technical offerings
- finding opportunities in existing collaborative relationships:
  - within NHED and the NE college alliance
  - with local school districts to provide a world-class model for P-14 collaboration in education
- a positive institutional climate that maximizes the potential of employees, fosters learning and student success, and encourages creativity and innovation.

Rainy River Community College’s strategies for resource deployment align with the goals of recruiting and retaining the students best served by the College, and providing relevant post-secondary opportunities to our students and community.

Collaborative efforts include strong relationships with the City of International Falls, the Koochiching Economic Development Authority, the Northeastern Minnesota Office of Job Training, Falls High School, Voyageurs National Park (ties with the college through Rainy River Community College’s Water Resources Center and science offerings), and the Applied Learning Institute (ALI).

Grant opportunities with the Blandin Foundation, the Bremer Foundation, ALI, and others ensure that RRCC’s curriculum, technology, and equipment is current, relevant, and responsive to the needs of students, our community, and regional business and industry.

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**Goals**

The goals complete the phrase, "Rainy River Community College will..."

- Recruit and retain the students best served by the College.
- Review and develop academic and technical programs that best serve the College’s students and communities.
- Pursue collaboration with community, government, business, and educational organizations to continually improve teaching and learning and enhance community vitality.
- Encourage and empower faculty, staff, students, and community members to guide the College.
Vermilion Community College (VCC), perched on the very edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, offers over a million acres of unspoiled natural laboratory in which to experience our many unique degree programs. It’s a one-of-a-kind setting for the liberal arts students looking to complete the first two years of their college education.

VCC was founded in 1922 as Ely Junior College, a liberal arts college providing children of miners and loggers an opportunity to pursue higher education. Over the decades, Vermilion has capitalized on its unique location and the area’s abundance of natural resources and evolved into a residential two-year college, offering a variety of educational programming and degrees, focusing on niche areas of natural resource use and natural resource protection. Vermilion’s unique mission and residential college status draws students from all over Minnesota and beyond. Overall college enrollment has increased in recent years, reflecting learners’ desire to pursue careers in natural resource and outdoor related fields, as well as societal needs for workers in the environmental arena. The majority of VCC’s students are full-time traditionally-aged learners, with 74% carrying full-time status and 88% age 24 years or younger.

VCC’s curriculum offers an Associate of Arts degree; a unique mix of programming leading to Associate of Science and Associate of Applied Science degrees; as well as numerous specialized certificates and diplomas. VCC’s programs are nationally accredited within their niche wherever applicable.
With substantial investments in on-campus housing, VCC’s overall operating budget is $9,615,000. Shrinking state appropriations have recently been eclipsed by tuition as our major source of revenue and ongoing reductions are posing a greater budget challenge each year.

2010 Revenue

Vermilion’s vision over the next five years is to further increase its distinction as a vital provider of education programming and career preparation in the natural resource and environmental arenas.

The college’s healthy enrollment growth will soon be challenged as a result of student housing constraints. Vermilion plans to meet this housing challenge after 2013 through the construction of the new dormitory space, as highlighted in our Master Facilities Plan.

VCC’s first priority of offering exceptional and affordable education programming is made ever more complex due to the current fiscal environment, and additional funding sources are being pursued in order to mitigate the consequences of diminishing State revenue. In addition, Vermilion will increase collaboration with regional industry and K-12 education partners to offer clear and affordable pathways to higher education and gainful employment.

VCC’s budgeting strategies focus on the college’s priorities and mission fulfillment. The college will continue with its extensive program review from academic programs to auxiliary enterprises in order to evaluate and realign college initiatives with institutional goals and priorities. These actions have focused resource deployment in the following areas:

- Provide the highest quality academic programming possible
- Maintain a balanced budget while building institutional reserves
- Expand programming initiatives through grant funding
- Secure new housing to facilitate continued enrollment growth
- Maintain nationally recognized student engagement results
- Meet the educational demands of our state and federal partners (Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service, United States Geological Survey, etc.)

Goals

- Student Focus. To provide high-quality programs and support services to meet the educational, cultural, social, and personal needs of our diverse students.
- Commitment to Faculty and Staff. To provide faculty and staff with the resources they need to be effective in an atmosphere of open communication, mutual respect, and accountability.
- Programs and Services. To provide innovative and comprehensive programs and services that meet the learning and occupational needs of students, employers, and society.
- Leadership. To develop and support leadership among students, faculty, and staff to achieve our full potential.
- Resource Development. To develop financial, human, and other resources to effectively support our students, faculty, staff, and programs.
- Collaboration. To develop and provide high-quality education and services through collaboration with educational institutions, business, government, and our communities.
The Northeast Higher Education District is located in Northeastern Minnesota – A great place to live, learn, work and grow.