SELF-STUDY REPORT

THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

A COMMISSION OF THE NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

MARCH 2008
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Overview
The administration, faculty, and staff of Western Dakota Technical Institute are pleased to present the Self-Study Report prepared for The Higher Learning Commission reaccreditation team visit in April 2008.

This report reflects the most recent data available. Additional information will be available to the visiting team through appendices and in the resource room.
History and Profile of Western Dakota Technical Institute

The South Dakota postsecondary vocational education system was conceived through the 1963 Vocational Education Act and subsequent state legislation. In 1966, the South Dakota Office of Vocational Education was established, and vocational technical schools were instituted. Sturgis and Rapid City were two of five communities statewide that proposed the establishment of area vocational schools.

The state Board of Vocational Education approved the Black Hills Area Vocational Technical School, Rapid City, in 1968. Two years later, Area-Five Vocational Technical School, Sturgis, was approved by the state Board of Vocational Education. In 1973, Area-Five was renamed Northwestern Vocational Technical School. Under the direction of two local K-12 Boards of Education, thirty miles apart, both schools conducted postsecondary vocational technical training programs.

In July 1976, the two schools were placed under one administration serving two school districts. Program duplication and financial constraints were the key factors in the decision to merge Northwestern Vocational Technical School and Black Hills Area Vocational Technical School. Rapid City Area School District and Meade School District K-12 Boards continued to administer programs residing within their respective districts.

In the spring of 1977, both boards endorsed the Western Dakota Vocational Technical Foundation, the purpose of which was to promote, assist, and extend financial support to postsecondary vocational education in western South Dakota. The Foundation was able to receive donations, sell bonds, and invest its assets to improve and extend vocational education in the area. The Board of Directors of the Foundation was comprised of community members representing business and industry.

On July 1, 1978, the existing school names were discontinued, and Western Dakota Vocational Technical Institute became the official name with the Meade School District Board maintaining fiscal responsibility for the institution. A Cooperative Board, composed of Rapid City District School Board members, two Meade District School Board members, one Sturgis business person, and one Rapid City business person governed the institution.

In 1980, the administration, Cooperative Board, and district boards questioned the feasibility of a K-12 system having the time, finances and expertise to adequately oversee the mission of the institution. With assistance from the state Board of Vocational Education, legislation was drafted and passed giving the institution “single-entity status” and the authority to pursue an “area concept.” On July 1, 1981, the institute became a single-entity operation, free from the governance of a K-12 district.

Under single-entity status, the governing body became the board with the Director designated as the chief administrative officer. The new board was comprised of
seven appointed members—two from the Meade District Board; two from the Rapid City District Board; one member at large, residing in the Meade District; one member at large, residing in the Rapid City District; and one member at large, residing in western South Dakota, but not in the Meade or Rapid City District. Social, economic, and political factors resulted in the continuation of a two-campus system. The administrative offices were located in Sturgis.

In 1983 and 1984, the institution amassed financial indebtedness largely attributed to facility lease cost and operating without a solid financial base. In December 1984, the institution’s board petitioned the Rapid City and Meade Districts asking that one would consider the assumption of governance effective April 1, 1985. During this critical time, the Governor and state intervened.

The state Department of Education, Governor, state legislators, local K-12 boards, and community leaders from Rapid City and Sturgis recognized the need to preserve postsecondary vocational education in western South Dakota. State funds were appropriated to retire past indebtedness and to purchase and remodel a facility known as the Rushmore Campus located in Rapid City. State resources were contingent upon a plan to eventually consolidate all programs to one location.

By September 1987, all of the institution’s programs, excluding Agricultural Technology, were consolidated to the Rapid City Campus. The Agricultural Technology programs, although mainly a distance education program, remains located on the institution’s 500-acre ranch in Sturgis.

In July of 1993, the name Western Dakota Vocational Technical Institute was changed to Western Dakota Technical Institute by the South Dakota Legislature to better reflect the changing technologies and the status of the institution to grant associate in applied science degrees.

Physical Plant
In 1981, the governing board leased the Rushmore facility, which was previously used for the manufacture of modular homes. The building contained 66,000 square feet of floor space located on 10.2 acres of land. For the next four years, the institution used one-half of the building and leased a portion of the other half to another firm.

The state of South Dakota purchased the property in 1985 at a cost of $850,000. The deed was given to the Rapid City School District with the stipulation that the facility be used for vocational technical education programs.

In 1986, $1,234,000 was used in the Phase I and II remodeling plan at the Rushmore Building. This completed the remodeling of shops/labs and the construction of classrooms on the first and second floors. In 1988, the final phase of construction was completed on the main building at a cost of $1,500,000. This phase, designed to accommodate 500 students, provided for the addition of the
cafeteria and the remodeling of the administration area and brought the square footage of the building to 96,877 square feet. Currently, the Carpentry, Fire Science, and Computer Networking programs remain in the Rushmore Building as well as Dual Enrollment programs in Automotive Technology and Welding. The Department of Corrections, Kibben Kuster Center of the Rapid City Area School Academies, and Black Hills State University also utilize space in the building.

A 5,100 square-foot day care center was built adjacent to the Rushmore Building in 1990 at a cost of approximately $327,000. This facility has a licensed capacity of 75 children.

In 1995, the first new phase of the Mickelson complex along Highway 44 was completed at a cost of approximately $5.4 million. Administration, Student Services, many instructional areas and the media center were located in the new 73,000 square-foot building. The next phase of the Mickelson building, a 104,000 square-foot addition, was completed at a cost of approximately $5.7 million and opened for the 1999-2000 school year. Eight trade and industry programs were relocated to the new quarters. Both buildings were funded with a combination of institutional reserve and state bonding authority, with a gift of approximately $2.5 million from the Rapid City Area School District for the Phase II addition.

A classroom building was completed in 2000 at the ranch in Sturgis at a cost of approximately $215,000.

The most recent addition to the WDT Campus was a $500,000 Emergency Response Training Facility. This 3,000 square foot, four level building was constructed near the Rushmore Building and was a joint venture between WDT and the City of Rapid City. The building serves as a training center for WDT Fire Science students, local and regional volunteer fire departments, and the City of Rapid City’s fire department.

WDT is in the beginning stages of development to the Mickelson Building that would add 25,000 square feet for a new library, bookstore, student commons area and meeting rooms. Although in the infancy stage, we anticipate breaking ground in late 2009. This new phase of the Mickelson Building will provide much needed space to expand and enhance the services to our students and the Rapid City community.

**Accreditation History**
WDT received initial accreditation in 1983 and has been fully accredited since. The last comprehensive visit took place in October 2002, with a follow-up visit in April 2005.

WDT’s status of affiliation changed in July 2007, when approval to offer distance education was granted.
Self-Study Purpose
WDT is vested in providing outstanding programs and services to its constituents. Because of that commitment, WDT desires to achieve the highest level of credibility possible. Seeking and maintaining accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission allows WDT the opportunity to attain such accreditation and provide evidence that WDT is meeting its mission. More importantly, it allows WDT to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses as WDT prepares for the future.

The WDT Executive Cabinet and Self-Study Steering Committee set the following goal for the 2008 Self-Study process.

Self-Study Process
The Self-Study Steering Committee was established in the spring of 2006 by the Vice President and Self-Study Chair and approved by the President. Each chair served on the Self-Study Steering committee and then selected committee members in the fall of 2006 to serve throughout the self-study process. All members of the WDT community were invited to participate on criterion committees.

In addition, the Institutional Planning Committee, which consists of members from academic units, campus committees, and campus boards, was charged with processing the self-study as reports came due. Committee feedback helped the criterion chairs look at areas of the institution that might have otherwise been missed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Criterion 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mission and Integrity</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starla Russell – Chair</td>
<td>Financial Aid Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill Elder</td>
<td>Admissions Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Johnson</td>
<td>Counselor (former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Martin</td>
<td>Senior Financial Aid Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi Anderson</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis Lundquist</td>
<td>Academic Unit Coordinator/Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vince Pfeifle</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Murano</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn Parker</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane Grahek</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Kennedy</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia O’Kelley</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bev Huus</td>
<td>Distribution Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill Winter</td>
<td>Daycare Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marya Rogers</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Iversen</td>
<td>IT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason Zastoupil</td>
<td>IT (former)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teresa Rostad</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Konantz</td>
<td>IT</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Criterion 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>Preparing for the Future</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim Morey – Chair</td>
<td>Assistant to the President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jo-Ann Elseman</td>
<td>Dean of Academic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deb Arne</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Len Eichler</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kari Kelting</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant (former)</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Criterion 3</strong></th>
<th><strong>Student Learning and Effective Teaching</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alicia O’Kelley – Co-Chair</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly O’Brien – Co-Chair</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicki Ducheneaux</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donita O’Meara</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann Slanina</td>
<td>Academic Support Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jo-Ann Elseman</td>
<td>Dean of Academic Affairs</td>
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<th><strong>Criterion 4</strong></th>
<th><strong>Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Curt Lauinger - Chair</td>
<td>Career Services Coordinator</td>
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<td>Donna Hanks</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave Pendleton</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duane Martenson</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
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The WDT Governing Board began its review process in late spring of 2007, gave additional feedback during the quarterly board meeting in January 2008, and adopted a “Resolution to Approve the 2008 WDT Self-Study”. This group provided feedback from a new perspective and allowed the self-study steering committee to expand the report even further.

The final rough draft was presented to the WDT community for review, and comments were solicited from the campus community. The campus community also received periodic updates from the self-study steering committee and was kept apprised of the study’s progress.

The final editing was completed by an internal editing team consisting of the President, Vice President, Associate Vice-President for Corporate Education, Director of Marketing, WDT Faculty Member, and the Self-Study Steering Committee Chair.

To prepare for the comprehensive visit, WDT sent several self-study committee members to the HLC Annual Meeting in 2006, 2007, and 2008. In addition, Mary Breslin visited WDT in the spring of 2007 to review the progress of the self-study and provide additional support.

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1 Resolution to Approve the 2008 Self-Study.
## Self-Study Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Study Design completed and approved by IP Committee and President</td>
<td>May 22, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion Committee appointments completed and started committee chair training</td>
<td>June 5, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criterion Component committees setup and committee training started</td>
<td>August 21, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study Kick off</td>
<td>September 5, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation and analysis of criterion components started</td>
<td>September 11, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Component reports due to Criterion Committee</td>
<td>March 1, 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criterion reports due to Steering Committee</td>
<td>April 1, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Committee decisions on major issues due</td>
<td>June 1, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First draft of full report due to Steering Committee</td>
<td>September 1, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-final draft report to editor due</td>
<td>January 1, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Institutional Snapshot due to Steering Committee</td>
<td>February 1, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Comment advertising due</td>
<td>February 1, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Report ready for mailing</td>
<td>March 1, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visit</td>
<td>April 21-23, 2008</td>
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</table>
Major Changes Since the 2002 Visit

Administration
In June 2000, long time Director Dr. Ken Gifford retired. Dr. Ray Mueller was hired in the fall of 2000 as Director. In April 2002, Dr. Mueller resigned and Ms. Nancy Richter and Ms. Patsy Schmidt were appointed as Interim Directors. During that time, several important administrative changes occurred.

The Finance and Operations Manager position was created.  
The Administrative Services Coordinator retired and the position eliminated.  
The Assistant Director of Curriculum resigned and was replaced.  
The WDT Foundation was re-established and a Board of Directors seated.

In April 2003, Dr. Rich Gross was hired as the new Director, and additional administrative changes took place.

- A new Assistant Director was hired.  
- Quarterly Board Meetings were established with the WDT Board.  
- A WDT Board Committee was created.  
- Strategic planning was revitalized.  
- A Foundation Director was hired and the WDT Foundation entered into a Major Gifts Campaign.  
- Administrative staff titles were revised to reflect titles appropriate to an institution of higher learning.  
- Director changed to President  
- Assistant Director changed to Vice President  
- Manager of Corporate Education changed to Associate Vice President for Corporate Education  
- Manager of Finance and Operations changed to Associate Vice President for Finance and Operations  
- Coordinator of Academic Affairs changed to Dean of Academic Affairs  
- Coordinator of Student Services changed to Dean of Student Services

Programs
WDT continues to evolve as an institution of higher learning. In keeping with its mission, WDT strives to revise and update our programs to meet the ever-changing needs of the region’s workforce. Although all programs follow a formal process to update and change curriculum, the following reflects the major changes to WDT programs in the past five years.

New Program Offerings
- Agriculture Resources Technology – Equine Management Option  
  - WDT received formal approval to offer distance education programs based on the success of this on-line offering.
• Field Engineering Technology – Associate of Applied Science Degree
• Fire Science – Associate of Applied Science Degree
• Health Unit Coordinator - Diploma
• Public Safety Dispatch – Diploma
  o This program will go dark in Fall 2008 due to low enrollment.

**Eliminated Programs**

• Administrative Services was removed from the catalog in 2003-2004, but reinstated for the 2007-2008 academic year.
• In 2007-2008, the Cabinetry/Fine Wood Working program was placed under the Carpentry program and no new students were accepted into the program. In 2008-2009 the program will no longer exist as a standalone program.
• Machine Tool Technology was eliminated from the catalog in 2004-2005 and combined into Welding/Manufacturing in 2005-2006.

**General Education**
The General Education Department has made great strides during the past five years. New courses have been created to enhance the life skills of our students. In addition, via the assessment process, the department has created a General Education Philosophy that guides and directs students through the learning outcomes they can expect to attain in their general education courses.
Responses to Concerns/Challenges of Accreditation Visit in 2002

Assessment
WDT has made strong strides in the area of assessment since the April 2005 visit. Since the focus visit, WDT has continued to enhance the assessment process and train faculty and staff.

During the 2005-2006 academic year, WDT implemented a new student assessment model that had been developed in a pilot program. Ten professional development days were designed to train faculty on the new assessment model. At the end of the academic year, each program had a fully functional assessment book that tied learning outcomes to the WDT mission, vision, and guiding principles. These assessment books are the foundation for program decisions and changes. Through this process, WDT has enhanced the decision-making process at WDT, and it is evident that the assessment process has become a part of the WDT culture.

Governance
As reported in the April 2005 focus visit report, WDT has made significant progress in the area of governance. As noted in the focus visit report, and throughout the 2008 Self-Study, WDT has created a new relationship with the Rapid City Area Schools Board of Education. The board has established policies that reflect the unique aspects of an institution of higher learning and have opened better lines of communication. This new relationship has enhanced WDT’s ability to move forward with new programs, legislation, and programming.

Finance
As demonstrated in the April 2005 focus visit report, WDT has made significant progress in the area of finance. Although still closely associated with Rapid City Public Schools, WDT has established a clear fiscal identity which continues to improve. Annual audits are conducted in association with the school district, with selected functions audited annually specifically for WDT. Administration continues to address the growth of the reserve fund. At fiscal year-end 2006-2007, the reserve balance stood at 15 percent of the annual operating budget.

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3 Focus Visit Report, 2005.
Executive Summary

Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

Summary

A comprehensive review of Western Dakota Tech’s operations reveals that much work has been done to strengthen the organization by involving various internal and external constituencies in the development of mission documents and strategic planning processes. WDT has completed a comprehensive research of the historic documents that have brought the organization to where it is today. By addressing Criterion One’s core components, WDT has identified its strengths and future challenges.

The scope and depth of what Criterion One requires of WDT is very clear and provides the foundation on which the institution operates.

Review of the institution’s mission documents, and the underlying support and understanding of the mission through leadership, governance structures, and collaboration reveals that WDT is responsive, future-oriented, and seeks input from many of its constituencies. It is evident that students, employees, and the community WDT serves have been made stakeholders in charting the future of the institution, and the leadership and governing body have made fulfilling the mission a priority.

Strengths

- As WDT has changed leadership, the institution has made a consistent effort to live by its mission.
- The WDT mission is clearly articulated.
- WDT is providing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for successful employment as evidenced by WDT’s consistently strong placement rates.
- WDT includes workforce development initiatives at all levels of planning and in all mission documents.

Improvement Initiatives

- WDT, its board, and other stakeholders in the state must continue to review governance to benefit students and enhance the mission.
- WDT must work to increase the graduation rate of minority students for the unique needs of our region.
• WDT must work to increase the diversity of its faculty and staff.
• WDT must work to provide additional financial support, grants, and scholarships so more students can take advantage of the training and educational opportunities available.
Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

WDT’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Summary

WDT is clearly emerging from a period of great growth and change. The institution is operating on a new strategic plan formulated in an innovative way. WDT’s strategic planning process began more than two years ago. WDT anticipated the magnitude of change the plan would bring. WDT also understands the plan will guide the campus into a new era of higher learning while preserving the best of our heritage of serving the students, businesses, and communities of western South Dakota.

WDT’s greatest challenge is making the best of these new opportunities without forgetting WDT’s place in history—providing unequaled quality of employment-oriented higher education. WDT must maintain its personal connection to the students and the employers while growing to meet the demands of our constituents. WDT’s greatest strength is its flexibility and dedication to providing focused and well-rounded education for the region’s workforce. WDT’s grassroots support for visioning and planning, added to the consensus of purpose among all stakeholders, ensures a focused future based on long-range planning.

Strengths

- WDT has built relationships with state lawmakers, business and industry, and other stakeholders who are actively engaged in promoting WDT and its mission at the highest ranks of state government.
- WDT is recognized as a leader in the community and workforce development and is able to use its collective expertise to influence public policy.
- WDT engages in partnerships with business and industry to incorporate state-of-the-art technology, tools, and equipment in educational programs.
- Through a program review process, WDT uses the expertise of its faculty, advisory committees, and staff to improve, create, and suspend programs.

Improvement Initiatives

- WDT must empower faculty leadership to increase involvement in shared governance of the institution.
- WDT must continue to work for legislative changes that would provide consistent funding mechanisms for replacement equipment, program start-up costs, and campus maintenance and repair.
- WDT must develop grant opportunities to support the increased needs of students, faculty, staff, and the community.
Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

WDT provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

Summary
WDT is a public institution of higher learning dedicated to providing students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for successful employment. Assessment is the tool that enables WDT to evaluate if the mission is met. Through the integration of the assessment model, WDT has made it a priority for all faculty to understand that assessment is no longer an afterthought, but an integral part of their jobs. WDT will continually work to make certain this culture is fostered so that it will continue to grow.

Strengths
- Assessment of student learning outcomes is being documented campus-wide.
- Assessment is part of the daily culture.
- Assessment is being used by programs in a measurable way to improve student learning.
- Training new faculty members is ongoing.

Improvement Initiatives
- WDT must dedicate resources to take assessment to the next level by justifying budget requests with assessment data.
- WDT must make program information accessible.
- WDT must use assessment measurements to make proactive choices to improve WDT.
Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

_WDT promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission._

Summary

Western Dakota Tech is dedicated to students, staff, and faculty. WDT truly believes everyone deserves access to continual and high-quality courses and professional education. WDT will continue to develop, implement, and evaluate programs for all staff members at every stage of their career growth. WDT will do the same for all students along their individual educational journeys. The groundwork for these efforts is firmly in place and will allow WDT to move forward with confidence.

Strengths

- WDT has developed a General Education philosophy that has served as the basis for creating a broader acceptance of the importance of General Education courses.
- WDT has created research partnerships with other institutions of higher education and with business and industry to create new knowledge and economic development opportunities.
- WDT’s clubs and organizations allow students to apply the technical and general education skills learned in the classroom to real-world challenges and projects.
- WDT’s process for faculty performance review and development creates clear goals for improved performance in the classroom, professional development, and service to the institution.

Improvement Initiatives

- WDT must work to reward all faculty and staff members for engaging in professional development opportunities and for meritorious performance.
- WDT must find and implement more effective strategies to encourage faculty and staff members to engage in professional development opportunities.
- WDT must work to engage alumni in returning to the institution to share and enhance their expertise and knowledge.
Criterion Five: Engagement and Service
As called for by its mission, WDT identifies its constituents and serves them in ways both value.

Summary
As demonstrated and consistent with its mission, Western Dakota Tech has identified the constituents it serves and the many opportunities it has initiated to benefit them. While we recognize the need for improvement, WDT is focused on our constituent groups and is serving them well while receiving significant benefits in return.

Strengths
- WDT students, faculty, and staff are actively engaged in improving the quality of life in the community.
- WDT's Corporate Education Center offers lifelong learning and training opportunities for individuals and businesses throughout the region.
- WDT has created methods to collect data from its various constituencies and incorporate the findings into institutional plans.

Improvement Initiatives
- WDT must work to incorporate all data collected into institutional plans for improvement.
- WDT must work toward creating consistent methods for collection, interpretation, storing, and securing data.
- WDT must capitalize on all ways to bring external constituencies to campus.
Overview
A comprehensive review of the institution’s operations reveals that WDT’s mission documents and strategic planning processes have been strengthened through the involvement of various internal and external constituencies, specifically within the past four years. As a result, WDT is now able to better identify and plan for future challenges.

The institution’s analysis of Criterion One has provided an opportunity for WDT to describe, evaluate, and identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities the institution must consider as the planning process continues. Examples of evidence that demonstrate WDT’s successes are also identified.

Review of the institution’s mission documents, and the underlying support and understanding of the mission through leadership, governance structures, and collaboration reveals that WDT is responsive, future-oriented, and seeks input from many of its constituencies. It is evident that students, employees, and the community WDT serves have been made stakeholders in charting the future of the institution, and the leadership and governing body have made fulfilling the mission a priority.
Core Component 1A

WDT’s mission documents clearly and publicly articulate its commitments.

Mission documents clearly define WDT, its constituencies, and goals
Mission documents are in place that are dynamic and current, broadly define the institution’s mission, and are clear, precise, and understood. The mission documents include the mission statement, philosophy, vision statement, guiding principles⁴, objectives, and strategic plan⁵. WDT developed these documents with input from internal and external constituencies representing classified and contract staff, faculty, administration, and the institution’s governing board – the Rapid City Area School (RCAS) Board. As a result, 82 percent of institutional employees report that mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments⁶.

Benchmarked, documented accountability that speaks to the fulfillment of the mission includes:

- An 85-88 percent degree-related placement rate⁷
- Active advisory committees and institutional committees
- Professional development and training opportunities for employees
- Collaborative agreements for technology and facility enhancements
- Customized training that promotes lifelong learning
- Development of high-demand degree programs and dual enrollment opportunities
- Academic, guidance, and career counseling and financial services to students
- Assessment that promotes high academic standards

The current mission statement was adopted in 2002 and has guided the operations of the institution since. Student-centeredness and service to all current and future stakeholders was considered during the revision of the mission in 2002.

The mission statement reads:

*Western Dakota Tech is a public institution of higher learning where students acquire the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for successful employment.*

A January 2007 survey of students, advisory committee members, and institutional employees provides evidence the mission statement is understood. In that survey,

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⁴ Mission, Vision, Objectives.
⁵ Strategic Plan.
⁶ Criterion One Survey to Institutional Employees, Ques. No. 3, October 2006.
⁷ Graduate Placement Reports, 2005 and 2006.
a majority reported that the mission statement is clear and cannot be interpreted in different ways\(^8\).

A philosophy statement reflects the basic operation of WDT. The institution maintains an open enrollment policy to provide education opportunities to all. The philosophy reads:

*We believe that all individuals should be afforded an educational opportunity to develop and maximize their technical abilities through opportunities offered by Western Dakota Tech.*

The vision, values, and goals were developed under the direction of the President when he joined WDT in 2003. These critical elements of the mission documents were approved in May 2005. The vision statement reads:

*It is the vision of Western Dakota Technical Institute to prepare our students for living, lifelong learning, working, and succeeding in the 21st century.*

The guiding principles, or values, that serve as the cornerstone of WDT’s operations include:

- Learning and Diversity
- Program Development
- Citizenship and Partnership
- Teaching
- Lifelong Learning
- Ethics and Efficiency

Student- and institution-centered objectives, or goals, also are stated in the mission documents. There are goals outlined for student learning, complemented by the Student Academic Assessment Core Abilities\(^9\). Objectives outlined in the mission documents include:

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\(^8\) Criterion One Surveys to Students, Institutional Employees, and Advisory committee Members, Ques. No. 2, January 2007.

\(^9\) Student Academic Assessment Core Abilities.
Students
- Demonstrated occupational skills
- Proficiency in academic skills

Institution
- Promote lifelong learning
- Maintain facilities, technology and highly trained individuals to provide educational opportunities for degree- and non-degree-seeking students
- Assure access to constituents who may be experiencing disadvantages of varying degrees
- Assist in securing employment opportunities

Institutional priorities are outlined in the institution’s Strategic Plan as “strategic priorities” and contain seven key priorities:

- Students – Increase learning opportunities for a diverse population of lifelong learners.
- Programs – Develop and improve programs that fulfill our mission and serve students and industry.
- Faculty and Staff – Maximize learning by attracting and retaining the most qualified, talented faculty and staff.
- Resources and Technology – Maximize opportunities for learning, working, and living within a technology-rich environment through the development of resources and sound fiscal management.
- Communications – Strive for excellence in organizational communication and meeting high standards in respectfulness, integrity, and ethics.
- Citizenship - Strengthen the institution and community through citizenship and community involvement.
- Partnerships – Strengthen the institution and community through collaboration.

The statements and documents together (mission statement, philosophy, vision, values, goals, objectives, and institutional priorities) clearly and broadly define the organization’s mission, as adopted by the institution’s governing board.

The development, analysis, and implementation of the institution’s activities to meet the mission, coupled with the revision of these critical documents, have proven to be invaluable processes that have enabled WDT to grow. The review of historical documents made evident the transformation WDT has undergone from a vocational institution to one that serves a broader group of learners who seek a diverse selection of quality educational opportunities.

The institution’s mission statement has been revised to meet the changing needs of the constituencies and embrace the highest standards. The first mission, developed in 1981, has undergone five revisions.

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10 Strategic Plan.
The latest revision of the mission statement occurred in 2002 in conjunction with Self-Study activities.

The philosophy has remained consistent for more than a decade.

The development of the vision, values, and goals began in 2003 under the direction of the new President and were approved in 2005. These significant documents provided a new direction for WDT. During the 2004-05 academic year, the academic programs were organized into academic units and coordinators were selected to lead the units through a planning effort that included the following:

- Program guiding principles
- Overall goals for the next three years
- Objectives to reach those goals
- Resources needed

During the summer of 2005, the academic unit planning results were reviewed, and the institutional vision statement and guiding principles were developed and put in place. A fall 2005 in-service was held to share these new documents. The Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS) Board of Education approved them later that academic year. The formation of an Institutional Planning Committee resulted from this new planning process, and student- and institution-objectives were discussed and developed. All of these efforts resulted in the development of the vision, values, and goals as part of the mission documents.

Similarly, the strategic planning process has been transformed. A strategic planning committee, whose membership changed nearly every academic year, attempted to set annual reviews and keep the document current. However, the change in leadership between 2000 and 2003 made it difficult to develop a comprehensive and realistic plan. In 2003, with key staff and faculty in place, strategic planning became a high priority, and development of a new strategic planning process was realized. The plan, in its current format, was finalized in 2007.

The Institutional Planning Committee is charged with reviewing and proposing updates to the mission documents. This Committee meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from departments and employee groups in order to gather input from various constituencies within the institution.

The development of a three-year Strategic Plan has identified and addressed the institution’s challenges. Subsequent reviews will show if the strategies and tactics were successful in meeting those challenges.

The format of the Strategic Plan includes priorities, followed by strategies and tactics. Actions, timelines, areas of responsibility, and financial resources required also are specified. Checkpoints are reviewed by key personnel assigned, and a final review at the conclusion will be undertaken by the Institutional Planning
Committee. The committee will evaluate the results and determine new opportunities and challenges to address in order to keep the plan current.

EVALUATION

Availability of mission documents reinforce WDT’s purpose

The mission documents are available to internal and external constituencies through electronic and hardcopy publications.

The mission statement is published through the following methods:
- Large posters in the hallways of the Mickelson and Rushmore Buildings
- Large posters in several classrooms
- Program catalog produced annually in hard copy and online
- Student handbook produced online
- All internal and external financial aid publications and correspondence
- Program assessment books
- WDT letterhead

The philosophy statement is published through the following methods:
- Program catalog produced annually in hard copy and online
- Student handbook produced online

The vision, values, and objectives are published through the following methods:
- The staff links on WDT’s website at www.wdt.edu
- The initial pages of the strategic plan

The institutional priorities are published through the following methods:
- The staff links on WDT’s website at www.wdt.edu
- The strategic plan

The mission statement is the most widely publicized portion of the mission documents. This is evident from response received from constituents who were
asked if they have personally read the institution’s mission statement. Seventy-one (71) percent of WDT’s employees responded favorably. Thirty-five (35) percent of advisory committee members and 25 percent of students also responded favorably.

In early 2007, the mission statement was included on the institution’s official letterhead to reach all external constituencies. Adding the mission statement to recruitment and marketing documents, admissions application, Tech Times newsletter, and program brochures would be a natural fit and would reach prospective and enrolled students. Further expanding the use of the mission statement on business cards, student ID cards, program syllabi, graduate placement reports, and professional signs or plaques in entranceways may increase the awareness of the institution’s mission.

In an October 2006 survey to WDT employees, 86 percent of the institution’s employees reported that they knew the mission statement. In a follow-up survey in January 2007, 71 percent could list a value, and 48 percent knew where to find the mission documents that contain the vision and values. This compares to a January 2007 survey to WDT students that indicated 7 percent of students could list a WDT value, and 26 percent knew where to find the mission documents that contain the vision and values. These results indicate that, although the institution is doing a good job educating employees about the mission documents, more work must be done to educate enrolled students.

The challenge of educating internal and external constituencies about the vision, values, goals, and organizational priorities is much more difficult, given the fact that these portions of the mission documents are much more detailed than a one-sentence mission statement.

It is clear WDT has important planning documents in place and makes them available to the public. In addition, the institution is responsive to feedback regarding the development, review, and dissemination of these planning documents so that a clear understanding of the mission can be realized.

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11 Criterion One Surveys to Students, Ques. No. 3; Institutional Employees, Ques. No. 7; and Advisory committee Members, Ques. No. 3, January 2007.
12 Criterion One Survey to Institutional Employees, Ques. No. 1, October 2006.
13 Criterion One Survey to Institutional Employees, Ques. Nos. 8 and 9, January 2007.
14 Criterion One Survey to Students, Ques. No. 5, January 2007.
Core Component 1B
WDT recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

Mission documents recognize and address diversity
WDT has identified three primary categories of diversity: Students, Faculty and Staff, and Employers. Programming that addresses the distinct needs of these categories demonstrates that WDT recognizes and plans for the diversity needs of its constituencies. It is evident that a positive impact is being made, and the mission documents provide a vehicle for further evaluation and prioritization of the institution’s resources to recognize and address diversity.

One characteristic that contributes to the quality of education at WDT is the diversity of the student population. Diverse characteristics include students of varying ethnicity, ages, experiences, and, due to the location and service area of the institution, students residing in rural areas. Programming for these students changes based on their needs and institutional resources.

Western Dakota Tech Enrollment as Compared to Regional Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WDT</th>
<th>Rapid City</th>
<th>Pennington County</th>
<th>South Dakota</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>no data avail.</td>
<td>no data avail.</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WDT currently serves an average of 400 students of nontraditional age (defined as over 22 years), more than 150 students of ethnic minority, 125 single parents, and 71 students enrolled in nontraditional programs for their gender\textsuperscript{16}.

The student body is highly representative of city, county, and state population demographics. This is important, as it is a testament to the success of the institution’s programming to reach the diverse population of students that resides within the region WDT serves. It is notable that WDT enrolls a greater percentage of minority and female students than any other South Dakota technical institute.

Western Dakota Tech Demographics in Comparison to Other Technical Institutes in South Dakota\textsuperscript{17}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Western Dakota Tech</th>
<th>Mitchell Tech</th>
<th>Lake Area Tech</th>
<th>Southeast Tech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The diversity of the student body includes three subcategories: nontraditional, ethnicity, and rural students.

The diverse characteristics of WDT students are representative of the increasing nontraditional enrollment found in the nation’s higher education system. Nontraditional students at WDT are defined by age (over 22 years), enrollment in nontraditional programs for their gender (for example, a female enrolled in the Welding program or a male enrolled in the Practical Nursing program), and single parents. Nontraditional students number approximately 600.

Western Dakota Tech is in close proximity to several Native American reservations in western South Dakota, and WDT actively recruits from these locations. Most students from these areas experience severe financial constraints and are first-generation college students. Native American students represent 11 percent (or approximately 150 students) of the student body.

\textsuperscript{16} WDT Faculty Handbook, 2005.
\textsuperscript{17} IPEDS, 2006.
Due to the location of WDT and the programming offered, WDT serves an increasing number of rural students through online courses. Rural and distance learning students represented approximately 65 students, or nearly 5 percent of the student body in 2007-08.

The diversity of WDT’s faculty and staff has three primary characteristics: gender representation, experience, and education. WDT is an equal-opportunity employer (EOE) and does not discriminate in its hiring practices.

The employees and administrative team of WDT are equally represented by men and women. Although WDT is an EOE, current demographics of the faculty and staff at WDT include few individuals of ethnic minority, with most employed in clerical or maintenance positions. The institution recognizes the importance of ethnic diversity at all levels and the demographics of the region it serves, so efforts have been made to increase the ethnic diversity among faculty and staff by advertising positions in newspapers throughout the state, including the Lakota Times newspaper that circulates on South Dakota’s reservations.

The level of experience and education employees bring to WDT is a major strength of the institution. WDT employs both full-time and adjunct faculty who bring life and previous work experiences to their classrooms. Some join WDT with certifications required to remain up-to-date in their field. For example, the full-time Fire Science Instructor is the former Fire Inspector for the State of South Dakota. Similarly, staff members bring relevant previous employment experience. For example, the WDT Counselor brings a wealth of life experience from his previous employment as both a youth and adult counselor through his work with Job Corps and as a chaplain with the United States Air Force.

Employees join WDT with the required educational levels in their field of instruction or employment, and some have earned higher degrees during their employment at WDT. For example, a Computer Networking Instructor earned her doctorate degree while instructing full-time, the Assistant to the President for Institutional Advancement is earning his doctorate degree while working full-time, and a Financial Aid Assistant earned her bachelor’s degree while working full-time.

With the diversity of learners and skills required to meet the demands of today’s workforce, WDT recognizes the various needs of employers of WDT graduates. Because WDT offers more than 22 programs, the range of the employers hiring WDT graduates is significant. For example, technical skills required for welding, carpentry, transportation technology, and computer-aided drafting vary significantly.

Adding to the diversity of WDT employers is the customized training that the institution’s Corporate Education Center (Corporate Ed) provides for business and
industry throughout the region. Annually, Corporate Ed provides training for approximately 3,000 students who enroll in non-credit courses. Because Corporate Ed creates customized training for companies, provides continuing education, certification courses, and online classes, the diversity of classes and programming required to meet the needs of employers is significant. For example, courses include a six-week Professional Truck Driving Program, a Dental Assistant Apprenticeship Training, and EMT (Basic and Intermediate) Training Programs. Certification courses in forklift operator, electrician, dental radiography, and online courses in web design, computer networking, and construction technology name only a handful of opportunities provided by the Corporate Education Center.

Diversity programming is responsive to the needs of constituents, and it is future-oriented. The success of WDT’s operations is witnessed through programming that maximizes limited resources, yet accurately reaches the targeted audiences.

WDT strives to recruit individuals from assorted backgrounds and employs a full-time recruiter who identifies and recruits nontraditional students. Programs to increase the awareness of educational opportunities at WDT for adult students include:

- Information nights that are hosted on campus
- Marketing evening and online courses
- Granting credit for experiences to students with documented certifications and licensures
- Offering credit-by-exam options

Recruiting opportunities aimed at Native American students are realized at events such as the Lakota Nation Invitational Basketball Tournament held in Rapid City, high school planning days, and WDT’s Tech Days. These events develop relationships with students located in Native American communities, and WDT works closely with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal agencies to secure funding for Native American students. Transfer credit is routinely granted to transfer students from tribal and other colleges. WDT recognizes the ethnic diversity of its student population by proudly displaying flags from each state and each Native American tribe from which a student has been enrolled.

Faculty and staff are well-versed in WDT’s commitment to diversity through such publications as:

- The Faculty Handbook
- The Student Handbook
- The Catalog
- Program Improvement Plans

WDT is also responsive to the sensitive needs of its diverse population. When the 2005 SSI Survey identified a challenge regarding the institution’s treatment of

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20 WDT Catalog.
students\textsuperscript{21}, an in-service training was held on the topic of student diversity and special populations. Staff development funds have been earmarked for attendance at conferences, meetings, and trainings that address diversity issues.

Services that assist the varied needs of the WDT student body include:

- A Child Development Center that provides childcare to children of students
- An Academic Skills Center that offers free tutoring services to all WDT students. Annually, nearly 40 students use tutoring services
- An Academic Services Coordinator who ensures campus accessibility and provides accommodations for students with documented disabilities
- Counseling and crisis intervention services and community referrals
- A one-credit Orientation course required of all students assists recent high school graduates’ transition to the college setting and helps older students adjust to the academic environment
- Diversity-related periodicals are available in the WDT library such as The Single Parent, Journal of Cultural Diversity, American Indian Quarterly, Asia Monitor, Ethno History, Indian Country Today, and Cultural Studies
- A Special Services Coordinator provides resources and referrals to first-generation college students, single parents, displaced homemakers, minority students, and nontraditional students. Services include:
  - resource and referral information
  - textbook assistance
  - life skills workshops
  - mentoring program
  - emotional support
- Emergency Funding Program to provide limited financial assistance for educational costs, childcare, transportation, certification or testing fees, and general daily emergencies
- Educational financial assistance is available for students who qualify through the U.S. Department of Education’s Title IV programs--federal grants, student and parent loans, and work-study programs
- Funding through agencies and government programs such as Bureau of Indian Affairs, Workforce Investment Act, Vocational Rehabilitation, Veterans Administration, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program, and GI Bill/National Guard
- A scholarship fund that recognizes academic performance, financial need, and critical workforce shortage programs for prospective and current students

Various student organizations\textsuperscript{22} focus on team building and promote communication among diverse student populations. Student organizations at WDT are prohibited

\textsuperscript{21} SSI, Ques. No. 16, 23, 29, and 37, 2005 and 2006.
from discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, or age. Special student organizations are available to provide support to students with special needs, such as:

- **Eagle Feather Society** - This organization sponsors cultural awareness and appreciation through special activities, projects, and employment/scholarship information. The Society also coordinates an Eagle Feather Ceremony during graduation each year.
- **Women in Nontraditional Employment Roles** – This organization is devoted to the support, role modeling, and mentoring of female students enrolled in nontraditional programs for their gender.
- **Nontraditional Student Organization** – The goal is to build a community among nontraditional students at WDT.
- **Student Ambassadors** – Students are selected and trained to assist with the institution’s admissions activities, providing tours, and assisting with special events for prospective students.
- **Rodeo Club** – College rodeo students can join this organization which is recognized by the National Inter-collegiate Rodeo Association, Great Plains Region.
- **Student Government Association** – Representatives from the WDT student body are elected to serve on this advisory committee that works with students, faculty, and administration. The Association allocates funding to the various institutional student clubs annually and sponsors social activities.
- **Clubs for students enrolled in specific programs** – There are 11 interest clubs that are available to students studying in specific program areas.

An awareness of cultural diversity is emphasized throughout the curriculum at Western Dakota Tech. Students learn about diversity and cultural differences within their required general education courses, which focus on employer-required skills and core abilities needed to be true knowledge workers in a global society. The philosophy of the General Education department reads:

> To help students develop the knowledge and skills that will contribute to their intellectual, personal, and professional growth and place them on a path to lifelong learning.

Courses such as Human Relations in the Workplace, Psychology, and Sociology provide students with the opportunity to obtain and hone these skills. The Human Relations course requires a community service component, as does the Applied Leadership and Service class offered through the Student Government Association. The General Education department has submitted a proposal to add courses in Native American Studies and Global Citizenship.

Students also are exposed to multiculturalism in many of their program courses. For example, Medical Transcription students practice transcribing documents dictated by doctors with various accents. Programs offering internships or clinical

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22 WDT Student Handbook – Student Clubs and Organizations, Section 12, 2006-07.
rotations enable students to work with various cultural groups within the community.

WDT’s Corporate Education Center provides short-term, non-credit training opportunities to accommodate the training needs of adult learners. Courses are offered based upon the needs of nontraditional students (on-site or off-site, online, evenings, one-day courses). Continuing education courses leading to occupational certifications and licensure also are available.

WDT participates in the Tech Prep Program for regional high school students to earn college credit for courses completed in high school. Tech Prep articulation agreements with alternative schools, private schools, adult basic education programs, and special needs programs have been developed. High school teachers can earn college credit through Tech Prep activities that focus on diverse student populations, career education, integrative curriculum, applied academics and methodology, and work-based learning experiences.

Instructors provide a myriad of diverse learning experiences in each class and use a variety of instructional techniques to assist students with different learning styles. Program Improvement Plans include an evaluation component for curriculum and instructional materials that identify gender bias and sex-role stereotyping and diversity. Remedial courses are available to assist students who arrive at WDT academically under-prepared. Evening, online, and hybrid courses provide flexibility to students who have the option of attending WDT full-time or part-time.

Curriculum programming for distance education students was enhanced in 2006 when WDT was approved by the Higher Learning Commission to provide online degree programs. The development of the WDT Southern Hills Learning Center through the Hot Springs School District located south of Rapid City in 2004 also enhanced programming for rural students. This center has held general education classes and non-credit courses through the Corporate Education Center.

WDT faculty, staff, and students are actively involved in the community, whether they are engaged in citizenship activities, program-related internships, or hands-on program-related clinicals. These activities speak to the diversity of WDT’s programs and the lengths WDT will go to meet student and community needs. Examples:

- Open house and events promoting Disabilities Awareness Month—Disability/Human Services program held a movie screening and displayed art work featuring works by local individuals with disabilities.
- Fundraising events for those in need—Fire Science program raised money for a young girl with leukemia. In addition, food and clothing drives for the less fortunate have been organized by various organizations.
- Safety events—Law Enforcement students have been involved in Project ChildSafe, raising awareness of gun safety and distributing gunlocks throughout the community. In addition, Law Enforcement students also provided a presentation on drunk driving prevention.
Program internships/clinical rotations—Seventeen WDT programs include hands-on, degree-related coursework in the community so students can provide services to diverse groups.

Community training—The Corporate Education Center provides training for the community, including computer-based, truck driving, and customized programming for businesses and organizations.

Marketing the WDT mission and services—The WDT Foundation, through the development of its Case for Support and resulting capital campaign, has been instrumental in spreading the word about WDT programs and services.

Events to commemorate American Indian Heritage Month—The Eagle Feather Society implements programming on campus that educates students and visitors regarding Native American heritage.

Habitat for Humanity Project—The Black Hills Homebuilders Student Chapter has worked with Habitat for Humanity to build a home for a family in need. They will begin work on a local women’s shelter in the near future.

Blood drives—Annual blood drives have been organized for the past four years.

Angel Tree & Gift Tree—The Special Services Coordinator, Student Government Association, and the WDT Bookstore organize toy drives for children of WDT students who need help during the Christmas holiday.

Food drives—Student organizations have organized food drives to provide meals for WDT students and their families during the holidays.

Evaluation of WDT’s efforts to recognize and address diversity reveals the institution is responsive and constituencies are benefitting. For example, 83 percent of students and 79 percent of faculty and staff feel that WDT is doing a good job recognizing and supporting diversity and cultural differences on campus and in the community. Additionally, 92 percent of students indicated they have not experienced or witnessed any forms of bias or discrimination at WDT.

Despite WDT’s successful efforts to diversify its student population and provide support to its students, graduation rates of minority students continue to lag behind those of other students. For example, the 2001 and 2002 cohorts of students graduating in 2005 and 2006 reveal graduation rates of minorities (Native American and Hispanic) at 3 percent and 10 percent respectively.

Example of Assistance

Special Services connected a female Native American student with consistent, reliable transportation to campus. WDT had discovered the student had been pushing her infant in a stroller three miles each day to and from a bus stop to WDT’s daycare center.

After receiving assistance, the student graduated, is employed in her field, and is providing a better life for her family.

23 Criterion One Survey to Students, Ques. No. 9; Criterion One Survey to Institutional Employees, Ques. No. 14, January 2007.
24 Criterion One Survey to Students, Ques. No. 11, January 2007.
students through the programming undertaken by the Special Services and Academic Services coordinators.

In 2005 and 2006\textsuperscript{26} student survey, and in a 2006\textsuperscript{27} employee survey, respondents reported Western Dakota Tech makes students feel welcome on campus. In addition, on the same surveys, students reported favorably that WDT was welcoming. Most students felt WDT is committed to part-time, evening, older students, students with disabilities, and students from under-represented populations.

The results of the efforts and activities the Special Services Coordinator provides to WDT students is evident through the 113 and 57 nontraditional students assisted within the past three years\textsuperscript{28}. Scholarship funding for Native American students within the past three years has also increased\textsuperscript{29}. This important, immediate assistance addresses a portion of the needs of minority and nontraditional students so they can stay in school and realize their educational goals.

Special event programming such as the annual Angel Tree has provided 167 children of WDT students with gifts during the Christmas season. The gifts for these children from 74 student families are purchased through donations and fund-raising efforts and distributed through the Special Services Program.

The impact the Academic Services Coordinator has had on special populations includes employing 16 student tutors who have tutored approximately 120 students within the past three years. An annual budget of $6,000 to $7,000 is allocated to provide academic assistance to students.

A testament to the impact diversity programming has had on the academic success of students is seen in the 2005 and 2006 Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Surveys. Students reported that a strength of WDT is, “nearly all classes deal with practical

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{funding_assistance PROVIDED_to_Special_Populations.png}
\caption{Funding Assistance Provided to Special Populations}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{26} Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Surveys 2005 and 2006, Strengths – Ques. No. 36.
\textsuperscript{27} Noel Levitz Institutional Priorities Survey 2005, Strengths – Ques. No. 24.
\textsuperscript{28} Funding Expenditures through the Special Services Program, 2005-2006.
\textsuperscript{29} WDT Scholarship Committee Minutes & Annual Contribution Report.
experiences and applications\textsuperscript{30}.” Students also reported a higher satisfaction for WDT than most comparable institutions with the internships or practical experiences provided in their program.

A result of the admissions/recruiting programming for diversity has enabled WDT to serve a comparable percentage of Native American students as reside in the region the institution serves. The five-year enrollment trend of the Native American population at WDT has steadied between 8 and 11 percent\textsuperscript{31} while the Native American population in the region is approximately 10 percent. This enrollment trend demonstrates that WDT successfully reaches out and attracts this segment of the region’s population.

The U.S. Department of Education has designated WDT as a “Title III – Strengthening Institution eligible participant” based on factors such as the percentage of federal Pell grant recipients, which is more than 50 percent of the population that received Title IV funding\textsuperscript{32}. On average, 83 to 85 percent of WDT students receive some form of financial aid annually\textsuperscript{33}. Additional funding through the scholarship program has increased from $26,000 in 2001 to nearly $96,000 in 2007. Scholarships for Native American students have grown from $2,400 to $20,000 within the past eight years\textsuperscript{34}.

The results of diversity programming for faculty and staff have been limited generally to the development of institutional policies and procedures. However, annually, staff development funds have been made available to encourage new teaching and learning opportunities so faculty and staff remain up-to-date in their education and training. These funds are in addition to the funds allocated through various departments and offices. Faculty and staff apply for staff development funds, and the Staff Development Committee considers all requests. Since 2001, staff development funds have increased from $18,300 to nearly $61,000\textsuperscript{35}.

To further demonstrate WDT’s commitment to encouraging work-related experience and pursuing higher education, staff can submit tuition-related expenses of up to $800 per year to the Staff Development Committee for reimbursement. WDT employees are encouraged to earn higher degrees, and within the past three years, seven WDT employees have earned their bachelor’s, master’s, or doctorate degrees while working full-time at WDT. Tuition and fee discounts are also available to employees of WDT who enroll in WDT classes. From the 2005-06 academic year through the 2007-08 academic year, approximately 30 WDT employees have taken advantage of the tuition discount and enrolled in WDT classes.

In addition to the academic programming required for successful employment of students, the community services programming for diversity has given WDT a good

\textsuperscript{30} Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Surveys, Strengths, Ques. Nos. 64, 2005 and 2006.
\textsuperscript{31} IPEDS Reports, Part A, 2001-2006.
\textsuperscript{32} Title III Application for Eligibility.
\textsuperscript{34} WDT Scholarship Committee Minutes & Annual Contribution Report.
\textsuperscript{35} Annual Staff Development Funds Allocations.
reputation in the community\textsuperscript{36}. In a 2007 survey of program advisory committee members, 65 percent responded that WDT recognizes and supports diversity\textsuperscript{37}.

WDT’s commitment to developing long-term programming to meet the needs of its varied populations is set through many channels, beginning first with the mission documents. This commitment is also realized throughout WDT as reflected in the institution’s policies and procedures and throughout the consumer information publications and efforts.

The institution supports its diverse student population, employees, and employers. Recognizing and understanding the impact diversity has on WDT is captured in the mission documents.

The Strategic Plan includes specific objectives addressing diversity within the student population:

- Expanding classes to nights and weekends to appeal to a broader audience
- Increasing online offerings
- Creating satellite learning centers throughout the region to better serve the population away from Rapid City
- Enhancing daycare through affordable fees and increased capacity
- Expanding and strengthening the Academic Skills Center, Special Services program, and Counseling Services to meet the changing needs of the growing student population
- Developing remediation plans to improve retention of under-prepared students
- Growing scholarship opportunities
- Increasing the number of students served by WDT through achieving demographic parity with national trends for two-year institutions

\textsuperscript{36} Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Surveys, Strengths, Ques. Nos. 45, 2005 and 2006.

\textsuperscript{37} Criterion One Survey to Advisory committee, Ques. No. 7, January 2007.
Institutional Policies and Procedures Address Diversity

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure equity of treatment and nondiscrimination for all at WDT. The open-admission policy allows enrollment of any student who is at least 16 years of age and has obtained a high school diploma or equivalent or has a demonstrated ability to benefit. The institution publicizes its Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity policy that prohibits discrimination in admission or participation in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, creed, religion, family or medical status, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, or an arrest or conviction record. The Financial Aid Office follows federal regulations regarding issues of non-discrimination and equity.

WDT is also an equal opportunity employer and has a strict policy against discrimination in the hiring process. The institution also follows the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Academic Services Center has a policy regarding accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Publications Recognize Diversity

The WDT catalog contains a comprehensive view of the institution’s mission, values, vision, and services that address the diversity of prospective and current stakeholders and their needs. In addition, the catalog outlines the institution’s commitment to assuring equal access and support to individuals who are disabled, economically or academically disadvantaged, in nontraditional programs of study, and of limited English proficiency. The Student Handbook details the institution’s mission and philosophy, non-discrimination statement, as well as outlining school policies and procedures and providing information on services available to students. The institution’s commitment to diversity is evident throughout these documents.

WDT’s application for admission contains a non-discrimination statement and information on financial aid and scholarships. The application does not request information regarding the demographic profile of the student. That information is gathered after the student’s admittance into the institution.

The WDT website, Viewbook, Catalog, and Graduate Placement Report all include photos of older students, ethnic minority students, and students in gender underrepresented programs. Procedures regarding accommodations for students with documented disabilities are included in every course syllabus, including contact information for the Disability Services Coordinator.

The Student Code of Conduct is distributed annually through the WDT Student Handbook. The Code outlines reasonable standards for academic and personal conduct that allows others to learn, study, work, and relax in a safe and orderly environment. In addition to the conduct expected of students, a procedural due process is outlined to ensure timely resolution to allegations of violations of the code. Both formal and informal resolutions are outlined, and a Conduct Board is available to resolve allegations.

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The Code of Conduct reinforces WDT’s mission of “acquiring the behaviors necessary for successful employment.”

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**Excerpts of the Student Code of Conduct that Reinforce WDT’s Mission**

“...acquiring the behaviors necessary for successful employment”

- Violations of the Code of Conduct include:

  - Obstruction or disruption of the normal operation or activities of the school.

  - Physical or verbal abuse or detention of any person or persons on school property or at school activities.

  - Endangerment of the health and safety of oneself or others, or infringement upon the rights of others.

  - Dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the Institute.
Core Component 1C
Understanding and support of the mission pervade WDT.

WDT’s mission is clear, understood, and supported
The elements outlined in Core Component 1A detail the degrees to which WDT makes the mission documents available to internal and external constituencies. To assist in assessing the effectiveness of these efforts, WDT used surveys in January 2007 to reveal how much the various constituencies understand the mission and the degree to which the WDT community felt the mission has been carried out and supported. In addition, Student Satisfaction Surveys (SSI) conducted through Noel-Levitz in 2005 and 2006 were used to determine the depth of which students knew WDT’s reason for existence. The SSI also measured WDT’s strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, the Noel Levitz Institutional Priorities Survey (IPS) completed by faculty and staff in 2006 measured the degree to which WDT employees understood the mission and how employees felt WDT was meeting its mission.

There are three key elements to the institution’s mission that make the operations and expectations of WDT clear.

The critical need to earn and maintain accreditation is understood and supported by WDT’s constituencies. In fact, to further demonstrate the validity of WDT’s programming and services, there are seven programs that have earned accreditation and/or certification approval within their respective professional agencies. In addition, WDT faculty and staff hold professional memberships in more than 90 organizations.

39 WDT Catalog, page 8, 2007-08.
40 WDT Catalog, page 9, 2007-08.
Participation in the U.S. Department of Education’s Title IV programs, which include the federal financial aid program, requires that the institution receive and maintain accreditation and submit Title IV Participation Agreements and an annual Fiscal Operations Report. In addition, the institution undergoes annual audits. Audit results have revealed no major findings for WDT’s Title IV programs. Successful compliance through the accrediting and regulatory requirements, combined with additional program accreditations and certifications, and professional membership activities, results in the institution operating with the highest of standards.

WDT prepares students for the workforce. The institution’s environment, whether in or outside the classroom, demonstrate the institution’s commitment to this preparation. For example, WDT’s core values outlined in the assessment activities are posted in banners throughout the hallways of the first and second floors of the Mickelson Building. These core values are life skills, analytical skills, communication skills, technology skills, teamwork techniques, social values, and employability.

In a January 2007 survey of advisory committee members, who represent industry and provide programming ideas and employment trends to WDT, 88 percent responded that students receive the skills necessary to be successful. In the same survey to students, 90 percent responded favorably, and 89 percent of WDT employees also responded favorably. The Noel Levitz surveys to both students and WDT staff revealed that students are able to experience intellectual growth at WDT and academic advisors are knowledgeable about program requirements.

Each program has outlined three-year goals, their mission statement, and assessment standards they must meet. In addition, each program is required to complete a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The programs that complete their PIP are selected every three years by the South Dakota Office of Career and Technical Education.

To ensure that WDT is keeping up with technological advancements, it implemented a wireless environment in 2004, with six programs requiring students to have...
laptop computers with the latest software for their area of study. WDT’s Associate of Applied Science degree in Agriculture Resources Technology program can be completed online46.

The short-term, non-credit courses designed for the working adult are developed and delivered through WDT’s Corporate Education Center. The Corporate Education Center’s open enrollment and customized courses provide training for organizations and businesses that need to enhance or refresh skills for their employees. Adding to the institution’s credit- and non-credit programming is the Tech Prep program. This program brings direct savings and benefits to high school students and educators through articulation agreements and professional benefits.

WDT faculty understand the demands and needs of employers. This is evident through the credentials, educational levels, and experiences of the 58 full-time and adjunct faculty. A credential committee tracks each faculty member’s credentials and updates their educational files accordingly. Training opportunities through the Staff Development Committee is available to assist educators with the challenges of preparing students for the workforce. Currently, 50 faculty have earned at least an Associate’s Degree.

In addition to students believing they are prepared for the workforce, as 90 percent reported in 200747, faculty and staff believe that graduates are prepared for their careers, as reported in 200648. This is important because all WDT employees are able to feel a sense of accomplishment in carrying out WDT’s mission.

To ensure students are prepared, each academic program relies on an advisory committee with representatives from business and industry. These committee members are the most direct and up-to-date sources for current trends in industry. This partnership ensures the validity of the program competencies in technology. In addition, 17 WDT programs have a practicum, internship, or clinical rotation that is required or offered as an elective.

WDT boasts a degree-related placement rate that averages above 80 percent annually and nearly 100 percent overall49. This consistent placement rate

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46 HLC Ag Online Approval Report.
48 Noel Levitz SSI, Ques. No. 56, 2006.
demonstrates that graduates are experiencing gainful, successful employment upon graduation.

The Career Services Coordinator provides employment assistance during a student’s enrollment and after graduation. Students participate in an annual career fair on campus and in the Black Hills Regional Job Fair. In addition, resume writing and interview skills are provided in a two-credit Career Communications class required in most programs.

Students report they are satisfied with their educational experiences at WDT. When asked in a 2006 survey, students responded favorably to the statement, “my degree/diploma will help me get a good job” and “WDT graduates are ready for a career.” It is evident through the placement statistics and through survey results that WDT is preparing students to enter the workforce and be successful.

**Mission Drives Strategic Decisions, Priorities, and Goal Planning**

WDT is governed by the Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS) Board of Education. To ensure the board has a basis for understanding the decision-making process at WDT and to engage in productive discussion for the approval of strategic decisions, WDT has implemented the following:

- The RCAS Board has quarterly board meetings held at WDT, which are dedicated solely to WDT issues.
- A WDT Board Committee has been established, consisting of the WDT President and two RCAS Board members.
- WDT has a representative on the Committee of Facilities and Facilities Planning under the direction of the RCAS Board.
- WDT has a representative on the Finance Committee under the direction of the RCAS Board.

**Institutional Strategic Decisions and Goal Planning**

During the past four years, WDT has worked hard to develop a more streamlined strategic and goal planning process. The challenge to making this process a priority and successful has been communication at all levels of the institution. As a result, the institution has made a significant commitment at the administrative level to

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50 Noel Levitz SSI, Ques. Nos. 73 and 74, 2006.
ensure all employee areas are represented on committees. Ensuring open lines of communication also has been a priority.

WDT began progressing steadily with its planning process with the development of the Institutional Planning Committee in 2005. This idea exchange and discussion process provided the energy needed to progress the institution through the planning phases because it provided the collective input of all constituencies. The direction for strategic planning was given by the WDT President. However, information gathering for institutional needs have been sought from all levels. A strategic and goal planning process that is bottom up has been implemented in order to capitalize on many of the strengths of WDT and to address the challenges that lie ahead. The following has been implemented to ensure decisions remain mission-driven and communicated:

- Cabinet has set meeting times and was restructured in 2005 to include representation from many areas of the institution.
- Academic Unit Coordinators were established in 2003 to represent the main academic program areas.
- The Institutional Planning Committee was established in 2005 with membership representing departments and staff groups.
- WDT faculty and staff are given the opportunity to participate on the many in-house committees.
- Minutes of each Cabinet meeting are emailed to all faculty and staff.
- Monthly Front Office Tip Sheets are emailed from the President’s Office to inform faculty and staff of current events.
- The biweekly Tech Times Newsletter is distributed in hard copy to all students and emailed to staff.
- Monthly All WDT staff meetings are held.

As WDT works toward communicating the decision-making and planning processes, it is evident that this continues to be a challenge within the institution. The 2006 Institutional Priorities Survey (IPS) to staff revealed that faculty and staff do not feel they play an important role in the strategic planning process. Likewise, another challenge was identified when faculty and staff reported they did not play a role in important campus decisions. This challenge was also identified in the January 2007 Criterion One Survey to WDT Employees when only 50 percent

51 IPS, Ques. No. 58, 2006.
52 IPS, Ques. No. 52, 2006.
responded they felt they are given the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process at WDT.\textsuperscript{53} It is evident that the planning and realignment processes, which began in 2003 and continued in 2005, have resulted in more information being gathering to make strategic decisions. Institution-wide communication continues to be a challenge. There is little doubt that significant progress has been made, and that the institution understands that there is more work to be done.

In 2003, WDT realigned academic programs into five academic units. A sixth was added in 2007. Each academic unit has an Academic Unit Coordinator (AUC) and a Lead Instructor for each program. In 2004, written responsibilities\textsuperscript{54} of the AUCs and Lead Instructors were established, and an application process for the AUC positions was created. The purpose of the realignment was to provide better communication between administration and faculty while ensuring each department was working toward a common goal - meeting the mission. The AUCs are members of the WDT Cabinet.

The establishment of the Institutional Planning Committee in 2005 ensures that WDT is focused on meeting the mission and plans for long-term and strategic goals. It also recommends policy and institutional goals to the Cabinet. Because of the significance of its institution-wide responsibilities, the committee is represented by all departments and staff groups.

Annual budgets are required from each department. Annually, the Associate Vice President for Finance and Operations requests each department complete a Budget Request Form. The form is submitted during the first quarter of each calendar year.

In 2007, the budgeting process included a hearing with the WDT Vice President to discuss the institution’s budget priorities and the impact upon department budgets. The meeting also provided an opportunity for department budget developers to

\textsuperscript{53} Criterion One Survey to WDT Employees, Ques. No. 6, 2007.
\textsuperscript{54} AUC and Lead Instructor Position Descriptions.
identify their needs and discuss department priorities. Upon completion, the final budget is submitted to the RCAS Board prior to the end of the fiscal year.

With the development of the institution’s strategic plan, which includes a financial resources component for each strategy, budgeting to meet strategic priorities is beginning to be realized.

Due to long-term budget realities, legislation was introduced during the 2007 and 2008 South Dakota Legislative Sessions for consideration regarding the institution’s funding formula, funding for new programming, and funding for buildings and maintenance.

The 2007 Legislature approved a Summer Study Session to research and provide recommendations on the institution’s funding formula. The recommendations have been introduced as legislation for consideration by the 2008 South Dakota Legislature.

**Consistency in Articulating the WDT Mission is Evident**

A challenge resulting from the 2006 IPS revealed that the mission and vision of WDT were not clearly understood by faculty and staff. However, a follow-up survey to WDT employees in October 2006 revealed that 82 percent of the employees responded that the WDT mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments. That same survey also revealed that only 16 percent of WDT employees do not believe that support and understanding of WDT’s mission pervades our institution.

There has been much work to increase the effectiveness of the communication efforts of WDT administration and the various departments. However, it is evident that there is much more work that must be undertaken. The WDT Strategic Plan includes a priority to “maintain high standards of integrity and ethics in internal communications” to ensure that faculty and staff are informed of key information.

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55 Legislative Summer Study report.
56 IPS, Ques. No. 57, 2006.
58 Criterion One Survey, Ques. No. 5, October 2007.
59 WDT Strategic Plan Strategic Priority—Communications.
WDT has implemented the following communication efforts to ensure the mission is articulated in a consistent manner:

- Each program meets with its advisory committee each semester with minutes recorded and kept on file.
- The WDT Foundation, through its capital campaign, provides opportunities to meet with individuals and local civic organizations to explain and garner support for the mission and the institution’s needs.
- The President publishes Tip Sheets that are emailed to all WDT employees.
- The Student Handbook is produced annually and posted on the WDT website.
- The Student Government Association, in coordination with the institution’s Counselor, publishes weekly announcements that are placed throughout campus.
- The Financial Aid Bulletin is produced annually and posted on the WDT website.
- Placement statistics are compiled annually and published on the institution’s website and in a booklet.
- Admissions and marketing publications are developed annually and distributed through many local and regional events and through campus and personal visits.
WDT’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.

Governance Structures Promote Effective Leadership
It is important to note the external governance structures for WDT are unique when compared to typical higher educational systems throughout the country. Although there is not an exchange of local funds to WDT, the institution is governed by the local K-12 school system. Due to the unique challenges higher educational institutions face, WDT has taken great steps to ensure that the internal governing structure is strong and responsive and that the external governance is a partner in identifying, understanding, and supporting WDT’s needs.

The organizational chart documents the internal structure that WDT has embraced to ensure the strategic placement of personnel and functions within the institution.

President—Serves as CEO, reports directly to the RCAS School Board, and maintains organizational ties to the South Dakota State Board of Education. The President chairs the Executive Cabinet. The President is hired by and reports to the school board.
Executive Cabinet—Oversees operating issues, acts on confidential and personnel matters, and reviews institution’s annual budget and policies. Membership includes President, Vice President, and the Associate Vice Presidents of Corporate Education and Finance & Operations.

Cabinet—Discusses operating issues, approves policies, and oversees and approves the vision, mission and planning processes. Membership includes Executive Cabinet, AUCs, Director of Marketing and Admissions, Assistant to the President for Institutional Advancement, and Deans of Academics and Student Services.

Academic Unit Coordinators (AUC)—Assist with academic program planning, including budgeting and identifying equipment and technology needs and serve as a liaison between academic programs within their unit and administration.

Institutional Planning Committee—Ensures WDT is meeting the mission, plans for long-term and strategic goals, recommends policy, and directs the 2008 self study. Membership includes representatives of all departments and staff groups within the institution.

WDT Standing Committees—WDT has multiple committees that provide recommendations for the daily operations of the institution. Members are appointed by the President, Vice President, or committee chairs. Governing Board members are invited to serve on many of these committees which include:

- Academic Council
- Academic Standards
- Campus Design
- Career Services
- Computer
- Credential
- Curriculum
- Financial Aid
- Professional Development
- Public Relations/Marketing
- Retention Task Force
- Safety
- Scholarship
- Staff Development
- Staff Recognition
- Student Learning/Effective Teaching
- Wellness

WDT personnel are employed upon review of required qualifications outlined in employment postings. In 2006, WDT restructured the organizational chart to include title changes of key administrative personnel. For example, the Director of WDT was re-titled President, the Assistant Directors were re-titled Vice Presidents
and Associate Vice Presidents, and many mid-level administrators were re-titled Directors, Deans, and Managers. These title and organizational changes coincide with today’s institutions of higher education.

Communication opportunities to administrative activities are realized through the distribution of the Cabinet Meeting minutes, President’s Front Office Tip Sheets, All-WDT Faculty and Staff Meetings, and through service on various committees. Effective communication continues to be an on-going challenge, as demonstrated in the January 2007 Survey to WDT Employees, which revealed less than half of institutional employees felt that the current channels of communication with administration were effective.60 However, WDT’s Strategic Plan has identified as a priority the need to address effective internal communication and has established goals to meet the priority61.

External Governance, Board Policies, Practices Embrace WDT Mission
WDT has a shared external governance structure consisting of the South Dakota State Board of Education and Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS) in accordance with SDCL 13-39-34 to 13-39-39.

The State Board of Education is authorized by the South Dakota State Legislature to govern the four technical institutions throughout the state. The South Dakota Governor appoints the board’s members who serve four-year terms. The State Board:

- Approves programs, courses, and services
- Sets tuition rates at technical institutes
- Establishes program standards and evaluates programs through the State Program Review Process
- Determines allocation of federal and state dollars
- Administers and supervises technical education in the state

The Rapid City Area School District 51-4 School Board provides oversight for institutional management, mission, and policy implementation. The board consists of seven members elected to four-year terms by constituents of the school district. The School Board:

- Selects and evaluates WDT’s president
- Works with the president to establish institutional goals
- Approves all policies
- Approves the annual budget
- Approves employee contracts
- Sets program fees

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60 Criterion One Survey to WDT Employees, Ques. No. 4, January 2007.
61 WDT Strategic Plan.
Nearly four years ago, the RCAS School Board responded to the unique needs of WDT by holding quarterly board meetings on the WDT campus. These on-campus meetings include regional ad hoc members, school board members, and a WDT Student Government Representative. Business exclusive to WDT is discussed and acted upon increasing the board’s understanding of operational issues, new initiatives, and challenges WDT has identified for future planning.

In addition to the quarterly meetings, a WDT Board Committee was developed to meet on a monthly basis. Membership includes the RCAS Board chair, one alternating RCAS Board member, and the Executive Cabinet. These meetings enable detailed discussions to fully integrate the governing board into WDT activities and efforts. The RCAS Board chair also serves as a full member of the WDT Foundation Board.

During the 2007 South Dakota Legislative Session, the governance structure of the four technical schools in the state was reconsidered. Legislation to remove the local school board from the governing function and place the technical institutes under a separate state-level technical board of education received statewide support. The legislation was narrowly defeated through a Governor’s veto, and governance of WDT remains with the RCAS School Board. Similar legislation has not been considered during the 2008 Legislative session.

Communication between WDT and the RCAS Board has greatly improved during the past five years. Board minutes are available to staff, and the President’s Front Office Tip Sheet includes activities and agenda items discussed.

**Academic Structures Promote Shared Responsibility and Integrity**
The most significant change to WDT that embraced shared responsibility WDT’s mission-driven operations was the development of the Academic Unit Coordinators (AUC). The coordinators act in the same manner as department chairs and promote communication, strategic planning, and goal setting for programs within their academic units. Addressing the communication challenges that have emerged from this structure is ongoing.

The institutional activities and services that support academic programming is integrated throughout WDT. Services include:

- Proposals for new and updated curriculum and programming through the Curriculum Committee
- Class registration and graduation requirement audits performed by the Dean of Student Services and Assistant to the Registrar
- Academic Standards and Financial Aid Committees that uphold academic integrity and continued eligibility for academic success and financial assistance.
- Academic, Counseling, and Special Services to assist with tutoring, emotional support, and locating financial resources
• Welcome Days and Orientation curriculum to educate students about the academic, social, and institutional processes required to be successful

The services provided to students are a major strength of WDT. Students reported on the SSI surveys that:

• Financial Aid Counselors are helpful.
• The people who help with registration are helpful.
• Drop/add policies are reasonable.

Core Component 1E
WDT upholds and protects its integrity.

WDT operates with integrity daily with its internal and external constituencies as demonstrated by following its institution-approved policies and procedures and state and federal regulations and laws. The governing, administrative, and committee structures promote accountability throughout the institution. As a result of WDT’s positive and future-oriented operations, the institution has increased its visibility in the community, among local and regional leaders, in state governing offices and departments, and in the South Dakota Legislature.

WDT Activities Align with the Mission
The seven priorities addressed in WDT’s mission documents through the Strategic Plan outline the major segments of the institution’s operations: Students, Programs, Faculty and Staff, Resources and Technology, Communications, Citizenship, and Partnerships.

Activities that address student needs are key to the enrollment, retention, graduation, and placement rates of students. Activities that support students include:

- Dual Enrollment and open admissions policies to encourage individuals to pursue educational opportunities
- Funding opportunities through the Federal Financial Aid program, which provides nearly 85 percent of WDT students with financial aid funds
- A Scholarship program that has increased nearly $75,000 since 2001 and recognizes academic achievement, financial need, and critical workforce shortage areas
- An Academic Services Coordinator who maintains an academic skills center to provide tutoring services and educational accommodations to disabled students
- A Special Services Coordinator who supports nontraditional, minority and single parent student needs
- A Counselor who provides counseling and emotional support
- A Retention Task Force to address and develop programming for retention
- Student Clubs and organizations in which WDT students can participate

WDT educational programs are guided by advisory committees, which meet each semester and are comprised of internal and external constituents. These committees review program curriculum to ensure program advancement and

Strengths of Student Programming*
- Admissions staff are knowledgeable.
- The personnel involved in registration are helpful.
- Financial aid counselors are helpful.
- My academic program advisor is approachable.

recommend new technologies. Assessment of academic programming is ongoing to ensure that students achieve course and program goals that align with the mission. Activities that support programs include:

- Academic Council and Curriculum Committee meetings that address changes, updates, and new programming
- Academic Standards Hearings that address satisfactory student academic achievement
- Student Learning/Effective Teaching Committee to address successes and challenges of various teaching methods
- Online courses and wireless laptop computer technology for program-specific needs
- Corporate Education Center to meet the needs of business and industry

Graduate placement rates reveal that students are receiving quality instruction that results in successful placement in degree-related employment. However, on-going assessment of programming is essential for WDT to compete in educating students for the changing demands of employers.

All WDT faculty and staff meetings are held monthly to facilitate communication regarding decisions, new developments, and general information sharing. The meetings are one important activity that has been ongoing for the past four years. Activities that support faculty and staff needs include:

- Opportunities for service on institution and external committees and professional development
- Credentials Committee, Staff Development and travel/professional development funding to promote training and development opportunities
- Staff Recognition Committee that documents years of service and administers the staff awards program
- Wellness Committee to promote healthy lifestyles

WDT invests in its employees through training, compensation studies and negotiation processes, staff committees, and recognition efforts. The majority of the institution’s operating revenue is utilized for salaries, and prioritizing financial resources is challenging. However, WDT strives to keep constituencies informed of the institution’s financial needs, budget constraints, and decisions relating to compensation and other employee investment programs.
Resources, facility, and technology challenges are discussed by the Institutional Planning Committee. Activities that support resources and technology include:

- A campus design committee that discusses and proposes campus-wide beautification and design projects
- A computer committee to discuss institution-wide information systems needs and assist in the prioritization, maintenance, and purchase of computer equipment
- The introduction of legislation to address long-term facilities maintenance funding

A challenge identified during the 2005 and 2006 SSI revealed that students did not feel that the equipment in the lab facilities is kept up to date. This was a similar finding on the 2006 IPS. Funding for new equipment needs is a concern for WDT. Legislation that addresses funding for new programs, buildings and maintenance, and equipment is being considered during the 2008 South Dakota Legislative Session.

On-going, effective communication methods are realized through many channels, including:

- RCAS Board and Cabinet meeting minutes are distributed campus-wide.
- The President’s Front Office Tip Sheet is developed approximately bi-weekly and distributed campus-wide.
- The Student Government Association develops weekly “What’s Happening” publications and distributes it in high-visibility areas.
- The Marketing Department publishes the biweekly “Tech Times” newsletter for campus-wide distribution.
- All faculty and staff meetings are open to all WDT employees.
- Standing committees and department/offices meet regularly and encourage members to share meeting discussions.

WDT recognizes that addressing effective communication is an on-going challenge, as revealed in 2007 when less than half of institutional employees felt that the current channels of communication with administration were effective. It is appropriate that the institution has identified this issue as a priority in its Strategic Plan.

Serving the community through service projects and committee assignments, WDT has realized the value of being a model civic partner through citizenship activities such as:

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63 SSI, Ques. No. 42, 2005 and 2006.
64 IPS, Ques. No. 29, 2006.
65 Criterion One Survey to WDT Employees, Ques. No. 4, January 2007.
- Fundraising and food drive events
- Safety events, including gun safety and drunk-driving prevention
- Events addressing awareness for designated months, including Disabilities Awareness Month and American Indian Heritage Month
- Habitat for Humanity project
- Blood drives
- Angel Tree & Gift Tree for the Christmas holiday
- The WDT Foundation engages in community presentations and speaking engagements to promote the services and programming available at WDT

Collaborative efforts are ongoing for WDT, and opportunities for engaging in partnerships have been realized through:

- The Dual Enrollment program
- Tech Prep
- Articulation agreements with 42 high schools and other institutions of higher education
- The WDT Southern Hills Learning Center
- The research partnership with the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology
- Black Hills State University classes held at WDT

There are many examples that document the mission-driven activities of WDT. The strategic planning process undertaken in the past three years identified the institution’s activities. Now, the details of the strategic plan will help ensure that future opportunities for mission-driven programming are responsive yet future-oriented, address the strategic priorities, and promote consistent programming.

**Governing Board Exercises and Reinforces Legal Responsibilities, Policies, and Procedures**

WDT is governed by the RCAS Board. The administration of RCAS provides personnel to address the human resources, business and payroll transactions, and state legal and regulatory functions for WDT. Annual audits are performed, and any findings and recommendations are filed in the President’s office.

The governing board meets monthly to discuss and act upon business relating to WDT, and meets at the WDT campus exclusively to discuss WDT agenda items. The board actively seeks input from the WDT President and other internal constituencies when considering WDT issues. The authority the board exercises enables the WDT President to administer the operation of WDT, and the board supports the institution’s endeavors by enacting policies and procedures that are conducive to an institution of higher education. This relationship has been cultivated within the past five years, and has been realized through the open communication and awareness efforts brought before the board through the leadership of the WDT President and his administration.
WDT’s internal governance ensures that state and federal regulations and laws are followed. For example:

- The IPEDS report is completed by the Associate Vice President for Finance and Operations, the Deans of Academics and Student Services, and the Manager of Financial Aid.
- Title IV regulations that permit WDT to participate in the Federal Financial Aid Programs are monitored and followed by the Manager of Financial Aid.
- The Perkins grant is monitored by the Associate Vice President for Finance and Operations.
- Career Placement Reports are compiled with the Career Services Coordinator.
- Consumer information requirements are met through the activities of the Marketing and Admissions Department.

The policies and procedures for WDT personnel are developed by both the RCAS School Board and WDT Cabinet. In addition, a faculty handbook, employee agreements for contract and classified staff, and union agreements exist among various employee groups. Development and approval of all policies is ongoing, and timelines for submission and approval are not standard. However, WDT is sensitive to the timeliness of research and addressing submitted proposals for consideration. In January 2007, 63 percent of WDT employees reported they felt they are treated fairly and consistently at WDT66.

Student policies and procedures are developed through WDT’s internal governance structures. Policies and procedures for students are outlined in the annual Student Handbook and Financial Aid Bulletin. Students attend a day-long Welcome Day session before they are enrolled and a one-credit Orientation course during their first semester. These sessions educate students on institution and academic policies. Course syllabi also contain student expectations and course-specific policies. The 2005 and 2006 SSI results revealed that students feel their academic advisor is concerned about their success as an individual67. In 2005 and 2006, however, students and faculty both reported that faculty are not fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students68. These results demonstrate that WDT is improving on its administration of student policies and procedures, but there is work to be done. Addressing this issue is a challenge that is included in WDT’s Strategic Plan.

**Operations are Open and Honest to Constituencies**

WDT strives to operate with integrity by dealing fairly with its constituencies. Although there are established policies and procedures that guide WDT operations, the values and ethics of WDT’s leadership, administrative structures, and employees serve as the cornerstone of the institution’s credibility.

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66 Criterion One Survey to WDT Employees, Ques. No. 15, January 2007.
68 SSI Surveys, Ques. No. 29; 2006 IPS, Ques. No 18, 2005 and 2006.
There are checks and balances that occur through the governance structures, as well as the strategic placement of personnel and departments. For example, WDT’s financial responsibilities are administered by the Vice President for Finance and Operations, with oversight provided by the RCAS Business Office. Additionally, employment offers are made through WDT personnel and interview committees, while contracts and employee benefits are administered through the RCAS Human Resources Office.

When asked if WDT presents itself to the public in an honest and accurate manner, 92 percent of advisory committee members and 74 percent of WDT employees responded favorably. Students reported that program requirements are clear and reasonable, which demonstrates that WDT’s consumer information is open and honest.

**Complaint and Grievance Processes Exist for Timely Action**

WDT has established reasonable standards for academic and personal conduct of students and faculty which allows others to learn, study, and work in a safe orderly environment. The student handbook contains a section on student accountability, which covers procedures for due process with resolution processes. Policies on tobacco, alcohol, and drugs are also included.

Complaints and grievances of WDT employees follow the Rapid City School District codes of AC*1 and AC*1-P. These district codes cover topics of discrimination, generalized harassment, sexual harassment, individually targeted harassment, criminal harassment, confidentiality, retaliation, in-service and prevention, reporting procedures, resolution procedures and the appeal process. Although there are processes in place to initiate the grievance and complaint processes, only about half of WDT employees reported appropriate WDT departments respond to complaints in a timely manner.

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69. Criterion One Survey to Advisory committee, Ques. No. 5; WDT Employees, Ques. No. 11, January 2007.
70. SSI Surveys, Ques. No. 66, 2005 and 2006.
71. Criterion One Survey to WDT Employees, Ques. No. 12, January 2007.
Summary
WDT’s strength is revealed in the development of the institution’s mission documents and strategic plan through the involvement of various constituencies. The institution has the requisite governing and administrative structures, policies and procedures, and documentation to support the mission-driven activities. There is widespread support and understanding of the mission that reveals WDT is responsive, future-oriented, and actively seeks input from its constituencies. It is also evident that WDT continues to be challenged with budget constraints, ongoing communication challenges, and thinning personnel and technological resources – all challenges that must be addressed to keep WDT mission-driven. There is no doubt WDT has identified its constituencies as students, employees, and the community it serves. These are the stakeholders as WDT charts and plans for its future.

Strengths
- As WDT has changed leadership, the institution has made a consistent effort to live by its mission.
- The WDT mission is clearly articulated.
- WDT is providing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for successful employment as evidenced by WDT’s consistently strong placement rates.
- WDT includes workforce development initiatives at all levels of planning and in all mission documents.

Improvement Initiatives
- WDT, its board, and other stakeholders in the state must continue to review governance to benefit students and enhance the mission.
- WDT must work to increase the graduation rate of minority students for the unique needs of our region.
- WDT must work to increase the diversity of its faculty and staff.
- WDT must work to provide additional financial support, grants, and scholarships so more students can take advantage of the training and educational opportunities available.
Overview
WDT’s leadership, faculty, and staff focus on the future. The institution also systematically engages its numerous external stakeholders in all appropriate aspects of preparing for the future. There are many opportunities and challenges in the institution’s future, and mechanisms are in place to meet and capitalize on them. This section will focus on how the people of WDT work to spot these future events, plan to make the most of them, and prepare for the unforeseeable elements that exist.
Core Component 2A
WDT realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

The environment in which WDT operates is impacted by numerous factors that are considered in all aspects of planning and operations. The assigned geographic service area is among the largest of any two-year institute of higher education in the nation\(^{72}\). It includes some of the most sparsely populated regions and one of the poorest counties, Shannon, in the United States, according to the 2000 census. This knowledge serves as the foundation for WDT’s preparation for future trends.

**Understanding of capacity and plans to anticipate change**
There are several ongoing planning documents that focus on future expansion and development. Issues relating to governance and state funding impact both current operations and the long-range outlook. Future expansions to buildings, equipment, and programs are directly impacted by available funding. It is an important component of the WDT mission to be receptive to the changing requirements of the local area and to be responsive to economic development needs as they arise. To this end, WDT is willing and able to change the emphasis of an existing program or to add a new program to meet the needs of the local community.

**WDT Revenue by Source**
The President, and other WDT faculty and staff as appropriate, are involved in improving our funding streams through many and varied activities. The President works closely with local community leaders, state legislators, business and industry, and the Governor to implement changes necessary for future expansion. In 2007, the four technical institutes cooperated to achieve the approval of several bills to study and improve the capacities of all technical institutes in the state. Senate Bill 95 – A bill to improve governance of the technical institutes in South Dakota\(^{73}\) - and four additional bills that impacted technical institute capacity were passed and signed in this legislative session. One of those established a committee to study permanent funding options for technical institutes\(^{74}\).

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\(^{72}\) Title III Strengthening Institutions Program Grant Application, 2006.
\(^{73}\) SB 95.
\(^{74}\) HB 1279.
Internal changes in governance were also instituted to increase faculty and staff participation in decision making. Examples are the change in composition of the Cabinet\textsuperscript{75} and the creation of the Academic Unit Chair committee. The Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs led the effort to create a comprehensive and objective program review process with a goal of making the highest quality possible, data-driven decisions concerning program retention\textsuperscript{76}. The results of each program review are recorded in a “Program Review Recommendations” document\textsuperscript{77}. Changes currently being made in the Carpentry program, and discussed in detail later in this chapter, are an example of the program review process at work. This will help ensure that existing resources and capacity are used in the most effective way possible. Also, a Capacity Building Report is included in each of the WDT Quarterly Board meetings\textsuperscript{78} to highlight programs and campus initiatives.

WDT has developed an active Foundation and a major gifts campaign with a goal of raising $4 million to support three distinct initiatives outlined in the Case for Support\textsuperscript{79}. As of March 1, 2008, the campaign has generated more than $2 million in cash and gifts-in-kind. This campaign has also significantly extended the institution’s community reach, as can be seen by the community leaders (Governor, Mayor of Rapid City, and many business leaders) who appear in the Case for Support. The most recent annual reports\textsuperscript{80} show the progress that has been made since the Foundation was reinvigorated and the capital campaign launched in 2005.

A dynamic strategic plan for the institution was finalized and adopted in 2007. This plan was created using a bottom-up approach that started with synthesizing existing program plans. The Institutional Planning Committee, with membership from academic programs and administrative offices across campus, engaged in meaningful, spirited discussion about WDT’s future and drafted a plan. WDT faculty and staff and the WDT Governing Board thoroughly vetted the plan before it was finalized. The strategic plan now serves as the coordinating document for all resource decisions at WDT. The institutional plan and individual program plans will be reviewed, compared, and integrated annually\textsuperscript{81}.

**Emerging factors: technology, demographic shifts, globalization**

WDT uses program advisory committees to stay ahead of emerging trends in business and industry. Advisory committees, made up of employers and appropriate industry leaders, bring information to the programs about changes in the business climate they foresee and offer insight as to the direction the programs should consider. The committees also verify changes in programs and curriculum. Examples include: adding dual-shield welding to the Welding/Manufacturing

\textsuperscript{75} Cabinet Roster.
\textsuperscript{76} Program Review Procedure.
\textsuperscript{77} Program Review Recommendations.
\textsuperscript{78} Quarterly Board Agendas.
\textsuperscript{79} Case for Support.
\textsuperscript{80} Foundation 2005 and 2006 Annual Report.
\textsuperscript{81} http://www.wdt.edu/staff/StratPlan.htm.
curriculum at the request of a mining equipment repair company and adding a programming track to the Computer Networking Specialist program. Advisory committee meeting minutes are recorded and detail the critical information these external constituent groups provide.

The WDT President leads by example and serves on the American Association of Community Colleges’ Commission for Emerging Trends and Technologies. Many other faculty members and staff are involved in local community functions, boards, committees and organizations and facilitate two-way communications with the institution’s numerous stakeholders. All these connections allow WDT to understand the forces and trends at work in the community and bring issues to the planning table.

Structural changes to improve environmental scanning have also been made. A Manager of Data and Research was created in 2008 to enable WDT to conduct better data mining and analysis in support of planning. The Office of Institutional Advancement reports directly to the President and focuses on new programs and existing program improvements. This office, created in 2007, also oversees the Foundation, facilitates the grant seeking processes, and develops partnerships with external stakeholders.

A partnership with the Rapid City Department of Fire and Emergency Services stands as the most successful project to date. The City of Rapid City provides $500,000 to build an Emergency Response Training Center east of the WDT Rushmore Building. Several volunteer departments have donated apparatus and equipment totaling many hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the training center. This partnership greatly enhances WDT’s Fire Science program and the training for the Rapid City fire department and regional volunteer departments.

Each year, WDT submits formal requests for additional funding from the State Future Fund in accordance with the WDT strategic plan. These funding requests support the tools and equipment needed to meet current technology requirements often described by program advisory committees. Examples:

- Collision Repair acquired a state-of-the-art Shark alignment system as a result of input from the program’s advisory committee.
- Law Enforcement purchased a shooting range simulator based on industry input. Regional police departments also use the WDT simulator, one of few in the entire state of South Dakota.
- The Health Sciences program use Sim-Man, a responsive human simulator, for medical practice.

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82 Program Advisory Committee Minutes.
83 List of Professional Memberships.
84 Manager of Data and Research Position Description.
85 Institutional Advancement Position Description.
86 Future Funds List.
To maximize efficiency in the use and upkeep of campus computers, a Computer Committee was formed to address changes in hardware and software and set priorities\(^8^7\). Several programs require their students to have laptops for an enhanced and industry-reflective learning experience. Additionally, the campus is completely wireless to maximize staff and student access to the Internet and WDT information resources. WDT also requires Microsoft Office training for all students and requires students to be able to access information from the Internet and data sources\(^8^8\).

WDT created (and the other three South Dakota technical institutes adopted) a workforce development website in 2006 to provide resources on employment planning and training for state legislators and business persons in the service areas\(^8^9\).

This action highlights WDT’s understanding of current workforce development trends. Discussions underway with the CEO of Black Hills Corporation, the Regional Manager for Wells Fargo Banks, the National Park Service, and several other business leaders to address their aging workforce challenges are another response to the impending workforce development crisis.

**Responses to a multicultural environment**

WDT has open enrollment, and it historically has embraced students from all backgrounds and ethnic groups. Currently, more than 12 percent of the student body is classified as having a significant percentage of Native American ancestry\(^9^0\). A diversity statement in the student handbook declares that WDT will not discriminate or allow others to discriminate for any reason. An emphasis on ethics in courses highlights the necessity to be inclusive in society of all ethnic and/or religious groups. To further its efforts to recruit students of all backgrounds, WDT hired a Nontraditional Recruiter to recruit diverse students and to advance WDT’s

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\(^8^7\) Computer Committee Minutes and Membership.

\(^8^8\) WDT General Education Requirements.

\(^8^9\) http://www.wdt.edu/workforcedevelopment/.

\(^9^0\) IPEDS, 2007.
efforts to enroll more men in career fields traditionally occupied by women and more women in male-dominated fields.

Evidence of this recognition and action taken for student success can be seen in the nondiscrimination statement on the first page of the student handbook. WDT incorporated a “Strategic Priority—Students” that states, “Increase learning opportunities and success for a diverse population of lifelong learners.” This priority is related to WDT guiding principles on diversity and lifelong learning. WDT defines diversity in its broadest possible sense, as all characteristics that distinguish one person from another.

WDT helps students from all backgrounds succeed. The WDT Catalog lists active student organizations such as the Student Government Association, Eagle Feather Society, Women in Nontraditional Employment Roles, and the Nontraditional Student Organization that promote and support the success of minority and nontraditional students. Examples:

- WDT students travel to Pine Ridge High School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to talk with students about the path to higher education.
- The square footage of the Academic Services Center was more than doubled in 2006 to better serve the increasing size and diversity of the student population.
- Special Services acquired a $1,600 grant to provide an emergency fund for Native American students that was distributed in the form of forgivable micro-loans to alleviate transportation, childcare, and other personal financial emergencies.

Preparation for the future by effective environmental scanning

Clinical experiences and internships in several programs add to the communication channels opened for WDT. These direct interactions between students and potential employers require evaluation and bring valuable feedback to the program. Program advisory committees also are very effective environmental scanning tools for program specific information and general regional trends.

In order to maintain an awareness of larger regional trends, WDT and WDT Foundation staff are active members in several area Chambers of Commerce and other service organizations. This reflects the organization’s desire to be good citizens and keep in contact with the region’s leaders. Many administrators are members and leaders of committees in these organizations. A list of the leadership roles held by staff follows.

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92 WDT Strategic Plan.
93 WDT Course Catalog p. 15, 2007-08.
94 Internship and Clinical Evaluation Forms.
• The President is a member of the Rapid City Area Economic Development Partnership.
• The President, Vice-President, Associate Vice-Presidents, and other administrators are active leaders in numerous community organizations95.
• All faculty and staff are encouraged to participate and take leadership roles in civic organizations.

Positions are held in a wide variety of civic organizations such as the Rapid City, Wall, and Hot Springs Area chambers of commerce, Kiwanis, Rotary, and many others.

Support for innovation and change
A long-standing curriculum committee exists to vet changes to existing program content and assist in program improvement. This team of faculty and staff primarily focuses on relevancy of existing programs, and the committee has exerted significant influence over programs96. In order to bring resources and emphasis to bear on new program development, the President created a new position titled Program Development Manager in 2004 with the following stated purpose:

Provide program development support in the revision of existing instructional programs and the development of new programs. Coordination with industry, economic development interests, and faculty in identifying the need for employees trained and/or educated in new or expanding fields. Provide assistance in the assessment of student learning at the instructional program and institutional level. Assist in the professional development of instructors. Assist in writing grants and proposals.

Since that time, four new programs have been added—Health Unit Coordinator (HUC)97, Fire Science98, Field Engineering Technician99, and Public Safety Telecommunications Operator (PSTO)100—based on input from employers in the region and research and development conducted by the development office.

The addition of Academic Unit Coordinators (AUCs) to the Cabinet in 2005 was a response to the need to improve organizational communication in times of rapid change. The addition of AUCs has created discussions and input never before realized in Cabinet meetings101. WDT created the Institutional Planning Committee to create more across-campus communication and to oversee the strategic planning process.

Program changes also show WDT’s commitment to innovation and change:

95 List of leadership activity.
96 Curriculum Committee Minutes.
97 HUC Application Package.
98 Fire Science Application Package.
99 FET Application Package.
100 PSTO Application Package.
101 Cabinet meeting minutes.
• WDT received Higher Learning Commission approval in 2007 to offer the Agriculture Resources Technology degree completely online\textsuperscript{102}.
• WDT combined Diesel Technology and Auto Technology to create the Transportation Technology program, taking advantage of the merging skill sets in all types of vehicle repair.
• WDT created the Associate in Applied Science degree in Allied Health to add leadership and management classes to WDT Health Services diploma programs\textsuperscript{103}.

Numerous additional adjustments to program offerings have been made during the past five years in response to changing technology, student needs, and industry requirements\textsuperscript{104}.

**Honoring history and heritage in times of change**
A review of WDT catalogs reveals a consistency of purpose and mission that continues in WDT’s current mission documents\textsuperscript{105}. This solid consistency is reflected in the current strategic plan by leading the document with the mission statement.

The WDT Foundation is actively pursuing the development of an Alumni Association to use the strength of history to enhance the present and the future. In 2008, the Foundation sent letters to approximately 5,000 alumni to announce plans for 40\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary events at WDT and to gauge interest in an Alumni Association\textsuperscript{106}. In addition to funding these efforts, the Foundation Board has approved the creation of an Alumni committee. The goal is to have a formal structure completed and an active organization by December 2008.

WDT’s Workforce Development Plan is another document driven by the 40-year heritage of WDT’s workforce training efforts\textsuperscript{107}. This resource for legislators and the general public illustrates the consistency of purpose at all technical institutes in South Dakota. It also provided insight and information for anyone interested in the workforce development needs of the region.

**Authority for decision making about organizational goals**
All mission documents are approved by the WDT Governing Board after recommendation by the President\textsuperscript{108}. All members of the WDT team may participate in the formulation of the organization’s goals through clearly defined lines of communication as revealed by the WDT Organization Chart\textsuperscript{109}. The President’s

\textsuperscript{102} HLC Ag Online Approval Report.
\textsuperscript{103} Allied Health AAS Application.
\textsuperscript{104} Curriculum Committee Minutes.
\textsuperscript{106} Letter to Alumni 2008.
\textsuperscript{107} http://www.wdt.edu/workforcedevelopment.
\textsuperscript{108} RCAS Board Minutes, January 24, 2008.
\textsuperscript{109} WDT Organization Chart.
open-door policy permeates the organization and provides opportunity for anyone to express opinions in or out of the formal lines of communication. The Institutional Planning Committee, Cabinet, and Executive Cabinet consider all mission document suggestions and concerns before final recommendation by the President to the board. WDT's Policy for Planning is posted on the public portion of the WDT website and clearly outlines the process of planning and how to participate.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{110} http://www.wdt.edu/strategicplan
WDT’s resource base supports its current educational programs primarily due to careful planning and austere measures—growth is possible only when fiscal support is secured. The funding process is currently being significantly modified to meet needs for maintaining and strengthening the quality of future operations at WDT.

Historically, South Dakota funded the state’s four technical institutes with a lump-sum system. The amount given to all technical institutes in the state has been based on the total amount contributed in the previous year (usually adjusted for inflation) and then divided among the four by formulas that have changed over the years. Additionally, the technical institutes do not have the ability to tax through any local or state systems and may not directly issue bonds.

Tuition and fees are the only portions of funding directly related to enrollment. Historically, state funding has not been connected to enrollment. In 2007, the South Dakota Legislature passed a resolution111 that established a Funding Task Force to review the funding system. The task force recommended changing the funding system so the state’s technical institutes can better meet South Dakota’s workforce development needs112. At the time of this writing, 2008 legislative action was not complete.

Resources are adequate for quality education
WDT has taken action to ensure levels of support for current programs are adequate to maintain the high-quality experience students expect, employers prefer, and accrediting agencies demand. WDT believes attracting and keeping quality faculty and staff is the primary factor in achieving this while recognizing equipment and facilities are an important part of the formula.

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111 HB 1279.
112 Funding Task Force Report.
WDT’s 2006-2007 Academic Year budget totaled $11,337,635. Eighty-one (81) percent of the instructional budget funded faculty salaries and benefits.

WDT has worked to build its reserve account during the past several years. In 2006-2007, the reserve account stood at $1,633,575, 15 percent of WDT’s operating budget.

WDT staff and faculty work to ensure all activities supported by WDT are vital and current to prevent the use of limited assets on non-productive pursuits.

WDT created a new pay system for faculty in 2006-2007 to maximize resources available for pay increases. An indice-based pay schedule\textsuperscript{113}, that recognizes higher levels of qualification with higher pay and establishes professional development as the avenue for career advancement, is intended to recruit and retain the most qualified faculty. Retention rates will be monitored to evaluate the efficacy of the program.

WDT’s comprehensive and objective program review process ensures the highest quality possible, data-driven decisions concerning significant changes to programs, including adding new tracks or eliminating programs\textsuperscript{114}. Four programs were reviewed in 2006-07, resulting in reducing the number of instructors in Carpentry, reassigning one Computer-Aided Drafting instructor to Field Engineering Tech and

\textsuperscript{113} Faculty Pay Matrix.
\textsuperscript{114} Program Review Procedure.
another to General Education, and placing the Public Safety Telecommunications Operator program in inactive status.

WDT’s budgeting process\(^{115}\) has been developed to include standard forms and procedures for gathering input from operational units. WDT's Executive Cabinet uses the information and data collected to ensure the best distribution of funds and provide detailed documentation for budget requests to the governing body and the WDT Foundation Board. This budgeting process results in delaying important decisions. For example, the Field Engineering Technician program was approved for start in the 2006 school year but delayed until 2007 to ensure all resources would be in place for a quality start.

**Resources strengthen the quality of education**

WDT takes proactive steps to improve revenue streams. Since 2005, WDT has launched a major gifts campaign, established the Office of Institutional Advancement, and increased partnerships with legislators.

The WDT Foundation, working through partnerships developed with industry by faculty members, has secured numerous donations of high-value equipment from business and industry\(^{116}\).

WDT placed added emphasis on grant funding in 2006 with the creation of the Office of Institutional Advancement. That year, WDT applied for a Community-Based Job Training grant (CBJT)\(^{117}\) and a Title III – Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)\(^{118}\) grant as a method to expand WDT’s offerings.

Numerous initiatives have been taken in the past few years to ensure that the students have the best possible experience. WDT accomplishes this by making sure all WDT employees are prepared to provide top-quality instruction and service.

Due to the wide variety of activities among programs, student-teacher ratios are set to ensure faculty can provide quality instruction in a safe environment. The position of Academic Unit Coordinator (AUC) has been strengthened with release time, regular meetings, and the appointment of an AUC Chair so day-to-day issues can be resolved at the lowest possible level.\(^{119}\)

WDT encourages lifelong learning for faculty and staff. Faculty and staff request Staff Development support for courses, seminars, travel, and other development opportunities not covered by current budgets. The following chart shows dramatically increased expenditures for staff development in recent years.

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\(^{115}\) Budget Input and Request Forms.
\(^{116}\) Foundation In-Kind Donation Records.
\(^{117}\) CBJT Application.
\(^{118}\) SIP Application.
\(^{119}\) AUC Duties.
In 2006-07, WDT allocated $51,000 for staff development—$21,000 for tuition costs, $20,000 for travel, and $10,000 for extra-duty pay. That year, more than 50 WDT staff members used staff development funds for tuition, conferences, seminars, continuing education, degree advancement, certification, and in-service speakers.

WDT also rewards professional development through the new faculty pay system. To ensure faculty are prepared to teach, all faculty members under contract must hold state credentials. Once credentialing course work is completed, instructors with two-year credentials apply for five-year credentials. Once that credential is obtained, faculty must complete 150 hours of course work to renew.

Faculty members hired into technical programs must have 6,000 hours in their field. New instructors work with a mentor from South Dakota State University and with a veteran WDT instructor. The program is highly structured and monitored by the Dean of Academic Affairs.

Several other recent developments provide evidence of ways WDT has improved the resources available for quality education.

- The institution owns and utilizes a 10-acre campus commonly referred to as the Rushmore Building, located approximately ½ mile south of the main campus. In 2003, the space was less than 50 percent utilized. It is now fully occupied by expanding programs, an effort to find tenants to lease space, and a partnership with the Rapid City Department of Fire and Emergency Services. This has turned an expensive empty building into a revenue source.

- Toward the end of 2006, the Marketing office prepared a business plan for a website content management system. The WDT Foundation approved $15,500 to purchase the product.

- A partnership with Peabody Coal yielded tremendous benefits for many students and programs through tuition reimbursement, internship opportunities, and in-kind donations totaling more than $25,000 in 2007.

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120 New Faculty Mentoring Program.
121 Ektron Proposal to Foundation.
- Western Mine Service is providing training opportunities for Welding students with equipment loans and consumables donations.

- Partnerships are advancing with Regional Health, Black Hills Corporation, the U.S. Geological Survey, South Dakota Wildland Fire Division, and many others.

Intelligent reallocation: downsizing or growth
WDT’s new planning process started with a review of the vision and guiding principles. Each program then completed a new three-year plan based on this foundation. The program plans were then synthesized, with additional campus-wide and committee input, to create an overall organizational plan. Now, all plans and actions are rooted in the WDT plan that focuses on the “Big Picture.” This process provides guidance, common purpose, prioritization, resource allocation, and, most importantly, buy-in.

WDT’s Program Review procedure stands as clear examples of WDT’s ability to reallocate resources. Actions resulting from program reviews include downsizing in one area to provide for growth in another with minimized personnel impact.

WDT’s inclusive planning process facilitates communication and understanding of sometimes difficult strategic and tactical decisions. The Institutional Planning Committee is the vetting body for changes in strategy. The composition of this committee is optimized for campus-wide participation. The range of topics discussed and accomplishments of this group can be seen in the development of the dynamic strategic planning process and the minutes of their meetings.

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122 WDT Strategic Plan.
123 IP Committee Membership.
124 Institutional Planning Committee Minutes.
Core Component 2C

WDT’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

WDT takes great care to ensure that appropriate activities are selected to be measured, that the measurement methods are appropriate, and that the loop is closed once the data are gathered.

Many methods are used to achieve this loop. Methods include a professionally prepared Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)\textsuperscript{125} and the Institutional Priorities Survey\textsuperscript{126} for faculty and staff. In 2004, student learning assessment was reviewed and adjusted to ensure proper measures are taken and results are used. Program advisory committees also serve as a valuable source of feedback that regularly drives changes to curriculum, equipment, and staffing.

Evaluation link to institutional effectiveness
WDT integrates many evaluation tools in its continuing operations, including:

- Assessing programs regularly
- Documenting data for decision-making
- Conducting regular surveys of all stakeholders
- Collecting anecdotal evidence from advisory committees
- Institutionalizing results to achieve continuous quality improvement.

WDT makes changes when room for improvement is discovered. WDT’s program assessment process\textsuperscript{127} frequently generates changes to meet changing needs and ensure that the institution continues to meet expectations of students and industry.

The curriculum review process requires data-driven evidence to support changes. A standard form\textsuperscript{128} is required. The Curriculum Committee\textsuperscript{129} uses the data while considering changes. Results of focus groups\textsuperscript{130} conducted by Student Services and Marketing have generated wide-ranging results that include the purchase of a portable prep station for Collision Repair and curriculum and staffing changes in several programs. Program Competency Lists\textsuperscript{131} are reviewed annually by advisory committees for each program, and a designated outside representative on the committee signs the review sheet.

\textsuperscript{125} SSI Results.
\textsuperscript{126} IPS Results.
\textsuperscript{127} Program Assessment Report.
\textsuperscript{128} Curriculum Change Request, 2007.
\textsuperscript{129} Curriculum Committee Minutes.
\textsuperscript{130} Focus Group Notes.
\textsuperscript{131} Program Competency Lists.
Collecting, analyzing, and using information

WDT uses numerous methods and measures to ensure data is available and understood so the institution may maintain the highest levels of quality and currency. The methods include the SSI and IPS surveys, program assessment binders, recurring surveys conducted by the Marketing office\textsuperscript{132}, and student course evaluations.

Multiple programs require a shadowing or internship experience for students. These experiences include an evaluation by the employer/individual with whom the student works\textsuperscript{133}. The evaluations provide a wealth of information about the student, WDT program, and the internship.

In 2006, a programmer position was upgraded to programmer/analyst to help in all aspects of data gathering and interpretation. This change was further enhanced with the addition of a Director of IT to bring more resources and improve the management of data throughout the organization. In 2008, the programmer/analyst position was again reorganized into a Manager of Data and Research to bring additional expertise to WDT’s efforts to gather and use data more effectively. As of this writing, the position has not been filled.

Feedback loops support continuous improvement

A core value of the WDT organization is to value feedback and constantly seek ways to improve operations. The institution succeeds in maintaining a focus on vision, mission, and history while appropriately responding to a rapidly changing environment.

Assessment binders\textsuperscript{134} are maintained and regularly reviewed for each program and include direct measures derived from multiple sources such as student evaluations of individual courses and evaluations of students from internship opportunities.

The Financial Aid office conducts regular meetings to review changes to external rules and the effectiveness of internal procedures\textsuperscript{135}. The Cabinet and Academic Unit Coordinators were reorganized to improve campus-wide communications.

\textsuperscript{132} Marketing Survey Results.
\textsuperscript{133} Internship Evaluation Forms.
\textsuperscript{134} Program Assessment Binders.
\textsuperscript{135} Financial Aid Meeting Minutes.
Periodic reviews contribute to improvement
All WDT units are reviewed periodically. Various committees provide review for processes related to their area of responsibility, while professional certifications maintained by many programs require periodic review and recertification to ensure external agency standards are met.

The State Board of Education requires each program to complete a comprehensive self-evaluation every three years. Officials from the Department of Education travel to WDT each year to assist and evaluate the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) process. In 2007, the four technical institute Vice Presidents began work with the State Office of Career and Technical Education to revamp and revitalize this process.

WDT’s strategic plan is reviewed and updated annually by the Institutional Planning Committee. This process looks both at alignment of the plan with the changing external environment and with the operations of all internal plans and actions.

The internal Program Review process mandates that each program will be reviewed at least once every five years. However, low enrollment, poor retention, and other factors could trigger a program review in any given year.

Support for evaluation and assessment
WDT ensures that emphasis is placed on evaluation and assessment by reserving time in the working day and in all-staff meetings to conduct, discuss, and learn about assessment and evaluation. The institution also recognizes the need for standardized external evaluation through budgetary support for program certifications and survey instruments.

Each semester, time is set aside during faculty in-service days to discuss assessment and train faculty on new procedures. The new faculty orientation program curriculum and mentoring topics list both include significant attention to evaluation and assessment. Key Assessment Committee members are granted release time for their evaluation work.

Each year’s budget accommodates at least four faculty members and staff to attend the annual Higher Learning Commission conference. These individuals share the information gathered with faculty and staff. Additional opportunities for training in evaluation and assessment receive priority status when staff development funds are allocated.  

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136 WDT Committee Chart.
137 Program External Certification, WDT Catalog pg 8, 2007-08.
138 Faculty In-Service Agendas.
139 New Faculty Orientation Curriculum.
140 Faculty Mentoring Program Description.
Core Component 2D

All levels of planning at WDT align with the organization’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

In late 2003, WDT’s new chief executive synthesized the information he had gained from formal interviews, informal conversations, and observations. He then created a new vision\textsuperscript{141} and set of guiding principles\textsuperscript{142}. He shared this product with the faculty and staff during formal meetings and informal conversations to arrive at a final product that was presented to and approved by WDT’s governing body\textsuperscript{143}.

Each program used the new mission documents to revise their three-year plans so they fully reflected the vision and guiding principles. Administration then reviewed all program plans to make sure they connected with the mission documents. This process was initially conducted by the Director of Program Development and then passed to the newly formed Institutional Planning Committee for broad-based vetting.

The Strategic Plan was revisited in 2005 to prioritize individual program plans and ensure the organization could support the desired activities. At that time, the Cabinet reorganized WDT’s administrative goals to include the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Mission of WDT.

Nine additional committees were appointed by the Executive Cabinet and President to carry out additional planning and the implementation of the mission documents. WDT’s Strategic Plan, approved by the Rapid City School Board\textsuperscript{144}, is the result of planning from the bottom up. This method greatly enhances understanding and buy-in from all levels of the organization.

Coordinated planning processes adopted by WDT center on the mission documents that define vision, values, goals and strategic priorities for the organization and are carefully crafted to enhance input from all levels of the organization. Details of the planning process provide evidence that the focus is universal and central. WDT’s mission, vision, and guiding principles are the preamble for the strategic plan\textsuperscript{145}. The initial outline of the current strategic plan was posted on the WDT Intranet and invitation to review the drafts and comment were delivered via email to all faculty and staff. Printed copies of the plan were given to each academic unit, Student Services, and the finance and operations group at the beginning of the 2006 academic year. Each of these groups was given time to review and comment. Adjustments were made and then the plan was turned over to the Institutional Planning Committee for finalization. The vetting and approval process for any modification to the plan includes review by the Institutional Planning Committee.

\textsuperscript{141} Vision Statement.
\textsuperscript{142} Guiding Principles.
\textsuperscript{143} Rapid City School Board Minutes January 24, 2008.
\textsuperscript{144} Rapid City School Board Minutes May 2, 2007.
\textsuperscript{145} WDT Strategic Plan.
and the full Cabinet for recommendation to the President. To be adopted, each individual item must be shown to support the mission documents.

**Strategic Planning processes link with budget**

In the past, the state appropriation for technical institutes has been rather predictable but decoupled from indicators of need. The complicated formula, based on completers, nature of education completed, and post-completion employment, historically resulted in a budget that was increased by an inflationary factor with almost no regard for growth. Living with this process created operation by wish-list in the event that the Governor would release extra funds from the Office of Economic Development. The 2008 South Dakota Legislature is discussing a new funding formula that is enrollment-driven and does a better job of recognizing the need for maintenance funding and capital additions. The lead legislation in this process is House Bill 1016. As of this writing, the 2008 legislative session has not concluded.

Under the current State funding situation, the Associate Vice President for Finance and Operations solicits requests from all departments and creates a multi-level budget and coordinated priorities of need. The Level I budget is based on a minimum appropriation and must contain all essential functions. The next level usually makes room for some improvement in operations based on additional one-time appropriations from the Legislature. A Level III budget is prepared and adds “wish list” items and projects so that WDT would be prepared for unexpected revenues.

The revitalization of the WDT Foundation and initiation of a Major Gifts Campaign are additional actions that indicate an acknowledgement of the need for other sources of funds and support to maintain the needed level of technologic currency and staff preparation. A financially viable Foundation also provides a more

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146 HB 1016.
147 Budget Input Request Form.
149 Case for Support.
responsive avenue for the procurement of resources. The campaign is designed around three pillars:

- Scholarships
- Economic development
- Dynamic teaching and learning tools

**Implementation of planning is evident**
Changes to academic offerings at WDT—addition, redesign, or cancellation of programs—are mission-driven and coordinated with, if not dictated by, the strategic planning process. The same is true of equipment and facilities. When an unexpected change occurs, the plan is adjusted as needed to best respond to the new circumstances. Any added action plans must include proof of budgetary coordination.\(^{150}\)

The following examples illustrate both the use of, and adjustments to, the Strategic Plan.

- The delay of the Field Engineering Technician (FET) program illustrates the need to adjust plans. A faculty member was assigned full-time for the 2006-07 academic year to prepare and finish developing the FET program in response to “Strategic Priority—Programs.” The new program was launched successfully in fall 2007.

- Phase I of the Emergency Response Training Center was completed in July 2007, and phase II of the updated plan started just three months later due to an early $60,000 commitment from Pennington County.

- In keeping with WDT’s “Strategic Priority—Students” and “Strategic Priority—Programs,” WDT sought and received approval to offer the AAS - Ag Resources Technology completely online.

- The WDT Foundation funded the acquisition of a content management system for the WDT website to support, “Strategic Priority—Communications.”

\(^{150}\) Strategic Plan Progress Tracker.
WDT’s long-range planning process is specifically designed for organization-wide participation and input while maintaining flexibility. The responsiveness of WDT’s strategic plan is inherent in its design and development process. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually. In addition, the broad guidance provided by the six strategic priorities creates an environment that encourages and enables quick action when an unexpected opportunity arises.

WDT lived this flexibility when healthcare industry leaders told us through our advisory committees that industry needed clinical workers with greater management skills. WDT responded by creating an AAS—Allied Health degree that was approved by the State Board of Education in 2007.
Summary
WDT is clearly emerging from a time of great change. The institution is operating on a new strategic plan that was formulated in an innovative way. Only a few short months ago, the statewide study on funding of postsecondary technical education was completed. Our strategic planning renewal process that began over two years ago anticipated this magnitude of change and will guide us into a new era of higher learning in South Dakota while preserving the best of our heritage of serving the students, businesses, and communities of western South Dakota.

One of our greatest challenges is to make the best of these new opportunities without losing our past—the unequaled quality of employment-oriented higher education. We must maintain our personal connection to students and employers while growing to meet the demands of our constituents.

Strengths
- WDT has built relationships with state lawmakers, business and industry, and other stakeholders who are actively engaged in promoting WDT and its mission at the highest ranks of state government.
- WDT is recognized as a leader in the community and workforce development and is able to use its collective expertise to influence public policy.
- WDT engages in partnerships with business and industry to incorporate state-of-the-art technology, tools, and equipment in educational programs.
- Through a program review process, WDT uses the expertise of its faculty, advisory committees, and staff to improve, create, and suspend programs.

Improvement Initiatives
- WDT must empower faculty leadership to increase involvement in shared governance of the institution.
- WDT must continue to work for legislative changes that would provide consistent funding mechanisms for replacement equipment, program start-up costs, and campus maintenance and repair.
- WDT must develop grant opportunities to support the increased needs of students, faculty, staff, and the community.
Overview

WDT ensures that valuable student learning occurs and innovative teaching methods are applied. This is evident through the many benchmarks that have been established to track progress in these areas. Our graduate placement reports\textsuperscript{151}, growing community support, and increase in prospective employers show that WDT is meeting its mission of giving students the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for successful employment.

WDT applies self-assessment to the improvement process so all graduates are prepared to enter the workforce. This criterion report will provide a history of assessment and demonstrate how the assessment program has grown. This report addresses the assessment goals reached and the challenges to come.

\textsuperscript{151} Graduate Placement Report
Core Component 3A

WDT’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

WDT’s 2002 Higher Learning Commission review noted that assessment was one of three areas WDT needed to improve. A follow-up visit by the HLC in 2005 identified that a new pilot model known as the WDT Assessment Book would be implemented in all academic programs.

Each program’s Assessment Book is divided into three sections:

- The red section contains institutional information.
- The yellow section provides program information.
- The blue section describes program student academic assessment.

The red “institute information” section contains:

- Assessment model
- Assessment duties
- Assessment timeline
- WDT vision, mission, and objectives
- WDT strategic plan
- WDT core abilities

The yellow “program information” section contains:

- Program mission
- Program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis
- Course requirements and competencies
- Program Improvement Plan (PIP)
- Three-year plan
- Advisory meeting minutes
- Program/curriculum changes
- Program budget

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152 Assessment Model.
153 Assessment Duties.
154 Assessment Yearly Timeline.
155 WDT Vision.
156 WDT Mission and Objectives.
157 WDT Strategic Plan.
158 WDT Core Abilities.
159 Program Mission.
160 Program SWOT Analysis.
161 Program Three Year Plan.
While the red and yellow sections are vital for a viable assessment program, the blue “program student academic assessment” information truly is where WDT documents assessment. WDT programs use the blue section to track changes in the assessment process. The blue section contains:

- Program assessment plan
- Course maps
- Action plans
- Program assessment reports
- WDT assessment reports

**Program Assessment Plan**
The first component of the blue section is the program’s assessment plan\(^{162}\). WDT used recommendations from 2005 peer reviews to create a master template so each program’s assessment plan was consistent.

After each program identified student learning outcomes, programs designed assessments to evaluate the student learning outcomes. Programs created direct measures to track student progress and ways to measure and document assessment.

**Program Course Map**
Program course maps\(^{163}\) serve as valuable tools. Each program uses a system such as an Excel spreadsheet to identify all classes so programs can crosscheck each class taught with the WDT core abilities. This shows each program how its courses move students toward mastery of the core abilities.

All WDT classes are required to have a core abilities statement on the master syllabus that reads: “Through the Student Learning Outcomes, the following core abilities will be addressed: ....” WDT uses this method to ensure all students are aware of the core abilities being taught.

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\(^{162}\) Program Assessment Plan.
\(^{163}\) Program Course Map.
**Action Plan**
Programs use action plans\textsuperscript{164} to document any assessment that did not meet the expected student learning outcomes. Instructors complete an action plan that specifically addresses how they will correct and follow up on all deficiencies. This ensures modifications are made in a timely manner.

**Year-end reports**
Each program submits a report\textsuperscript{165} to the Dean of Academic Affairs summarizing the year's assessment efforts. The Dean then compiles the information and writes a comprehensive report for WDT\textsuperscript{166} that is shared with faculty. Programs update assessment books at that time to ensure they are ready for the year.

**Connecting Assessment to the Mission Documents**
The Assessment Committee tied the WDT vision, mission, guiding principles, and core abilities to student assessment. The committee created the core abilities with input from faculty, staff, administration, program advisory committees, and the Cabinet.

The core abilities are transferable skills, attitudes, and abilities expected to be mastered by all WDT graduates. WDT adopted seven core abilities:

- Life skills
- Analytical skills
- Communication skills
- Technology skills
- Teamwork techniques
- Social values
- Employability

The core abilities are now integrated into all WDT programs. Every program must design student learning outcomes around the core abilities, and all classes must identify on the master syllabus the core abilities being assessed. To promote the core abilities to the entire WDT community, banners are displayed in two main campus hallways. WDT’s Corporate Education Center adopted a version of the core abilities for non-credit courses, seminars, and customized training opportunities.

\textsuperscript{164} Program Action Plan.
\textsuperscript{165} Program Assessment Reports.
\textsuperscript{166} Annual WDTI Student Academic Assessment Report.
Creating an Assessment Culture (2005-2006)

WDT had to create an assessment culture to ensure the success of the assessment program. WDT had to transform the campus culture so an assessment program was understood and accepted.

WDT’s Assessment Committee delivered extensive training, which resulted in WDT faculty achieving a stronger understanding of institutional assessment (institutional accountability), program assessment (student learning), and how general education curriculum ties into program assessment.

During the 2005-2006 academic year, WDT dedicated 10 faculty development days to learning and understanding:

- Assessment definitions
- Terminologies
- Direct and indirect measures
- Formative and summative assessment
- Core abilities
- Collection of artifacts
- Student learning outcomes

The Assessment Committee continued to offer training to deliver more in-depth guidance on formative direct measures, completing course maps, and completing each program’s three-year plan using WDT’s guiding principles.

The Assessment Committee used faculty development days as hands-on opportunities for faculty. During training sessions, programs completed mission statements, SWOT analyses, and rewrote student learning outcomes. Faculty learned to use direct measurement tools such as horizontal analysis, rubrics, scoring sheets, and portfolios. The Committee also provided opportunities for faculty to work with assessment coaches.

During one faculty development day, the WDT team that attended the conference, “Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy,” presented what they learned. The training included classroom assessment techniques (CATs) and the concept of conversations.
At the next faculty development event, faculty were given two days to finish documenting Student Learning/Effective Teaching efforts for the year. All programs were required to have their assessment books completed, including documenting any assessment efforts pursued during the school year, creating action plans when necessary, and compiling artifacts for future reference.

Programs also were required to have assessment plans for the following academic year completed and ready for implementation. This included updating course maps, three-year plans, SWOTs, and syllabi. As of the 2006-2007 school year, all syllabi were required to include an assessment statement.

Outside of the faculty development days, the Assessment Coordinator worked with the General Education Department to guide them in creating a philosophy and assessment plan unique for programs. General Education faculty hosted a series of brown bag luncheons to gather information from programs about the kind of courses that would best serve students. The luncheons resulted in development of new courses. The General Education Department is now developing a process to embed assessment into each program.

While it had set ambitious goals for 2005-2006, the Assessment Committee achieved its objectives. The training opportunities and focus on assessment equipped WDT faculty with tools and techniques to build and implement a successful assessment program.

**Continuing the Momentum (2006-2007)**

With a solid assessment platform in place, the Assessment Committee focused on keeping the process on track and moving forward through the 2006-2007 academic year.

With training completed and necessary tools in place, WDT was ready to launch the new assessment model. WDT built a multi-level process as part of the model to ensure this occurred. The Assessment Committee, assessment coaches, Academic Unit Chairs, and lead instructors all kept assessment at the forefront of faculty awareness. Faculty leadership monitored assessment and engaged in periodic checks to ensure assessment occurred as planned.
The Assessment Committee scaled back the large group training to place more emphasis on the coaching system and implementation. Each academic unit’s assessment coach was responsible for meeting with each program to:

- Ensure faculty were on track
- Provide programs with assessment information
- Be available when support was needed

The Assessment Coordinator met with all coaches, Academic Unit Coordinator, and program leads to showcase the assessment process and to emphasize that each faculty member was responsible to ensure assessment is occurring. Lead instructors on each program are responsible for keeping programs focused on assessment efforts while Academic Unit Coordinators keep a standing agenda item for assessment in unit meetings.

In addition to academic programs, the Student Services office also takes part in self-assessment activities. Each Student Services function writes a three-year plan and annually assesses progress toward goals.\(^\text{167}\)

Student Services also collects and distributes indirect measures, which are shared at all-staff meetings, Cabinet meetings, In-Service/Staff Development days, and through Tech Times and email. Some examples include:

- Graduation numbers are reported annually and included in several reports. WDT reports overall numbers and breaks them down by cohort, program, and demographics.
- Retention rates are reported and tracked. WDT is working toward enhancing retention efforts through a Retention Task Force.
- Student Satisfaction Inventory results were collected in 2005 and 2006. WDT will administer the survey again in 2008.
- Student demographics are collected through confirmation and registration forms. WDT reports this data annually through IPEDS and Standards and Measures.
- Graduate placement is tracked each year through the Career Services office.

These documents are designed to require frequent updating and continual revision to create benchmarks and reliable measures.

WDT understands that programs and offices must continually assess programs and services and use the outcomes to ensure the academic needs of students are met.

WDT has grown learning opportunities for faculty and staff by increasing the staff development budget. The Staff Development Committee’s goal is to assist employees in obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their responsibilities.

**Promoting Effective Teaching**

In 2005, WDT began a Performance Planning and Review process that required all faculty to identify three achievable educational goals that address Teaching Effectiveness, Service, and Professional Development. Sixty (60) percent of faculty wrote teaching effectiveness goals that coincide with ongoing classroom assessment activities.

WDT empowered the Staff Development Committee to provide opportunities for staff to enhance their teaching techniques by hosting in-service sessions on varied subjects, including effective teaching strategies, diversity training, and generational differences.

The following are some examples of how effective teaching has been demonstrated:

- The South Dakota Board of Education presented an award to WDT’s Business Department to recognize the department’s work with student electronic portfolios that incorporate the core abilities.

- WDT has entered into a research partnership with South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSM&T). One of WDT’s welding instructors currently oversees an SDSM&T research lab.

- Through funding from the National Science Foundation, a WDT Electronics instructor worked with Black Hills State University (BHSU) to oversee the Consortium for Advanced Technological Education (CATE). CATE's mission is
to produce a high-quality distance education vehicle for delivering basic electronics curriculum to high school students in rural South Dakota. Twelve school districts in western South Dakota participated in this project, which involved 800 students.

- WDT has 27 articulation agreements with state universities in South Dakota, allowing WDT students to transfer credits. Agreements\(^{168}\) exist in:
  - Computer Aided Drafting
  - Business Management and Marketing
  - Law Enforcement Technology
  - Electronics and Computer Technician
  - Accounting
  - Ag Resources Technology
  - Industrial Electronics
  - Disability and Human Services Technician
  - Pharmacy Technology

- WDT entered into a transfer agreement with National American University (NAU) that allows WDT graduates to transfer all credits to NAU’s Bachelor of Science Degree in Applied Management\(^{169}\).

All WDT instructors use a variety of methods to remain up-to-date with emerging teaching strategies and methodologies, including:

- Conversations with Academic Unit Chairs
- Discussions with instructors
- Advisory committee meetings
- Partnerships with educational partners and universities
- Program-specific periodicals
- Mentors and colleagues
- National curriculum

WDT employs 55 full-time, one three-quarter time, and one half-time faculty and approximately 30 adjunct instructors. Full-time faculty actively participate in more than 50 professional organizations that promote and enhance teaching abilities. Participation in these organizations give faculty access to important industry trends that can be used in the classroom.

In 2006-2007, a new faculty salary system was introduced and adopted. This new system recognizes technical skill advancement and educational degrees with pay increases. In the first year, 91 percent of all indices awarded were in the technical advancement category. Pursuing additional technical skills and advanced degrees allows faculty to bring a wide range of knowledge to the classroom, offering students new and enhanced learning opportunities.

\(^{168}\) [http://www.sdbor.edu/administration/academics/Articulation.htm.](http://www.sdbor.edu/administration/academics/Articulation.htm)

\(^{169}\) WDT-NAU Transfer Agreement.
Core Component 3C

*WDT creates effective learning environments.*

Assessment has grown into an institutional tool that is used to make decisions that impact student learning. Every academic program has an assessment book. Faculty use this tool to identify opportunities for improvement and document necessary changes.

Student Services offers students a wide range of services, including career placement, diagnostic testing, prior learning evaluation, orientation, housing assistance, counseling and ongoing support, advisement, financial aid, and records management.

**Academic Services Center**

The Academic Services Center offers course-specific tutoring to students. This free service is designed to give individualized attention to students who want to improve their performance. The center employs peer tutors who are assigned based on their areas of expertise. Various study-skill workshops focus on:

- Note taking
- Memory skills
- Listening skills
- Time management
- Test taking

The center also provides academic resources students need and offers encouragement for student success.

**Special Services**

Special Services coordinates and provides support services to minority, single parent, displaced homemaker, single pregnant women, first generation, and nontraditional student populations. WDT recognizes nontraditional students face unique circumstances and barriers. The Special Services Coordinator assists these students in their pursuit of higher education. Services available include:

- Resource information and referrals
- Textbook assistance
- Life skills workshops
- Mentoring
- Support groups
- Financial assistance
Career Services
Career Services is committed to serving students, alumni, and the employers who hire graduates. In 2006, 84 percent of WDT graduates found employment directly related to their program, a rate higher than the national average of 82 percent. Career Services facilitates a successful match between a graduate’s employment interests and available career opportunities. In addition, the office informs students and alumni of employment opportunities and assists students develop interview, resume writing, and networking skills.

Counseling Services
Counseling Services provides quality counseling and guidance tailored to each student’s unique circumstances and needs. The office works with students to help them maintain healthy perspectives in their physical, mental, emotional, educational, and social well-being. The counseling program directs its services toward helping students successfully complete their studies. WDT’s counselor also assists students with personal problems that affect academic progress.

Financial Aid
WDT’s Financial Aid Office is dedicated to administering the U.S. Department of Education’s Title IV Financial Assistance Program in a fair, consistent, and efficient manner and assisting students seek funding opportunities in order to fulfill their post-secondary educational goals. The office provides personalized assistance, accurate and meaningful interpretation of federal eligibility regulations, and guidance regarding long-term financial considerations and default management.

There are approximately 14 organizations and clubs students can join to gain experience working with others and to connect with other students in common interests170.

These organizations, along with the services offered in Student Services, are designed to give students a sense of belonging and ownership. They also provide opportunities to develop important leadership skills outside the classroom.

Pre-Enrollment Testing
A pre-enrollment assessment is required of all students seeking admission to WDT. WDT administers the COMPASS test during the initial stages of the application process. Students who have taken the SAT or ACT within the past five years may be able to waive the COMPASS if their composite score is adequate. Desired academic credentials for admission include:

- Transfer from a postsecondary institution with a total of 35 credits and a 2.5 cumulative GPA or above
- A composite ACT score of 18 or above or a total score on the SAT of 860 or above or an acceptable COMPASS score

170 WDT Catalog, 2007-08.
Admissions staff analyze test scores so students are placed in coursework appropriate for each student’s skill level. For example, if a COMPASS score indicates a student’s math and English skills are not at a proficient level to succeed in the program of study, the student is enrolled in remedial math and English courses so the student can succeed and prepare for higher-level courses.

Several programs use other entrance exams to gauge student preparation. For example, Practical Nursing requires potential students to take the NET exam. The NET score is one piece that determines if the Practical Nursing program will accept a student.

These exams and placement tests are designed to ensure that WDT is helping students choose a path to success.

**Helping Students Succeed**
All students are assigned faculty advisors as soon as they register for classes. Students also enroll in a mandatory Welcome Day. During Welcome Day, students spend a day on campus to learn about available services, meet instructors, and network with fellow students.

Students complete the orientation process\(^{171}\) during the beginning eight weeks of their first semester to learn about subjects such as financial aid, study skills, and time management. Orientation also allows students to meet administrators, staff, and others who help students succeed.

WDT uses multiple funding resources to keep students moving toward their educational goals. WDT uses the Perkins program, Future Funds, and the WDT Foundation to purchase or receive donated classroom technology.

The Perkins Program Improvement Grant supplements WDT’s ability to enhance technical skills attainment, program improvement or expansion, professional development, and the purchase of technology. In 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, 64 percent of WDT programs benefited from the grant.

WDT applies for Future Funds from the Governor’s Office of Economic Development. WDT uses these grants to upgrade equipment and enhance and improve WDT programs. During the past three years, 22 percent of WDT programs benefitted from these grants. In 2007-2008, the grants purchased:

- Trimble Recon GPS equipment and software
- Hunter Alignment Machine
- VR Simms Virtual Welding Simulator
- Z-Scanner
- Dodge Cummings Engine Performance Trainer

\(^{171}\) Orientation Syllabus.
The WDT Foundation provides services, equipment, and funds to support students and programs. The majority of contributions are donated equipment to support vital student learning outcomes.

WDT understands that not all students learn the same way. Technology available to instructors and students allows curriculum to be delivered in a variety of ways. Students have access to use technology to aid in their coursework, including:

- Wireless network availability
- Electronic portfolios
- Computer Numerical Control machine for programming
- Projectors for presentations
- Kurzweil Reader
WDT strives to maximize opportunities for learning, working, and living within a technology-rich world through the development of resources and sound fiscal management.

Several programs use WDT’s lease laptop program to increase learning opportunities and prepare students for careers. Students entering a laptop program purchase a state-of-the-art laptop and current software. The laptop program prepares students to enter the workforce with the latest in computer technology and the skills to use it.

WDT ensures access to resources such as the WDT Library, study areas, and clinical and internship sites necessary to support learning and teaching. The WDT Library supports student learning by:

- Providing materials, informational resources, and services to support the curriculum, interests, and skills of WDT students
- Providing access to databases in print and electronic formats
- Ensuring access to WDT and all state library collections by membership with the South Dakota State Library
- Empowering students to be lifelong learners through Library Instructional Classes directed to specific courses and assignment
- Fostering student relationships one-on-one or in a group classroom setting
- Supporting library student workers
- Providing a library website
- Providing access to a copier, scanner, fax, TV/VCR/DVD, typewriter, computer lab, and printer
- Providing Interlibrary Loans

The Paralegal program maintains a fully functioning legal library that houses research materials needed by paralegal and law enforcement students. Attorneys in the community also use the library.

Clinical sites provide students opportunities to hone skills in the following Health Services programs:

- Practical Nursing
- Surgical Tech
- Phlebotomy
- HUC
- Pharmacy Tech

172 http://www.wdt.edu/library.
WDT’s internship program provides opportunities for students to foster contacts with future employers and develop classroom skills in a working environment.

WDT evaluates the use and effectiveness of its learning resources to enhance student learning and effective teaching through:

- Direct and indirect measures
- Student Satisfaction Inventory surveys
- End-of-semester student evaluations
- Program advisory committees feedback
Summary
Assessment is the tool that enables WDT to evaluate whether the institution is accomplishing its mission. Through the integration of the assessment model, WDT has made it a priority for faculty to understand that assessment is no longer an afterthought, but an integral part of their jobs. WDT will continually work to make certain this culture is fostered so that it will continue to grow.

Strengths
- Assessment of student learning outcomes is being documented school-wide.
- Assessment is part of the daily culture.
- Assessment is being used by programs in a measurable way to improve student learning.
- Training new faculty members is ongoing.

Improvement Initiatives
- WDT must dedicate resources to take assessment to the next level by justifying budget request with assessment data.
- WDT must make program assessment information more accessible.
- WDT must use assessment measurements to make proactive choices to improve the institution.
Overview
Successful practices, planning, implementation, and evaluation are vital for lifelong learning. At WDT, lifelong learning is the foundation on which the institution stands. As South Dakota moves forward into the twenty-first century, it will become even more critical to assist students and faculty by promoting general education and other avenues of broad-based learning. WDT is well-positioned to assist students, staff, and faculty to embrace lifelong learning.
Core Component 4A

*WDT demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.*

WDT’s Governing Board articulated a clear vision in November of 2004:

**Western Dakota Tech Vision**

*It is the vision of Western Dakota Technical Institute to prepare our students for living, lifelong learning, working, and succeeding in the 21st Century.*

WDT’s Vision and Objectives outline goals that communicate the value WDT places on providing an atmosphere conducive to lifelong learning. The vision is supported by objectives that encourage students and the institution to take active roles in WDT’s success:

**WDT Objectives**

*Students will demonstrate:*

- The occupational skills necessary to obtain and retain successful employment in their field of training
- Proficiency in academic skills in the area of communications, mathematics, computer use and social science appropriate to their program of study

*WDT will:*

- Develop and implement short-term and customized training opportunities through the Corporate Education Center
- Maintain efficient and effective facilities designed to serve the needs of students
- Develop and retain a staff of technically competent and highly trained individuals
- Secure adequate financial resources necessary to accomplish its mission
- Assure equal access to those who are disabled, economically or academically disadvantaged, in nontraditional programs of study, or of limited English proficiency
- Provide services to those requiring academic assistance, counseling and career guidance

The Corporate Education Center, previously known as the Business and Industry Training Center, underwent changes in 2006 to better align with WDT’s core abilities. After evaluation and discussion, the Corporate Education Center added an eighth core ability—Industry Specific Skills—that reflected the idea of short-term
and industry-specific training. The change resulted from conversations with other regional continuing education centers and as a result of information gleaned from Learning Resources Network (LERN) Annual Conferences.

The Corporate Education Center offers training in three tracks:

- Core
- Upskills
- Mastery

Each track reinforces the others so skills build upon a solid foundation. The Center tracks each student’s progress using software that creates individualized transcripts. Employers can use the transcripts to construct a comprehensive training program for employees. The Corporate Education Center believes that by investing in lifelong learning, employees will have more satisfying and productive working relationships, as well as the opportunity for growth in their job performance, teamwork and overall corporate competitiveness.173

The Corporate Education Center offers a variety of open enrollment classes, ranging from four-hour computer and business communication classes to eight-hour Commercial Driver's License seminars to 40-hour machining and welding classes.

Customized training courses, held either on the WDT Campus or at the client’s location, assist companies in assessing their training needs, creating training plans, and taking advantage of learning opportunities.

The Corporate Education Center also creates career training programs that are short-term in nature. In all instances, the Corporate Education Center creates programs in response to a need identified in the community. Examples:

- Professional Truck Driving program
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program
- Dental Assistant Apprenticeship program

The Corporate Education Center continually monitors and adapts to the needs of the community. In 2006, Corporate Education expanded EMT training to offer EMT-Intermediate training as well as EMT-Basic.

In a partnership with ed2go, a third-party online course vendor, Corporate Ed offers more than

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173 Corporate Education Center Course Schedule, Spring 2008.
300 online classes in a wide range of topics, including\textsuperscript{174}:

- Professional Sales Skills
- Accounting Fundamentals
- Introduction to Microsoft Access 2007
- Advanced Grant Proposal Writing
- Interpersonal Communication
- Creating a Successful Business Plan
- Introduction to Photoshop CS2

**Governing Board**

WDT’s Governing Board has a standing Capacity Building agenda item at the quarterly WDT meeting. WDT faculty and staff use the opportunity to describe programs and initiatives. Examples:

- **November 15, 2004**
  - Business Student Portfolios. A Business Management & Marketing instructor described the program’s innovative electronic portfolio project\textsuperscript{175}.

- **August 31, 2006**
  - Business Student Portfolios. A Business Management & Marketing instructor delivered an update about the portfolio project\textsuperscript{176}.

- **Nov 30, 2006**
  - Academic Unit Coordinators (AUCs). WDT’s Vice President reported that a new communication model was implemented with the AUCs. This model has had a positive impact on faculty communications. Some AUCs shared their experiences.

- **Feb 22, 2007**
  - Field Engineering Tech (FET) Program. The FET program coordinator reported on the Field Engineering Tech Program, which combines elements of Computer-Aided Drafting, electronics, and Geographic Information System technologies with specialty areas such as hydrology. The program is designed to create field specialists who work with monitoring and managing remote data collection. This is a growing specialty that has wide applications in a variety of industries.

- **May 2, 2007**
  - Allied Health. The Practical Nursing program coordinator reported on the proposal for an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Allied Health. The program is designed to advance the communications skills

\textsuperscript{174} \url{http://www.wdt.edu/corped}.
\textsuperscript{175} WDT Board Meeting Minutes, November 15, 2004.
\textsuperscript{176} WDT Board Meeting Minutes, August 31, 2006.
and reasoning abilities of students interested in health-related occupations. It will enhance their understanding of human nature and interpersonal skills and help them to be more successful.

- August 30, 2007
  - Did You Know? WDT’s President delivered a PowerPoint presentation that described worldwide trends that will impact WDT’s workforce development efforts.

Creating a professional growth culture

In 2006-2007, WDT and the Faculty Association negotiated and implemented a new procedure for faculty evaluation. The new system promotes professional staff growth and development through joint efforts of the Dean of Academic Affairs, Academic Unit Coordinators, and faculty members\(^{177}\). This procedure ensures faculty are rewarded for expanding their knowledge as educators. This process has resulted in a new pay scale system being put into place at WDT.

The new pay scale provides salary increases based on faculty acquiring technical and academic experience and credits. Faculty earn increases by working toward a formal degree, attending classes and conferences, and acquiring certifications and licenses. Faculty receive an index and advance on the pay scale for every 15 credits earned. In 2006-2007, WDT awarded 50 indices to eighteen faculty. In 2007-2008, WDT awarded 14 indices to eight faculty members\(^ {178}\). The index initiative encourages lifelong learning and puts faculty in charge of their salary increases\(^ {179}\).

WDT sets aside approximately 13 days each academic year for staff development. Faculty use the hours spent in staff development as credit toward hours needed to acquire and maintain five-year credentials.

The SD Office of Career and Technical Education mandates lifelong learning for faculty. New instructors are given two-year credentials and have two years to complete coursework for five-year credentials. The credential process then shifts to WDT. Eight categories accumulate toward the credential:

- Occupational experience
- Credit courses
- Industry Business/Conference Training
- Education workshop/conferences
- Unpaid occupational experience
- Curriculum design
- Organized technical research
- Service on State Evaluation Team

\(^{177}\) Procedure for Faculty Performance Development.

\(^{178}\) Indices Awarded in 2006.

\(^{179}\) Documentation for Faculty Pay Scale.
In 2006-2007, 75 percent of full-time faculty possessed five-year credentials. Other faculty credential status:

- Full-time instructors with a two-year credential: 10 percent
- Part-time instructors with a five-year credential: 0 percent
- Part-time instructors with a two-year credential: 1.7 percent
- Part-time instructors with no credential: 3.3 percent
- Full-time instructors who have a five-year credential and a secondary certificate: 3.3 percent

WDT does not require credentials for adjuncts.

The WDT Governing Board affirmed the importance of lifelong learning for faculty and staff in Board Policy 420\textsuperscript{180}.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{WDT Governing Board Policy 420}

"Western Dakota Tech will support employees in obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their responsibilities to the institute."
\end{quote}

In 2006-2007, WDT spent $42,076 for campus-wide staff development. Individual program and department budgets also allocated funds for training. WDT’s staff development budget allocated:

- $23,612 for tuition
- $12,089 for travel
- $6,375 for extra-duty

In the 2006-07 academic year, more than 50 staff members used staff development funds:

- 20 conferences/seminars
- 55 tuition/continuing education
- 23 degree advancement
- 1 certification
- 2 in-service speakers

Between 2001-02 and 2007-08, WDT increased the total funds available for staff development and training by more than $33,500.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{180} Western Dakota Tech Policies Manual.
\textsuperscript{181} WDT Budget, 2006-07.
Meeting Student Learning Needs
WDT understands students have very challenging schedules. WDT has proactively increased the number of night and online classes so that students have access to educational opportunities that meet student needs. It is essential in today’s world that classes are offered when students are available. WDT is meeting the needs of today’s students.

Prior to the fall 2006 semester, WDT reinvigorated an evening Business Management and Marketing degree program. A cohort of 21 students began their pursuit of an Associate of Applied Science Degree in the program. The cohort has dropped to 12 students, although overall program enrollment has grown. The Business program plans to implement additional online courses to enhance WDT’s ability to meet student needs and improve retention.

In 2006, the Welding/Manufacturing program incorporated late afternoon and evening courses for second-year students to maximize available space and equipment.

WDT began offering Pharmacy Tech as a night program in 2005.

In the 2006-2007 spring semester, WDT offered 17 night classes\(^{182}\) in:

- Accounting
- Business Management & Marketing
- General Education
- Medical Terminology
- Pharmacy Tech

WDT also offered 28 online classes\(^ {183}\) in:

- Agriculture
- Business Management and Marketing
- General Education
- Medical Terminology

WDT offers its Agriculture Resources Technology degree completely online. The Higher Learning Commission approved online program delivery in 2007\(^ {184}\). Students in the program choose one of several specializations\(^ {185}\):

- Ag Business
- Equine Management
- Natural Resources
- Ranch Management

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\(^{182}\) http://www.wdt.edu/sonisweb/reports/wdti_schedule.cfm.

\(^{183}\) http://www.wdt.edu/sonisweb/reports/wdti_schedule.cfm.

\(^{184}\) HLC Ag Online report.

\(^{185}\) http://www.wdt.edu/sonisweb/reports/wdti_programs.cfm.
WDT faculty are committed to combining the pursuit of higher education with community involvement. Programs involve students in community action programs so students can apply their knowledge and enhance their technical and soft skills. Examples:

- Internships with local mechanic shops
- Clinical rotations at area hospitals and clinics
- Volunteer safety trainings
- Serving as volunteer consultants at an annual technology conference

WDT administers a financial aid and scholarship program to ensure that finances do not keep students from pursuing their higher education goals. Scholarships are funneled into WDT through two different avenues: the WDT Foundation and private donors. Since 2003-2004, scholarship support has grown by 20 percent.

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186 Community Action by Program Spreadsheet.
Core Component 4B

WDT demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

WDT’s mission statement, developed by faculty and staff, is displayed and taught across campus.

The primary differentiation between a trade school, where specific skills are developed, and an institution of higher learning, is general education. WDT believes a two-year degree broadens and complements technical skills.

WDT provides that breadth with:

- Rigorous General Education courses that support and enhance program curriculum
- Voluntary clubs that enhance and improve classroom instruction
- Support for national competitions that provide focus, spirit, and experience

Based upon advisory committee and community surveys, WDT believes a strong General Education program in English, math, humanities, and computers is critical to student success.

The Computer Networking Specialist program conducted a community survey and used the data to modify its curriculum to focus more attention on English and communication skills, as well as modernizing some classes to better meet community needs.

WDT continually improves and modifies the General Education program to serve the needs of the students, the institution, and the community. The General Education department completes an annual survey of WDT’s technical departments to determine changing needs. The General Education department also held a series of brown-bag lunches to collect input that was used to change General Education courses.

General Education research resulted in a strong emphasis on creating online courses, maintaining evening courses, and increasing course variety. General Education also modified how it offers some courses. WDT reorganized the Introduction to Computers class from a three-credit, 16-week course to a number of one credit, five-week, application-level courses. This change allows programs to select courses students need.

WDT continues to expand the variety of General Education courses offered, the teaching and learning methods used, and the course offerings to meet the needs of all students.

187 General Education Survey.
General Education is currently working to create more courses that can be transferred to the state university system. This will allow WDT to better support the training needs of the community and help more students reach their educational goals.

**General Education Philosophy**

The general education program at Western Dakota Tech is designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills that will contribute to their intellectual, personal, and professional growth and place them on a path of lifelong learning.

General Education provides the skills that employers demand in today’s world and the core abilities needed to be knowledge workers in a global society. Knowledge workers use their abilities and intellect to solve problems.

**Learning outside the classroom**

WDT believes co-curricular activities, such as student clubs, effectively help students learn outside the classroom. Co-curricular activities include clubs and organizations students can join voluntarily to enhance their education and their experiences.

Several student clubs require students to raise funds for activities. In 2006-2007, students in Carpentry, Collision Repair, Automotive, Diesel, and Welding raised funds to support their participation in SkillsUSA. This association holds contests in different technical fields, which allow students the opportunity to test themselves against other students and demonstrate their expertise. In the 2007 competition:

- Carpentry students won 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th at the state competition.
- Collision Repair students won 1st in state and 13th at nationals.
- Automotive Technology students won 1st in state and 1st at nationals.

WDT’s commitment to reach out to diverse populations is demonstrated by its support of culturally diverse programs such as the Eagle Feather Society. WDT supports the Eagle Feather Society by providing meeting locations and funding through the Student Government Association.

The Eagle Feather Society is a Native American student organization that supports and encourages Native American students to succeed in all areas of life. Each year, the Society hosts a sacred ritual where Native Americans who have achieved distinction are awarded a sacred eagle feather to commemorate their accomplishments and receive the honor of the tribe. WDT is honored to be the only higher education institution in South Dakota that holds the ceremony on campus.

WDT also brings to campus speakers and presenters who encourage students in many different areas of personal and professional growth. Speakers have delivered presentations about alcohol and drug awareness, stress management, professional development, and overcoming hardships.
Core Component 4C

WDT assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

WDT continually assesses the usefulness of its curricula through assessment benchmarks. WDT’s individual programs engage advisory committees\textsuperscript{188} to evaluate the efficacy of curriculum and give advice regarding emerging industry trends. Twenty-two programs have active advisory committees of diverse industry and business representatives who have hired program graduates or are important industry partners. Industry feedback allows WDT to monitor the relevance of program curriculum and effectiveness.

Several programs have incorporated recent and long-standing alumni representatives into advisory committees. Alumni assess curriculum relevance and deliver input about all proposed program modifications.

WDT encourages social responsibility by students beginning with campus orientation activities. During this time, WDT suggests participation in a variety of community organizations and service groups. WDT’s Human Relations in the Workplace course requires all students to complete four to eight hours of community service.

During resume workshops and classroom presentations offered by the Career Services office, volunteer service is always encouraged. Furthermore, all Federal Work Study (FWS) students are encouraged both verbally and financially to participate in off-campus community service employment. Students are given contact information for a variety of service organizations as potential FWS employers and are given the opportunity to meet with representatives from a variety of social service organizations during the annual FWS meeting each fall. Since January 2006, students earning FWS wages from off-campus organizations are paid an additional $1 per hour.

\textsuperscript{188} Advisory Committee Minutes.
Core Component 4D

The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

One of the principles listed under the WDT vision is, “WDTI strives to reach its goals by operating in an ethical, open, and cost efficient manner in all its programs and business affairs.”

WDT provides faculty, students, and staff support for acquiring, discovering, and applying knowledge responsibly.

WDT uses the Student Code of Conduct and Procedural Due Process Principles to ensure students understand expectations and accountability methods. The handbook informs students of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Computer/Internet/Network Policy. Discrimination, harassment, plagiarism, and academic transgression also are addressed in course syllabi.

Staff and Faculty receive training regarding FERPA and harassment, and the faculty handbook provides resources and support to ensure ethical and consistent behavior. Areas regarding the responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge in the faculty handbook include:

- Campus Safety/Security .......................... Section 3 P 08
- Professionalism.................................. Section 3 P 12
- Sexual Harassment .............................. Section 3 P 13
- Copyright Law ................................... Section 4 P 14
- Faculty Development ............................ Section 4 P 15

All new faculty are required, for the first two years, to create a professional development plan. The plan includes completing CTE 105, participating in a mentoring program, attending a three-day orientation process, and being observed in the classroom four times per year during the first year.

WDT faculty and staff promote a life of learning by modeling it through regular staff development days, professional development, and pursuit of higher education. The Staff Development Committee reviews and supports requests for professional development outside the scope of individual department budgets.

Institutional Research

WDT is not a research institution, so WDT does not have policies and procedures regarding research. However, WDT collaborates on research projects through a partnership with the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology (SDSM&T).

189 WDT Vision, Mission, Objectives, and Strategic Plan.
In addition, the WDT Welding/Manufacturing program fabricates materials and parts for the SDSM&T Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Production (CAMP) program.

**Supporting students**

WDT supports several student organizations such as the Student Government Association, Eagle Feather Society, Paralegal Club, and Career Enhancement Club. These clubs all contribute to and encourage responsible application of knowledge through the following ways:

- **Accountability**—All members, especially the officers, are assigned duties and are responsible to the other members
- **Human relations skills**—Dealing with all types of personalities within the club prepares students for personal conflicts in the workplace once they graduate
- **Campus leadership**—All students are expected to act in a responsible manner to model appropriate behavior

Student Government Association participants learn and practice leadership, ethics, teambuilding, communication skills, event planning, and advocacy. All of their actions and decisions are discussed and approved by vote of the officers.

SGA members work with the WDT President and administration to learn about professionalism, policy development, and WDT operations. Officers have dedicated office space, which adds to their visibility and accessibility.

SGA is actively involved in several service projects, most of which the student representatives bring forward themselves. In 2006-2007, several of the student representatives were enrolled in the SGA class (SL 100—Applied Leadership and Service) that requires them to complete at least two hours of community service and write reflection papers on their leadership and service experiences.
Summary
WDT is dedicated to students, staff, and faculty. WDT embraces the belief that everyone deserves access to high-quality courses and professional education. WDT will continue to instill a desire in students, faculty, and staff to pursue lives of learning. The groundwork for these efforts is firmly in place and will allow WDT to move forward with confidence.

Strengths
- WDT has developed a General Education philosophy that has served as the basis for creating a broader acceptance of the importance of General Education courses.
- WDT has created research partnerships with other institutions of higher education and business and industry to create new knowledge and economic development opportunities.
- WDT’s clubs and organizations allow students to apply the technical and general education skills learned in the classroom to real-world challenges and projects.
- WDT’s process for faculty performance review and development creates clear goals for improved performance in the classroom, professional development, and service to the institution.

Improvement Initiatives
- WDT must work to reward all faculty and staff members for engaging in professional development opportunities and for meritorious performance.
- WDT must find and implement more effective strategies to encourage faculty and staff members to engage in professional development opportunities.
- WDT must work to engage alumni in returning to the institution to share and enhance their expertise and knowledge.
Overview
WDT identifies its constituents as:

- Students
- Alumni
- Industry
- Community
- WDT faculty and staff

WDT’s constituent groups are listed randomly and do not reflect any order of priority. Though WDT strives to meet the needs of all these groups to the best of the institution’s ability, it is clear that we can and must improve our service to all these groups, in particular, WDT alumni.

Alumni can become a valuable part of the WDT community by providing the institution with in-depth guidance and support as it strives toward meeting institutional goals. Establishing an intensified partnership, based on improved communication and understanding, will help WDT accomplish its mission and improve WDT’s long-term involvement with every alumnus, perpetuating an unbroken lifeline between our past and our future.
Core Component 5A

WDT learns from the constituents it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

WDT is dedicated to collecting input and guidance from each of its constituents, and then to the greatest degree possible, instituting lessons learned. WDT uses the information it gathers from its constituents to improve, expand, and optimize services to ensure WDT meets or exceeds each group’s needs and expectations.

Students

In 2005 and 2006, WDT conducted Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) surveys to gauge how students viewed WDT, its programs, and its services. Both surveys revealed similar results and similar challenges. In March 2006, a formal discussion with faculty members was held to determine possible responses to the challenges. Since then, faculty, staff, and administration have addressed the findings in a multifaceted, comprehensive manner. The SSI identified the following challenges. WDT’s response follows each challenge.

Challenge 1: Equipment in the lab facilities is not kept up to date.

Support for equipment has increased from state Future Funds and partnerships. Future Funds allocations have varied in recent years, from $145,000 in 2003-2004 to $207,000 in 2004-2005 and $197,000 in 2005-2006. Funds have been used to purchase important equipment for programs across campus.

In addition, partnerships with private industry have resulted in:

- $15,000 Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) lab in Industrial Electronics
- Access to advanced welding equipment through the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology
- $500,000 Emergency Response Training Facility from city economic development funds.

Future Funds Allocations

![Future Funds Allocations](image)

190 2005 Student Satisfaction Inventory Results.
191 2006 Student Satisfaction Inventory Results.
WDT continually works to expand partnerships to benefit student learning. WDT’s efforts in this area resulted in a nomination for the prestigious Bellwether Award from the Community College Futures Assembly\textsuperscript{192}.

The WDT Foundation Major Gifts Campaign has continued to grow, approaching 50 percent of its $4 million, four-year target. Expanded support for WDT programs is anticipated as the campaign edges closer to its goal. Foundation efforts have resulted in equipment donations to multiple programs, including Transportation Technology, Fire Science, and Industrial Electronics.

Two major federal grant applications were submitted in 2006 to address program advancement, equipment, and software upgrades. The grants were unsuccessful, but the proposals generated additional thoughts and discussions across campus and within WDT’s Institutional Planning Committee. Those discussions resulted in the incorporation of portions of the grant project proposals into the WDT Strategic Plan\textsuperscript{193}.

The Community Based Job Training Grant requested $1,274,254.90 to assist WDT alleviate the need for healthcare workers in the region. The funds were requested to renovate existing space in the WDT healthcare training area to provide maximum clinical simulation possible. Additional equipment, such as the pregnant patient simulator and universal patient simulator, would have complemented existing training equipment. Additional instructors also would have been hired to handle the increased number of students and training requirements\textsuperscript{194}.

WDT’s Title III grant application requested $2 million to develop and deliver a distance education model using the latest in technology to serve the rural areas of western South Dakota, to implement a new student data management system, and to create an endowment\textsuperscript{195}.

To create additional resources, WDT formed an Office of Institutional Advancement to address institutional needs more aggressively through Foundation giving, grants,

\textsuperscript{192} Bellwether Award Nomination.
\textsuperscript{193} WDT Strategic Plan.
\textsuperscript{194} Community Based Job Grant Abstract.
\textsuperscript{195} Title III Grant Narrative.
partnerships, and program development\textsuperscript{196}. The office hired a Foundation Coordinator responsible for all Foundation activities\textsuperscript{197}. The coordinator’s work is centered on three areas of activity: Building Relationships, Educating and Motivating, and Recognizing and Giving Thanks. The coordinator’s work is summarized in weekly Foundation updates sent to appropriate constituent groups\textsuperscript{198}.

As the Office of Institutional Advancement and the Foundation create the framework necessary for WDT's Major Gifts Campaign to be a true success, the offices have generated tangible results. One excellent example is the donation of sixty $1,000 scholarships from a local charitable foundation.

WDT believes all these efforts are critical to WDT’s future success, especially as institutional budgets for training equipment become more limited due to rising personnel and operating costs. In addition, the rate of revenue increase has not kept up with the rise in costs. Institutional efforts to increase revenue from grants, partnerships, and donors will help WDT meet constituent needs.

\textit{Challenge 2: Quality of instruction in most classes is not excellent.}

WDT has created a well-structured assessment plan that focuses on improving student learning. The Student Learning and Effective Teaching Committee continue to monitor program and department assessments to ensure that learning issues are addressed.

\textit{Challenge 3: Faculty are not fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.}

In August 2006, WDT hosted Bruce and Paula Longfox of Rapid City who presented a four-hour workshop to faculty titled, “Dealing with Diversity in the Classroom.” The presentation was modified to fit the needs and interests of the faculty and addressed issues concerning Native Americans. A follow-up survey of the workshop found a very positive response by faculty\textsuperscript{199}. Faculty felt it was both meaningful and responsive to their questions.

This effort is important because Native American students make up about 12 percent of WDT’s student body, and the institution’s strategic goals include increasing retention rates for that population through better understanding of cultural diversity and improvement of services. The target date to retain Native American students at the same rate or better than the WDT retention rate of all WDT students is May 20, 2009. WDT’s Retention Task Force will formulate specific strategies to reach the goal.

\textsuperscript{196} Assistant to the President for Institutional Advancement Job Description.
\textsuperscript{197} Foundation Coordinator Job Description.
\textsuperscript{198} Weekly Foundation Updates.
\textsuperscript{199} Diversity Workshop Survey Results.
Challenge 4: Students get the run-around when seeking information on this campus.

Through analysis of the SSI information and WDT processes, the Admissions and Marketing offices were combined to enhance communications with prospective students through the admissions process.

A strategy is required to improve communications between faculty and staff. WDT’s Strategic Plan targets May 2008 as the deadline for an internal communications plan.

Challenge 5: Classes are not scheduled at convenient times.

An evening program in Business Management & Marketing was reintroduced in the fall semester of 2006 to accommodate students wishing to earn a business degree after normal business hours.

In the fall of 2007, the Fire Science program began offering online classes to accommodate students already working in the firefighting field who want to complete an Associate of Applied Science degree. Twenty-three students enrolled in the classes.

The Computer-Aided Drafting Technician Program began offering classes at night and online in Fall 2007. WDT cancelled the classes because of low enrollment.

Within a month before the end of selected WDT classes, including all those taught by adjunct faculty, students are asked to complete a course evaluation form\textsuperscript{200}.

After final grades are submitted, instructors receive the results and are directed to complete a reflection form that identifies the positive and negative portions of the review and the steps the faculty member will take to change the situation.

The reflection papers are used during subsequent performance evaluations to help determine if the faculty member achieved performance goals. Following is a sampling of responses from a recent semester’s reflection papers:

\textsuperscript{200} Student Evaluation Form.
- Emphasize that students can email or call me with concerns.
- The Troubleshooting class will have more structure with a better-defined goal.
- I will continue to invite students to dialogue with me early on to allow for prompt resolution of issues they may have.
- I don’t always appreciate students who are not prepared for class and apparently I am letting it show. So, I need to keep my impatience under wraps and try to be more diplomatic.
- I will provide more supplementary materials with real-life examples.
- I will reorganize and streamline the course material, adjust the testing pattern, maintain flexibility, and increase the number of activities and amount of homework
- I will work on student perceptions that I favor students.
- My goal is to have two student projects which may involve working as small groups and/or working with community resources.

**Alumni**

Alumni relations have not historically been a priority for WDT. When WDT initiated the Foundation’s Major Gifts Campaign, WDT realized the weakness created by a lack of alumni focus. In response to the clear need, responsibility for alumni relations was given to the Institutional Advancement office. Alumni services have improved, but additional work is needed so alumni become a more important part of WDT.

WDT hosted an alumni gathering for Practical Nursing graduates that drew more than 30 graduates. The gathering resulted in preceptorships and full-time job opportunities for current WDT students.

WDT is organizing an Alumni Association with the assistance of alumni volunteers. The association is planning a May 2008 kickoff event that will coincide with commencement activities. The association hopes to use the organization to keep alumni connected to WDT, generate employment opportunities for alumni, create discounted rates for continuing education, and to build the groundwork for long-term fundraising opportunities.

WDT has refocused its efforts and is committed to serving our alumni. The Career Services Office offers career counseling, mock interviews, resume review, and resume filing services for students and alumni.
Each spring, WDT hosts a Career Fair on campus. This event has grown with the reputation of, and demand for, WDT alumni in the workforce. In the past five years, it has grown from barely 20 employers to more than 60 local, regional, and national companies. Alumni are invited via email to attend this event. The Career Services Office also offers email notification of relevant job opportunities to WDT alumni by email.

WDT looks forward to launching its own online job-posting service that will improve alumni services. This service will allow companies to post employment opportunities through an automated system that notifies students and alumni of relevant openings. The online job system also will allow students and alumni to post their resumes for consideration by prospective employers. With a target completion date of summer 2008, this service will allow WDT to reconnect with graduates and provide continual service.

Career Services sends all graduates letters and emails to prepare the annual Graduate Placement Report. In addition to updating student contact information, follow-up services are also offered in the event a student is seeking employment assistance.

**Industry**

WDT’s mission is to train a skilled workforce for regional economic development needs. WDT works with its business and industry partners to make sure WDT graduates meet existing needs.

WDT’s annual Career Fair brings dozens of local, regional, and national employers to campus to meet and recruit students for post-graduation employment. The 2008 fair drew more than 65 employers, the largest number in the event’s 10-year history. Career Services works to recruit new employers to the event and to make changes to the event. Feedback received in 2006 resulted in several changes to the 2007 event, including rearranging booth space to give employers greater visibility.

WDT’s Office of Institutional Advancement is responsible for tracking regional and national industry needs, meeting with the region’s businesses, and following local and national employment trends. The collected data is used to support the creation of new programs and new areas of emphasis in current programs.
In addition, the current funding formula for technical institutes in South Dakota has forced WDT to focus primarily on creating new programs that can be started with little additional resources. The Field Engineering Technician\textsuperscript{201} program is an excellent example of WDT’s efforts in this area. Existing faculty and adjuncts teach Field Engineering. Partnerships with industry resulted in donations to purchase equipment and supplies.

Each WDT program has an advisory committee of industry experts and constituents. The advisory committees discuss the needs of the community and industry. The committees examine curriculum to ensure that what is happening in the classroom and laboratories matches what happens in the workplace. These relationships give WDT a regular opportunity to hear from this constituent group and respond to its needs.

In discussions with members of the regional firefighting community, it became clear that an Emergency Training Center was needed in the Rapid City area. WDT worked with fire departments and emergency response agencies to construct a proposal for the Rapid City 2012 program. The program, funded by a special sales tax, allows community groups to request funds for projects that improve the community. WDT designed a proposal for what became known as the Emergency Response Training Center\textsuperscript{202} and testified multiple times to the Rapid City Council about the benefits a training center would bring to the community. The Rapid City Council eventually approved the $500,000 project. The building was completed in 2007 and is used by area firefighters and WDT students in the Fire Science and Law Enforcement Technology programs.

**Community**

In response to community needs, the WDT Student Government Association (SGA) holds events that serve our constituents in the community. SGA hosts one to three blood drives every year at the request of United Blood Services in Rapid City. SGA also has held food drives in response to a plea from the Black Hills Regional Food Bank. SGA also responded to a fund-raising request from Storybook Island by purchasing a $50 brick inscribed with the WDT logo.

\textsuperscript{201} Field Engineering Technician Curriculum.
\textsuperscript{202} Emergency Response Training Center Plan.
Community organizations and groups have access to WDT facilities for events that meet the WDT mission. Groups either pay nothing or a nominal fee for facility use.

Because WDT is considered an integral part of the region’s workforce development efforts, the institution is often asked to participate in multiple economic development organization activities. When these organizations host businesses that are considering expanding or moving to the western South Dakota region, WDT participates by supplying information about credit and non-credit training opportunities, partnerships, graduate placement, skill sets taught, and other data that can help companies make wise, informed decisions. In 2007, a major defense contractor visited Rapid City on short notice. The Rapid City Economic Development Partnership asked WDT to put together packages with specific information to address the company’s questions. WDT responded and participated in the meetings with the company’s officials. The company eventually opened a Rapid City office.

**WDT Faculty and Staff**

Because of the success of the Student Satisfaction Inventory, WDT administered the Institutional Priorities Survey in 2006 to gauge faculty and staff perceptions about a large number of issues. This survey identified multiple strengths and challenges faced by the institution:

- **Strengths**
  - WDT graduates are prepared for their careers
  - Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields
  - Curriculum is relevant
  - Technical courses challenge the students
  - Adequate financial aid is available for most students
  - Financial aid counselors are helpful
  - Academic advisors are knowledgeable about program requirements
  - Students are made to feel welcome on this campus
  - The campus staff are caring and helpful
  - Program requirements are clear and reasonable
  - Counseling staff care about students as individuals
  - Students are able to experience intellectual growth here

- **Challenges**
  - Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students
  - Administration is approachable to faculty and staff
  - The equipment in the lab facilities is kept up to date
  - Faculty and staff play an important role in important campus decisions
  - Administrators respond quickly to faculty and staff concerns
  - The campus is safe and secure for all students
  - Faculty and staff play an important role in strategic planning

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203 2006 Institutional Priorities Survey Results.
WDT will administer the Institutional Priorities Survey again in spring 2008 to determine if changes made to processes, structures, and areas of priority affected the strengths and challenges identified.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, WDT’s President met with new faculty members several times to learn their initial impressions of WDT, the faculty training process, and other matters of importance. Because of these meetings, changes were made to the new faculty orientation program.

Monthly all-staff meetings allow faculty and staff to hear campus news, announcements, new initiatives, status updates, and other information directly from other WDT staff and faculty. Those in attendance have the opportunity to ask questions of decision-makers and others.

General Education instructors regularly attend program advisory committee meetings. This participation facilitates open discussion between General Education instructors and the programs to determine if the General Education classes are effective for the students in different program areas. Alternative class delivery methods and schedules have been developed as a result of these meetings.
Core Component 5B
WDT has the capacity and the commitment to fully engage its identified constituents and communities.

Making connections
WDT has identified its constituents and created structures and processes to connect with them. WDT relies on these connections to ensure the institution is providing appropriate services at the best times and places.

WDT’s program advisory committees are especially important when programs are being developed and initiated. WDT began planning for the Field Engineering Technician program in 2005. After discussions with various constituent groups, WDT designed a curriculum for implementation in Fall 2007. In the Fall 2006 semester, a program coordinator was named and held additional, more in-depth meetings with constituent groups from across the region. The meetings led to an overhaul of the curriculum, the creation of two program tracks, and a program more focused on industry needs204.

WDT’s Tech Prep office has created 39 credit articulation agreements with secondary schools in western South Dakota205. The agreements include 465 individual courses that allow students to transfer high school credit to their WDT studies.

WDT’s Student Government Association (SGA) allocates student fees to student organizations across campus. The amount allocated to each group depends on the request made. In the 2007-2008 academic year, SGA allocated $20,000 to student organizations206. This process allows student organizations to connect with multiple resources.

The annual Christmas at WDT event invites the children of WDT faculty, staff, and students to campus to visit Santa, play games, and enjoy snacks. Because of the economic situation of some students, this is an important holiday celebration that allows their children to feel special. The campus also participates in several Angel Tree activities that result in gifts being given to the children of WDT students.

204 Field Engineering Technician Curriculum.
205 Tech Prep Articulation Agreements.
At the beginning of each fall semester, WDT hosts a Community Resource Fair that brings dozens of community agencies, churches, and organizations to campus to show students the wide variety of services available in the community. The event is designed to make sure students have connections to the wide variety of resources that exist in Rapid City and to make sure students have at least one opportunity to access them easily.

WDT hosted a Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce mixer in February 2006. Several hundred members of Rapid City’s business community toured campus on Valentine’s Day, met instructors and staff, and learned more about how WDT serves Rapid City and western South Dakota.

In March and April 2007, the WDT Bookstore held a clothing sale that gave discounts to anyone who brought in food items for area food pantries that supply the necessities of life to those in need.

Multiple WDT programs have internship or preceptorship requirements built into the curriculum. These experiences send students to work in real-world settings with professionals already practicing in the area of study. These programs connect students directly with industry.

The internships and preceptorships are designed to enhance each student’s educational experience by allowing them to take part in a professional setting that matches the post-graduation world. This connection gives students opportunities to make connections, build relationships, and learn about their profession and the tasks that they will be required to accomplish as a professional.

One particularly exciting internship example is the partnership WDT’s Industrial Electronics program has created with Peabody Coal Company of Wyoming. Under the agreement, WDT students spend a semester working full-time at the coal mine before returning to WDT to finish their degree program. If they maintain a 3.0 grade-point average (on a 4.0 scale), the company pays for that final semester of study and guarantees the student a job after graduation.

In 2007, Business Management & Marketing students designed public-service billboard messages for a local billboard company. The student group collaborated with EPIC sign company in Rapid City to design a summer safety awareness campaign.

WDT faculty, staff, and students represent WDT at community events that connect the institution to the community. Examples include the Red Ribbon anti-drug
parade, WDT night at Storybook Island, Black Hills Regional Job Fair, Business to Business Expo, Parade of Lights, Bowl for Kids Sake, and many others. Three examples can be found in the WDT health programs.

- Phlebotomy/Laboratory Technician students assist Rapid City Regional Hospital personnel during the hospital’s Wellness Check program. WDT students draw blood from Rapid City School District and WDT faculty and staff and family members and properly package the samples for delivery to the laboratory. The event allows WDT students to practice their skills and demonstrate their abilities to community members. In 2006, more than 50 people participated in the program.

- During the 2006-2007 academic year, Practical Nursing students participated in a medical information project with senior citizens in the Rapid City community. The students scheduled meetings at retirement communities and senior centers, and invited anyone interested to participate at no charge. During the meetings, the students collected medical histories, lists of medications, allergies, emergency contacts, and other information that was compiled, formatted in an easy-to-use manner, and delivered to each of the 65 participants. In addition to helping community members create an accurate and concise document containing their personal medical information, the project allowed students to connect with and serve the community.

- During the 2006-2007 academic year, Practical Nursing students participated in a screening event at MediCap Pharmacy. The students did blood pressure checks and blood glucose testing free of charge for more than 100 pharmacy customers and other members of the community.

Recognizing service
To support and recognize the efforts of WDT faculty and staff who participate in the community, WDT created the Doc Gifford Community Service Award. Dr. Ken Gifford was a long-time Director of WDT who helped the institution survive some lean years and grow. The Doc Gifford Award is presented to a full-time faculty or staff member for providing outstanding service to WDT through involvement and contribution in the community by:

- Participating actively in professional, civic, and/or community organizations
- Welcoming volunteer responsibilities and leadership roles
- Demonstrating dedication and loyalty to WDT
- Building positive relationships and maintaining good rapport with members of the community

Nominations for the award are accepted from across campus. A committee of

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207 Medical History Project Information Sheet.
208 Doc Gifford Community Service Award Nomination Form.
faculty and staff members representing a cross-section of the campus reviews the nominations and selects the winner. The recipient is given a marble pillar to represent their status as an upstanding, solid member of the community.

Planning for engagement
WDT has built community service into its strategic planning efforts. One of the institution’s Strategic Priorities is named “Citizenship” and describes the institution’s broad plans for the future in this area^{209}. WDT’s Institutional Planning Committee has written action plans that serve as the implementation guidelines for the Strategic Priority.

^{209} Strategic Priority—Citizenship.
Core Component 5C

WDT demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituents that depend on it for services.

Credit transfer programs
WDT has created articulation agreements with other colleges and universities to provide WDT graduates more opportunities. Program-to-program agreements with South Dakota regental universities allow WDT students to transfer a portion of their credits to four of the five bachelor’s degree granting institutions in South Dakota\(^\text{210}\). Working together, the state’s four technical institutes assisted in the promotion of these agreements in a program called FlexFactor. Students can quickly see what technical institute courses will transfer where at the website, www.flexfactor.info\(^\text{211}\). Every program-to-program agreement is different, and the technical institutes and some Regental universities continue to work together to identify additional transfer opportunities.

WDT also has a 2+2 agreement with National American University\(^\text{212}\). The agreement allows WDT students who have earned an associate of applied science degree to complete their bachelor’s degree in Applied Management at NAU in two years or less while attending classes full-time. The partnership with NAU is natural because NAU and WDT share similar missions – preparing students for successful careers in a wide variety of fields. That makes it easy for students to take the technical experience and foundational skills learned at WDT and transition to advanced studies to earn their bachelor’s degree at NAU.

WDT students who transfer credits to NAU will have the option of taking classes both on campus and online to complete their bachelor’s degree. Online classes give students the flexibility to create schedules that best fit their busy lifestyles.

In addition to helping students transfer WDT credits to other institutions of higher education, WDT accepts credits in many circumstances. Students requesting credit at WDT for postsecondary work completed at other schools must submit official transcripts. Postsecondary credits from an accredited higher education institution in which the student has earned a grade of “C” or higher, or its equivalent, are considered for transfer. Program faculty, with administrative approval, will make

\(^\text{210}\) Articulation Agreements with Regental Institutions.
\(^\text{211}\) http://www.flexfactor.info.
\(^\text{212}\) National American University Articulation Agreement.
the determination of acceptance. Appropriate staff review military credit for transfer.

Students wishing to challenge course work for credit are required to successfully complete an examination. Student Services must approve all credit-by-exam requests. Credit may be granted based on previous work history if approved by the appropriate instructor with administrative approval.

Tech Prep brings direct savings and benefits to students and educators through articulation agreements and professional benefits. More than 40 high schools and educational programs in western South Dakota now participate in Tech Prep programs through articulation agreements and consortium membership. These schools are not just the traditional public high school. Some are alternative schools, private schools, adult basic education programs, and special needs programs. Tech Prep goes wherever there are students and teachers, and everyone benefits when students and teachers are motivated to excel.

Articulation agreements between individual secondary schools and WDT\textsuperscript{213} provide opportunities for high school graduates to apply high school credits as credits toward technical institute graduation. For example, an incoming high school graduate may not need to repeat or pay for a course or courses already completed in high school if that student can document a B average in the high school courses. A student who has taken English, Algebra, Computer Applications, and Agricultural classes in a high school with a current articulation agreement could enroll at WDT with as many as 12 credits already completed. An added benefit to the student is that those transferable credits can be used at any of the four technical institutes in the state.

Articulation agreement renewal is required every two years to ensure a match between secondary level coursework and postsecondary level coursework. The WDT Tech Prep office coordinates the agreements.

WDT’s Tech Prep office has created 39 credit articulation agreements with secondary schools in western South Dakota. The agreements include 465 individual courses that allow students to transfer high school credit to their WDT studies.

Tech Prep programs also allow high school teachers to earn college credit through a variety of Tech Prep activities that focus on career education, integrative curriculum, applied academics and methodology, and work-based learning experiences. Member schools in the WDT Tech Prep Consortium can receive financial assistance to send teachers and counselors to these activities. Tech Prep held 13 such events during the 2005-2006 academic year, with nearly 300 participants.

\textsuperscript{213} Tech Prep Articulation Agreements.
During the most recent reporting year, the Tech Prep Coordinator participated in a wide variety of committees and related activities to connect with WDT constituents. A few examples:

- Serving on the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) senior project committee at Stevens High School
- Serving on the School to Work Advisory Committee at Sturgis Brown High School
- Serving as President of the West River Counseling Association and serving on the South Dakota Counseling Association Board. WRCA held three conferences for area counselors
- Presenting a session on diversity issues at the SDCA Conference in Pierre
- Serving as Rapid City Area Schools Community Partnership Facilitator
- Creating the annual Tech Prep brochure, the new articulation brochure, and the “Your Future is HOTT” brochure
- Creating the “Talking Points” flier used on SDCA Legislative Day along with a new brochure for SDCA

Tech Prep also participated in activities that connected students in the program’s service area with business and industry. Some examples:

- Eighteen students from Bennett County School District participated in paid and unpaid internships, tutoring, and community projects.
- Forty Douglas High School students experienced business presentations in classrooms, and they volunteered to work 90 hours in a career of interest.
- One hundred forty four students from Timber Lake High School took part in internships and job shadowing.
- Nineteen students from Philip High School participated in School to Work and supervised work experiences.

Tech Prep worked with businesses across its service area to provide work-based learning experiences for 3,693 high school students during the most recent reporting year. The experiences included internships, job shadowing, Youth Employment Skills Program, conference and seminar attendance and many others. These events allow WDT to meet the needs of its constituents by connecting future members of the workforce with employers and other opportunities.

**Dual Enrollment**

WDT also offers dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. WDT believes that dual credit courses will enhance and extend the high school curriculum, in addition to avoiding unnecessary duplication in coursework during the students’ transition from high school to the technical institute or other postsecondary education. High school student participation has grown in recent years.

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216 Tech Prep Final Report, 2005-06.
years. In the Fall 2004 semester, 55 high school students enrolled in 241 credit hours. In the Fall 2006 semester, 75 students enrolled in 388 credit hours\textsuperscript{217}. Stringent guidelines exist for placement in dual enrollment. Upon successful completion of these courses, such students receive credit toward high school graduation and toward completion of a degree or a diploma.

As part of the Tech Prep strategic plan for the next three years, dual enrollment opportunities with WDT will be expanded to any high school in the state that elects to enter into a dual enrollment agreement. An informal survey of dual enrollment agreements in local high schools indicated a growing interest by students and parents to “double time” through coursework necessary for high school graduation and postsecondary placement.

Information about the expansion of the dual enrollment program was disseminated to area high schools throughout the spring of 2007, and two area high schools have elected to pilot dual enrollment for their students by entering into formal agreements with WDT for the 2007-2008 school year. These students are enrolled in dual enrollment classes online, during the day, and in the evening. Their progress will be monitored and student participation and achievement will be critical to evaluating the success of self-pay dual enrollment. Tech Prep will use the results to aggressively seek to expand those opportunities to other schools in the area. Dual enrollment opportunities will eventually include onsite delivery of coursework by WDT instructors and course delivery by teleconference.

Special Services

WDT offers and provides services to a wide variety of nontraditional students. WDT recognizes the fact that nontraditional students have very different circumstances and obstacles than traditional students. WDT provides several financial services and emotional support to all nontraditional students.

- Resource Information and Referral—Helps point students toward possible support services and funding opportunities outside of WDT
- Book Loan Program—A limited number of General Education books are available through the Special Services Loan Library. Books are checked out for the semester on a first-come, first-served basis
- Student Assistance Center—Offers tutoring and help with study skills at no cost

\textsuperscript{217} Dual Enrollment Report.
- Mentoring—Pairs new nontraditional students with current nontraditional students for support purposes
- Workshops—Many subjects are covered, including scholarship searches, job seeking skills, study skills, and stress management
- Nontraditional Student Organization—Provides opportunities for nontraditional students to meet with peers and talk about common concerns and issues
- Child Development Center—Provides a nurturing, reasonably priced environment for children ages 4 weeks to 12 years
- Personal Counseling—A counselor is available in Student Services to provide counseling services free of charge
- Academic Counseling—Student Services provides academic counseling to answer questions about academic progress, class schedule changes, and other academic issues
- Career Counseling—Helps students figure out what they want to do with their education.
- Financial Resources—Funds are available to help with some educational costs, such as:
  - Tuition Assistance
  - Child Care
  - Transportation
  - Emergency Funds
  - Certification/Workshop/Testing Fees

Responding to constituent needs
WDT faculty and staff respond to the needs of the institution’s constituents in a wide variety of ways. According to a survey completed for this report:

- 39 percent of WDT faculty & staff report non-work-related involvement with local schools.
- 36 percent of WDT faculty & staff report non-work-related involvement with other higher education institutions.
- Staff members coordinate the Campuses Community Prevention Coalition with South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and National American University to track and reduce high-risk behavior by students.
- Faculty and staff hold memberships in 103 professional organizations, with WDT assisting with dues through the budgeting process and Staff Development.

The Information Technology (IT) office at WDT provides services to students, alumni, faculty, and staff. The IT staff repairs software and hardware issues, researches and makes recommendations about emerging technology, and provides general support for all computing functions across campus. It is especially interesting to note the services for alumni. Any WDT alum can request assistance with computer issues, and the IT office provides services free of charge. While the
IT office does not track alumni service requests, the office estimates that more than 12 alumni requested assistance during the 2006-2007 academic year. The IT office also provides free assistance to faculty and staff who have issues with personal computers and software. The IT office remains open until 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday to provide service to daytime and evening students, faculty, and staff.

The IT office also provides guidance when the campus considers technology purchases. IT staff will conduct research, gather prices, and make alternate recommendations if necessary. For example, when Business Management & Marketing instructors suggested wireless projectors for classrooms, IT staff made sure the suggestion was solid before beginning the purchase process. Currently, six classrooms are equipped with wireless projection systems.

The Dakota Grill serves breakfast and lunch to students, faculty, staff, and industry and community members on campus. The Dakota Grill offers daily specials and a variety of salads, sandwiches, and made-to-order meals.

**Workforce development**

In response to requests from industry and economic development officials in the western South Dakota region, WDT collaborated with other technical institutes in the state to create a Five-Point Plan for Workforce Development.\(^{219}\)

South Dakota already faces worker shortages in key labor areas such as nursing, manufacturing, nuclear medicine and engineering technicians, electronics, welding, transportation, and many others. Those shortages will soon be compounded by the impending Baby Boomer retirement that will create up to a projected 50 percent worker demand in many core industries during the next 10 years. These trends also will affect the state’s ability to adequately staff new and expanding industries.

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\(^{219}\) [http://www.wdt.edu/workforcedevelopment](http://www.wdt.edu/workforcedevelopment).
The plan’s five points:

- **Give Working Adults More Opportunities:** Technical institutes have traditionally targeted recent high school graduates. As a result, the proportion of older adult students is smaller in South Dakota than in other states. WDT will provide these adults with new career opportunities by:
  - Placing a renewed emphasis on the 24 to 44 age group
  - Reaching these students where they are—at work and in the community
  - Creating innovative educational methods that appeal to working adults

- **Innovate to Serve:** A significant percentage of programs offered by the technical institutes are campus-based, largely because of lab and shop-oriented instruction methods. WDT will provide more convenient learning alternatives for potential students of all ages who live long distances from a technical institute campus or possess a schedule that keeps them from coming to campus during regular hours by:
  - Providing additional educational opportunities during evenings and weekends
  - Creating more online courses
  - Making more use of the Digital Dakota Network
  - Opening additional off-campus learning centers
  - Taking advantage of new learning technologies such as podcasts, vodcasts, and others.

- **Target Greatest Needs:** The technical institutes will work with South Dakota business and industry to ensure that new and existing programs focus on developing student skills in areas of greatest workforce need. Additionally, WDT will work in partnership to create new ways of attracting students to these careers, including enhanced workplace internships, cooperative education, scholarships, and forgivable loans supported by industry.

- **Build Excitement About South Dakota Careers:** WDT will spread the message to students of all ages that dreams can come true in South Dakota. WDT will work in partnership with business and industry and K-12 school systems to:
  - Increase dual enrollment opportunities for high school students
  - Target students who have no postsecondary education plans
  - Create career academies and summer institutes for middle school and early high school students in priority career fields
  - Promote South Dakota careers in elementary and middle schools in interesting, age-appropriate ways

- **Create National Career Training Centers:** Regardless of the success of all other strategies, South Dakota must also focus on creating a net in-migration of workers. Technical institutes, along with business and industry partners and the Regental system, will focus on creating national training centers.
focused on careers and skills in greatest demand. These national training centers will bring to South Dakota students from across the country who are interested in these career fields. Once they are here, WDT will attempt to retain them by promoting South Dakota’s quality of life and by educating them about the state’s career opportunities.
Core Component 5D

*Internal and external constituents value the services WDT provides.*

**Enrollment and graduates**

Enrollment increases and the institution’s increasing number of community partnerships demonstrates the value constituents place on the services WDT provides.

WDT enrollment in diploma and degree programs has risen steadily for three years to 1,055 in the 2006-2007 Fall semester. Enrollment has also risen for the spring semester in each of those years to 1,010 in the 2007 spring semester.

Final student counts conducted at the end of each semester also have risen, as have the number of graduates. In May 2007, WDT graduated 363 students, the most ever in the history of the institution\(^{220}\). This shows that WDT is retaining and graduating the students it recruits.

**Gauging value of services**

WDT measures the value students place on WDT services in a variety of ways. Through course evaluations and the Student Satisfaction Inventory, WDT is able to gauge student satisfaction. Based on those surveys, WDT has made changes to better serve students across campus.

WDT has been particularly active in using results of the Student Satisfaction Survey (SSI). In surveys completed in 2005 and 2006, teaching effectiveness was clearly a

\(^{220}\) Commencement Program, 2007.
concern of students. As a result, the Assessment Committee was renamed the Student Learning Effectiveness Committee and undertook a series of actions to improve the quality of teaching, including focusing more faculty in-service time on teaching excellence and the distribution of teaching improvement tips via email\textsuperscript{221}.

WDT will use the consecutive year results to build a baseline of student satisfaction in a wide variety of areas. The institution now plans to conduct the survey biannually to continue tracking data and using it to make changes to better serve students.

WDT measures the value local employers place on the institution’s services through placement rates. Placement data show that 88 percent of 2005-2006 graduates were hired by South Dakota companies and that nearly 95 percent were placed in careers within six months of graduation\textsuperscript{222}.

**Corporate Education Center**

To serve the community and industry, WDT provides non-credit programs and training opportunities in our service area.

In the late 1970s, the Governor of South Dakota established the Business & Industry Training Centers (BIT) and incorporated them within the four technical institutes in the state. The Governor’s Office of Economic Development provides financial assistance for the BIT administrators’ salaries at each of the tech schools. The mission was to “ensure the citizens of South Dakota a range of customized training programs to become productive workers in a technologically advanced society.” Over the years, the BIT Centers have provided numerous short-term training classes for individual employees and businesses/industries in their respective service territories.

During 2005-2006, the BIT Center at WDT increased efforts to promote and encourage continuing education. BIT modeled its strategy after WDT’s credit-bearing programs and the Core Abilities created by the institution. A new training paradigm was created to offer programs and courses in the eight skills areas that are critical for corporate and individual success:

- Industry Specific Skills
- Technology Skills
- Communication Skills
- Teamwork
- Analytical Skills
- Life Skills
- Social Values
- Employability

\textsuperscript{221} Effective Teaching Emails.

\textsuperscript{222} Placement Report, 2007.
The training is offered in three tracks, each one building on the other so skills grow on a solid base:

- Core Track
- Upskills Track
- Mastery Track

In addition, all participants in any non-credit course or program are tracked as they progress, using state-of-the-art software that creates individualized non-credit transcripts. This allows employers to build and track a comprehensive training program for every employee in any organization. It also allows employees to have a transcript that proves their efforts to build their skills and knowledge.

Because of these changes, the BIT Center was renamed the Corporate Education Center in 2006. An enhanced mission statement was crafted.

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**Corporate Education Center Mission**

The Corporate Education Center promotes economic development in the western South Dakota region by providing short-term training to individuals and customized training to business and industry.

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The Corporate Education Center believes that investing in lifelong learning leads employees toward more satisfying, productive working lives. It also enhances job performance, teamwork, and overall competitiveness.

The Corporate Education Center provides a variety of services and training options for individuals, existing businesses or industry groups, and companies that are considering expanding or upgrading employee skills.

Several thousand workers throughout western South Dakota, and adjoining states, annually enroll in Corporate Education classes/programs. They represent numerous businesses and industries, and have a wide variety of job titles. Enrollment in Corporate Education Center programs and courses has increased for the past several years to slightly more than 3,000 in the year 2007.

Open enrollment classes are published in a flier in the spring and fall. These are short-term classes with a wide audience. Offerings include one-day computer classes; courses in customer service and business communication; Commercial Driver’s License seminar; welding; and many others223.

Customized training courses are created for individual companies. The Corporate Education Center assists companies in assessing their training needs, developing curriculum, securing resources, and providing the training. The Center utilizes

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223 Corporate Education Center Course Schedule, Spring 2007.
qualified, experienced instructors from education and industry\textsuperscript{224}. The Center serves all of western South Dakota, on and off-site by bringing the training to a company site or conducting training on campus.

Industry training that is short in nature and designed for specific careers is conducted throughout the year. Examples include: Professional Truck Driving, Emergency Medical Technician, Dental Assistant Apprenticeship Training. It is clear that constituents value these services.

Nearly every graduate of the six-week Professional Truck Driving program\textsuperscript{225} is hired before they graduate. The program began in 1995, when the trucking industry faced a 100,000 truck driver shortage nationwide. South Dakota trucking companies requested a customized training program for entry-level truck drivers.

The Corporate Education Center developed a six-week training program designed to prepare men and women for over-the-road semi-truck driving employment. The course consists of classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel experience. To date, 451 students have graduated from the program. The Corporate Education Center has received donations of tractor-trailers from local, state, and national trucking companies and through grants from the Governor’s Office of Economic Development.

In addition to local employment, our graduates are routinely recruited by the nation’s largest carriers. They applaud us for a high quality program, well-rounded curriculum, low student teacher ratio (4:1), experienced trainers, good facilities and equipment, and an excellent geographical training area: busy two-lanes, interstate driving, city driving, hills, and inclement weather.

The Black Hills District Dental Society supports the Dental Assistant Apprenticeship Training Program\textsuperscript{226} by providing all equipment and students. In 1991, the Dental Society requested a customized training program for current employees in dental offices. The Corporate Education Center developed an apprenticeship program, which is approved by the South Dakota Board of Dentistry, the U.S. Department of Labor—Apprenticeship Training, and recognized by DAN-B, the national accrediting agency. The program consists of 144 classroom hours and 2,000 hours on-the-job training. To date, 184 students have graduated from the program. The success of this program is credited not only to the quality of instruction, but also by the

\textsuperscript{224} Corporate Education Center Trainer Biographies.
\textsuperscript{225} Corporate Education Center CDL Program Brochure.
\textsuperscript{226} Corporate Education Center Dental Assistant Brochure.
incredible support of the dental community. Area dentists contribute to the program through donations of supplies, equipment, use of dental offices for clinicals, and serve as guest lecturers during the program.

The Corporate Education Center has been the leading provider for EMT-Basic and EMT-Intermediate Training Programs in the region for more than 20 years. These programs serve training needs for fire, ambulance, and law enforcement agencies throughout the region. Students complete the National Registry exam at the conclusion of the course. The pass rate of the EMT-B program participants is among the highest in the state. The pass rate percentage for Fall 2006 participants was 78 percent, with a 98 percent pass rate on the retake. The pass rate percentage for Spring 2007 was 83 percent, with a 100 percent pass rate on the retake\(^{227}\). Local city, county, and volunteer fire departments contribute to the programs through donations of time, talent, and equipment.

WDT is an authorized training center for American Heart Association CPR courses. The Corporate Education Center provides classes and recertification opportunities for 700-800 individuals annually, making us one of the largest providers of these services in the area. During FY 06, the number of individuals certified in CPR was 782 through the Corporate Education Center and another 380 individuals through the credit programs at WDT.

Continuing education or certification courses are held throughout the year. These courses meet the requirements for specific industries, such as continuing education for licensed electricians, dental radiography certification, forklift operator certification, EMT Refresher, and CPR recertification. Courses are rarely cancelled because of insufficient enrollments, proving their value to our constituents.

More than 300 online classes are offered through the Corporate Education Center’s partnership with ed2go. The classes are offered in a variety of topics, including computers, certification prep courses, business administration, accounting, sales and marketing, health care, grant writing, languages, and others.\(^{228}\)

More than 50 online training programs are offered through a partnership with Gatlin Education. These programs prepare students for a variety of careers in healthcare, business, web design, technical programs, computer networking and certification programs, video game design and development programs, and construction technology programs\(^{229}\).

WDT facility leasing allows constituents to use WDT facilities for instructional purposes and activities that support the mission of WDT. During the 2007 fiscal year, 55 external companies used WDT facilities on 200 different dates. The Corporate Education Center is responsible for scheduling and approval of training conducted by outside agencies and by industry. The Customized Training Center

\(^{228}\) http://www.wdt.edu.
\(^{229}\) http://www.wdt.edu.
was built to be an exceptional setting for training, seminars, and educational workshops. It has elevated seating for up to 140 people and is equipped with computer projection equipment and large screen televisions.

WDT has a long history in the community for providing facility usage for approved events. As a result, partnerships have developed with various businesses and/or industries that are mutually beneficial to our programs and students.

- **Automobile Industry.** Daimler Chrysler, Ford Motor Co., and General Motors have conducted training for area service technicians in WDT facilities. The Customized Training Center and its large shop area were designed to accommodate this particular industry, with an overhead door and car lift. The auto manufacturers allow WDT instructors and students to attend the training sessions at no charge. In addition, they provide automobiles, equipment, and training materials to our Auto Tech Program for training purposes. This allows our students to train on new vehicle models and keep up-to-date on changing technology.

- **Eddie’s Truck Sales and the Freightliner Corporation.** These companies conduct service semi-tractor technician training at WDT. WDT students and instructors are allowed to attend at no charge. Eddie’s Truck Sales was instrumental in assisting the Corporate Education Center’s start-up of the Professional Truck Driving Program by providing equipment at no or minimal charge. They continue to support the program by offering truck repairs at discounted rates. The owner of the company has been a member of the WDT Foundation Board of Directors for five years, serving as the Vice President, and is an active participant and generous contributor to the major gifts campaign. The company also provides internship and career opportunities to WDT’s Transportation Technology Program students.

- **Education.** Black Hills State University utilizes various classrooms throughout the campus at a nominal fee. BHSU and WDT have developed articulation agreements for a number of classes and programs, allowing students to transfer credits. South Dakota State University utilizes the Customized Training Center to provide Occupational Health and Safety Administration training for the Associated General Contractors. The University of South Dakota utilizes WDT’s facilities for nitrous oxide training for area dental offices. Chadron State College (CSC) uses WDT’s facilities for orientation sessions for their new students from western South Dakota. CSC and WDT have articulation agreements allowing students to transfer credits. Rapid City Area School District utilizes WDT facilities for classes, employee in-service activities, spelling contests, testing, Academy graduation ceremony, and other events. WDT offers qualified RCAS high school juniors and seniors to participate in dual enrollment classes at a discounted rate. Finally, the RCAS Rushmore Academy program is housed at WDT.
• Government. The South Dakota Department of Corrections rents office and classroom space in the Rushmore Building for Juvenile Correction Services. State agencies, including Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Revenue, Department of Transportation, Office of Career & Technical Education, South Dakota Tech Prep, and others, use the facilities for various training sessions or meetings held in this region. South Dakota Emergency Management Services has conducted regional EMT Testing at WDT for nearly 20 years at no charge. South Dakota Wildland Fire Suppression has conducted a number of training sessions in the Customized Training Center. This relationship led to the development of WDT’s highly successful and very popular Fire Science Program. Pennington County Firefighters have held their annual three-day Mid-Winter Muster at WDT campuses for more than 15 years with minimal after-hour charges. The National Park Service utilizes WDT facilities for employee training and inservice meetings.

• Medical. Rapid City Regional Hospital utilized three classrooms in the Rushmore Building for in-service training for their employees for several years. WDT charged a minimal room fee, while the hospital provides clinical sites for many of our health program students and donated equipment for several WDT healthcare programs. In addition, hospital employees serve on WDT program advisory committees. One hospital employee, a WDT alumnus, has served on WDT’s Foundation Board of Directors for the past five years.

• Testing Entities. The Dental Assisting National Board uses WDT facilities to conduct certification tests for dental assistants. ACT, Inc. uses WDT facilities to provide sessions that help high school teachers and counselors improve students’ college readiness; The National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies uses WDT facilities for testing.

• Others. Associated General Contractors Heavy Highway and Associated General Contractors Construction have provided member training sessions for many years at WDT. They provide student scholarships and instructor training opportunities as well. Black Hills Federal Credit Union provides customer seminars and employee training at WDT facilities. Black Hills Legal Professionals hold their annual training seminar in the Customized Training Center. WDT Paralegal students are allowed to attend this training at no charge. Children’s Home Society uses the facilities for training potential foster parents and adoptive parents for the State of South Dakota. Food Services of America provides Serve Safe Training at the campus. WDT Food Service and Day Care employees are allowed to attend at no charge. Kemp’s Dairy conducts annual employee safety meetings at the facilities. They also conduct contract training through WDT’s Corporate Education Center. Johnson Machine conducts service technician training in the facilities. WDT Collision Repair instructors are allowed to attend at no charge. The company also donates training materials to the program.
All students in Corporate Education Center classes, regardless of the length of the class, have an opportunity to complete a course evaluation\textsuperscript{230} at the conclusion of the training. Suggestions and comments\textsuperscript{231} are generally very positive regarding the training, instructors, facilities, and service. Corporate Education Center staff looks for trends in suggestions and/or comments and make changes to courses and programs as warranted.

In addition, every company utilizing our Customized Training services has an opportunity to complete a customer satisfaction survey\textsuperscript{232} shortly after the training is concluded. As with the course evaluation surveys, suggestions and comments\textsuperscript{233} are generally very positive regarding the training, instructors, facilities, and service. Corporate Education Center staff looks for trends in suggestions and/or comments and make changes to courses and programs as warranted.

Every graduate of the Professional Truck Driving Program has an opportunity to complete a survey\textsuperscript{234} three months after the training is concluded. Comments are generally positive\textsuperscript{235}.

The Corporate Education Center’s course offerings, partnerships, responsiveness to industry needs, and loyal customer base demonstrates that WDT strives to ensure that its constituents take advantage of and value the services provided. WDT has identified several challenges the Corporate Education Center must address so the Center can reach its full potential and serve more companies and individuals better.

There is no Federal financial aid available for Corporate Education Center students. Individuals and/or the employers must pay in order to enroll. This can be a hardship, particularly for students interested in the Professional Truck Driving Program. The cost for the program is just under $3,000, and a student must be available full-time for six weeks. A trucking company will reimburse a newly hired graduate over a two-year period. Corporate Education Center staff continues to work with trucking companies to find alternative ways to fund students in the program.

For many companies, there are no training dollars available for open enrollment classes, making recruiting for these courses difficult. Corporate Education Center staff work to educate employers about the importance of training.

For companies, there are training dollars available for customized classes through the Governor’s Office of Economic Development. However, the restrictions on the available funding considerably narrow the list of potential recipients.

A budget change at the state level eliminated funds for new and replacement

\textsuperscript{230} Corporate Education Center Course Evaluation Form.
\textsuperscript{231} Course Evaluation Form Comments.
\textsuperscript{232} Corporate Education Center Customer Satisfaction Survey.
\textsuperscript{233} Customer Satisfaction Survey Comments.
\textsuperscript{234} CDL Program Survey.
\textsuperscript{235} CDL Survey Comments.
equipment at the Corporate Education Center. WDT includes equipment requests in the overall institutional budget.

Current full-time staff is limited to the Associate Vice President, two clerical staff, and a truck driving instructor/coordinator. The current workload makes it difficult to build additional business through company visits, direct sales, and other methods. The Corporate Education Center has requested funding for a contract salesperson who would meet individually with area employers to assist in determining their training needs.
Summary
As demonstrated and consistent with its mission, WDT has identified the constituents it serves and the many opportunities it has initiated to benefit them. While we recognize the need for improvement, WDT is focused on our constituent groups and is serving them well while receiving significant benefits in return.

Strengths
- WDT students, faculty, and staff are actively engaged in improving the quality of life in the community.
- WDT’s Corporate Education Center offers lifelong learning and training opportunities for individuals and businesses throughout the region.
- WDT has created methods to collect data from its various constituencies and incorporate the findings into institutional plans.

Improvement Initiatives
- WDT must work to incorporate all data collected into institutional plans for improvement.
- WDT must work toward creating consistent methods for collection, interpretation, storing, and securing data.
- WDT must capitalize on all ways to bring external constituencies to campus.
Overview
More than 80 percent of Western Dakota Tech students receive some form of federal financial aid, and WDT is committed to ensuring students receive the fullest amount of funding available to them. In addition, WDT strongly believes that following federal compliance standards is not merely a requirement. Instead, WDT uses the process to gather data to enhance and improve services offered to students.
Credits, Program Length, and Tuition
WDT operates under a 16-week semester schedule in the fall and in the spring. WDT offers two eight-week summer sessions and a three week pre-technical session.

WDT awards one credit for each hour of lecture and two hours of lab time a class meets each week. WDT offers more than 30 online classes with more added each semester.

Students who satisfy program requirements earn a Diploma or Associate of Applied Science Degree. Diploma programs average 45 credit hours and are typically completed within two or three semesters. The Associate of Applied Science Degrees average 72 credit hours and are typically completed within four semesters. All programs include a general education core with specific program requirements established by lead instructors.

The South Dakota Board of Education sets tuition. Tuition is the same at all four South Dakota technical institutes. The local governing board approves fees as recommended by the WDT Cabinet or administration. WDT charges the same tuition for all students regardless of residency. WDT assesses additional lab fees for online students in the Agriculture Resources Technology program and an additional resource fee for eight high-cost programs. Tuition rates are published on the WDT website.

Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act
WDT is proud of its ability to continually meet and exceed the requirements of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act. WDT participates and complies with HEA by gaining approval to participate with Title IV through the Program Participation Agreement, the Eligibility and Certification Renewal, and by consistently monitoring the cohort default rate.

The integrity with which the Financial Aid staff demonstrates compliance is beyond compare. This staff is fully vested in ensuring WDT’s ability to award federal financial aid to all eligible students. The Financial Aid staff is integral in the development of campus policies and procedures to ensure continual compliance with federal standards. The staff demonstrates this each year through the completion of the Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP) and every six years when WDT gains renewal status through the Program Participation Agreement. The latest agreement was approved in 2006 and is due for renewal in 2012.

WDT monitors the Title IV default rate closely. More than 80 percent of students utilize federal financial aid. WDT values its ability to maintain eligibility by remaining in full compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act. Those efforts are paying off. The average three-year default rate for WDT is 5.9 percent.
WDT enhanced its default management program during the 2006-2007 award year by:

- Implementing a parent session during the 2007-2008 Welcome Days
- Mailing all students (regardless of their status of new, returning, or graduates) their total loan indebtedness information, along with their anticipated payment schedule
- Enhancing the mailings sent to former WDT students who appear on EAC’s pre-claims list (which is a list of students who are late or have missed at least one student loan payment)

In addition, students may use an online budgeting/debt management program introduced to them during Welcome Day and Orientation. WDT’s goal is to keep the default rate at 5 percent or below. WDT will continue to develop efforts to meet this goal.

**Campus Crime Report**
WDT complies with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act and annually publishes the Campus Crime Report in the Student Handbook. Data is collected from campus administrators and the Rapid City Police Department and includes crimes committed on the WDT campus and adjacent property. WDT submits the data to the U.S. Department of Education.

The Dean of Student Services coordinates the annual collection of data for the IPEDS administered by the National Center for Education Statistics. This data includes graduation rates and is available for review on the U.S. Department of Education College Opportunities Online website.
Biennial Drug and Alcohol Review  
In accordance with Drug-Free Schools and Campuses Regulations, WDT publishes a Biennial Drug and Alcohol Review. The United States Department of Education recently reviewed the 2006 report.

In addition, WDT annually publishes the campus Drug and Alcohol policy in the Student Handbook. The policy includes information on the sanctions for drug or alcohol violations.

WDT is an active member of the Rapid City Campus Community Prevention Coalition. This coalition is dedicated to educating students about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. WDT has administered the CORE Drug and Alcohol Survey three times, with the results giving WDT a clear indication of prevention activities to incorporate on campus.

Organizational Records of Student Complaints  
WDT prides itself on teaching students the behaviors necessary to succeed in the workforce. To that end, WDT works to resolve student complaints at the lowest possible level. WDT staff encourage and, at times, assist, students in working with faculty and staff members when grievances arise. Often, this process resolves the dispute, and no formal complaint is recorded.

However, there are times when students are dissatisfied with the services they have received from WDT faculty, staff, and administration. When this occurs, the student is encouraged to file a formal complaint as described in the grievance process outlined in the WDT Student Handbook. The Dean of Student Services keeps on file the official record of the complaint and resolution.

Advertising and Recruiting Materials  
WDT accurately reports its affiliation status with the Higher Learning Commission in the WDT Course Catalog and WDT Student Handbook. Both publications indicate the address, phone number, and HLC website.

Students receive campus contact information through a variety of sources. The website includes a listing of all faculty and staff contact information. Other campus contact information is published within campus publications, including WDT recruitment publications, course syllabi, course catalog, and student handbook.
WDT Mission

Western Dakota Technical Institute is a public institution of higher learning where students acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary for successful employment.
WDT Vision Statement

It is the vision of Western Dakota Technical Institute to prepare our students for living, lifelong learning, working, and succeeding in the 21st century.

In order to realize our vision, we dedicate our energy and efforts to the following principles:

- WDT strives to provide a caring, nurturing, and disciplined learning environment for students of all ages and backgrounds, and does so by providing quality courses and programs, encouraging academic rigor, and maintaining a skilled, dedicated, and student-oriented faculty and professional staff.

- WDT strives to provide programs that lead to successful employment and career pathways for our graduates, by providing opportunities both for existing careers, and for new employment trends and opportunities.

- WDT strives to be a model civic partner by collaboratively engaging communities, organizations, and businesses in programs, projects, and activities that lead to improved economic development, greater levels of service, and enhanced quality of life.

- WDT strives to utilize the most effective teaching and learning technologies and strategies that enhance student skills and abilities now and into the future.

- WDT strives to build a community of lifelong learners of all ages and backgrounds throughout our service area, who have the skills and ability to understand and respond to a changing world and its impact on business, technology, economy, and workplace strategies.

- WDT strives to reach its goals by operating in an ethical, open, and cost efficient manner in all of its programs and business affairs.

- And finally, it is the vision of Western Dakota Technical Institute to be a leader, in both our state and region, for quality educational programs and service, and to develop and/or adopt those practices which will result in continuous improvement, improved quality of life for our graduates and communities, and for providing a trained workforce who will meet the challenges of the 21st century.
Strategic Priorities

Western Dakota Technical Institute has adopted the following priorities for long-term planning. Action plans of the institution, programs, departments, and committees will fit within these strategic directions.
Strategic Priority—Students

Increase learning opportunities and success for a diverse population of lifelong learners.

This priority is related to WDT guiding principles on diversity and lifelong learning and applies equally to students enrolled in credit and non-credit courses. WDT defines diversity in its broadest possible sense, as all characteristics that distinguish one person from another.

Strategies and Tactics

_Institutional Strategy 1_
Expand course offerings

Tactic 1  Increase the number of programs offered in the evenings and weekends

Tactic 2  Increase the number of online courses and programs

Tactic 3  Create satellite learning centers in the WDT service area

Tactic 4  Increase General Education course offerings to give students more options to meet their needs and interests

_Institutional Strategy 2_
Increase retention of the students through better understanding of the diversified cultures and improvement of services

Tactic 1  Improve the remediation program

Tactic 2  Improve student engagement with WDT

_Institutional Strategy 3_
Increase the student population within the confines of budget restraints

Tactic 1  Analyze growth opportunities considering cost versus the WDT mission

Tactic 2  Improve recruiting and marketing strategies through data analysis

Tactic 3  Increase the number and quality of articulation agreements

Tactic 4  Strengthen Corporate Education Center connections to WDT diplomas and degree programs
Strategic Priority—Programs

Develop and improve programs that fulfill our mission and serve students and industry.

This priority is based on the guiding principle that addresses our commitment to programs that leads to successful employment and career pathways for our graduates.

Strategies and Tactics

Institutional Strategy 1
Achieve and maintain institutional and program accreditations

Tactic 1 Achieve full ten-year accreditation of WDT from NCA-HLC in 2008

Tactic 2 Maintain all individual program accreditations and add new program accreditations as appropriate

Institutional Strategy 2
Improve the process for the startup of new programs

Tactic 1 Engage all institutional stakeholders in program development to maximize outcomes in terms of employment preparation and alignment with WDT vision

Tactic 2 Codify new program approval and start-up procedures to enhance curriculum design and program success

Tactic 3 When implementing new programs, endeavor to hire new faculty as early as possible to prepare the program for start-up

Tactic 4 Design academic programs that encourage multiple skill-set developments through modular curriculum

Institutional Strategy 3
Enhance current programs

Tactic 1 Establish a credible and systematic program review process to ensure program viability and relevance

Tactic 2 Establish a process for developing new online instructional programs

Tactic 3 Increase efficacy of advisory committees through analysis and improvement of current procedures
Strategic Priority—Faculty and Staff

Maximize learning by attracting and retaining the most qualified and talented faculty and staff.

This priority is based on the guiding principle that addresses teaching and learning tools. The core of this priority is to develop a culture of excellence for all student experiences.

Strategies and Tactics

Institutional Strategy 1
Improve recruiting, hiring, retention, and orientation processes

Tactic 1 Improve recruiting procedures to attract a larger, better qualified, and better informed group of job applicants

Tactic 2 Improve hiring practices to provide clear expectations of WDT

Tactic 3 Improve orientation training for all new employees including adjunct faculty

Institutional Strategy 2
Formalize student-centered learning

Tactic 1 Increase awareness and importance of student centered learning with faculty and staff

Tactic 2 Improve teaching and learning through assessment
Strategic Priority—Resources and Technology

Maximize opportunities for learning, working, and living within a technology-rich environment through the development of resources and sound fiscal management.

WDT will maximize current resources and seek partnerships, grants, and other forms of external funding to provide the educational environment students deserve.

Strategies and Tactics

*Institutional Strategy 1*
*Ensure that educational programs are equipped with the best possible teaching tools and training equipment*

- Tactic 1: Maintain technology in labs and shops that reflects the current and emerging needs of the primary industry
- Tactic 2: Keep classroom technology current
- Tactic 3: Provide faculty dedicated time and resources to learn new technology
- Tactic 4: Streamline and centralize equipment maintenance and procurement

*Institutional Strategy 2*
*Maintain and expand WDT facilities*

- Tactic 1: Maintain existing facilities
- Tactic 2: Plan for future expansion
- Tactic 3: Plan for future satellite campuses
- Tactic 4: Identify temporary lease facilities
- Tactic 5: Rent excess capacity to education partners

*Institutional Strategy 3*
*Acquire external resources*

- Tactic 1: Support the WDT Foundation in its efforts to conduct major gifts campaigns and other resource and fundraising activities that support WDT and its students
- Tactic 2: Identify and request grant funding for operational and capital requirements
Tactic 3 Identify sources to lend/lease/rent equipment to support student learning

_Institutional Strategy 4_

*Manage assets prudently*

Tactic 1 Develop operational budgets that are tied to assessment planning

Tactic 2 Monitor and adjust budget allocations to reduce waste
Strategic Priority--Communications

Western Dakota Technical Institute will strive for excellence in organizational communication meeting high standards in respectfulness, integrity and ethics.

The actions we undertake to achieve this priority will enhance all of the guiding principles and other strategic priorities.

Strategies and Tactics

Institutional Strategy 1
*Maintain high standards of integrity and ethics in internal communications*

Tactic 1 Ensure that all WDT faculty and staff are informed of key information

Tactic 2 Ensure operational alignment with the strategic plan

Institutional Strategy 2
*Maintain accuracy, clarity and timeliness of communication with external constituencies*

Tactic 1 Initiate communication mechanisms that clearly articulate institutional initiatives in a timely manner

Tactic 2 Ensure that written and electronic publications and communications are up-to-date and clearly articulate WDT programs, policies and procedures
Strategic Priority—Citizenship

Strengthen the Institution and community through citizenship and community involvement.

WDT’s guiding principle on civic responsibility commits WDT to serving as a model civic partner in all we do.

Strategies and Tactics

_Institutional Strategy 1
Involve WDT in the community_

Tactic 1  Encourage staff and faculty to participate in community service projects

Tactic 2  Encourage students to participate in community service projects

Tactic 3  Host community events

Tactic 4  Present the value of WDT in support of economic and workforce development in the community and region

Tactic 5  Promote the contributions of WDT to the region through speaking engagements and attendance of community events
Strategic Priority—Partnerships

Strengthen the Institution and community through collaboration

WDT’s guiding principle of Partnership Development provides the inspiration for the item. WDT is committed to promoting and maximizing the contributions of WDT to Regional Economic Development.

Strategies and Tactics

Institutional Strategy 1
Create and grow partnerships with institutions of higher learning, secondary schools, businesses, industry, and government agencies

Tactic 1 Create and grow partnerships with institutions of higher learning
Tactic 2 Create and grow partnerships with secondary schools
Tactic 3 Create and grow partnerships with business and industry
Tactic 4 Create and grow partnerships with government agencies
Western Dakota Tech Five Point Workforce Development Plan

In 2007, WDT developed a workforce development plan comprised of five major goals. The purpose of the plan was to provide a framework for addressing regional and state workforce development needs as presented by business, communities, and stakeholders. Later, this plan was adopted by the other three technical institutes and became a statewide plan for all four institutions.

South Dakota’s four technical institutes serve as the “canaries in the coal mine” for South Dakota’s workforce needs. Our program advisory boards, the employers of our graduates, and our extensive industry contacts are telling us the same thing: a crisis is coming.

South Dakota already faces worker shortages in key labor areas such as nursing, manufacturing, nuclear medicine and engineering technicians, electronics, welding, transportation, and many others.

Those shortages will soon be compounded by the impending Baby Boomer retirement that will create up to a projected 50% worker demand in many core industries during the next 10 years. These trends also will impact the state’s ability to adequately staff new and expanding industries.

The State’s four technical institutes propose a five point plan that will help meet existing and projected labor shortages. This plan includes the following elements:

- Give working adults more opportunities
- Innovate to serve
- Target the greatest needs
- Build excitement about South Dakota careers
- Create national career training centers

Give working adults more opportunities
Technical institutes have traditionally targeted recent high school graduates. As a result, the proportion of older adult students is smaller in South Dakota than in other states. We will provide these adults with new career opportunities by:

- Placing a renewed emphasis on the 24 to 44 age group
- Reaching these students where they area – at work and in the community
- Creating innovative educational methods that appeal to working adults

EXAMPLES:
- We will be submitting a grant later this fall, coordinated by AACC, that targets new populations of learners 50 and up.
- BIT reorganized as the Corporate Education Center aligning new programs and services to the institutional focus on core abilities and targeting adult workers.
Innovate to serve
A significant percentage of programs offered by the technical institutes are campus-based, largely because of lab and shop-oriented instruction methods. We will provide more convenient learning alternatives for potential students of all ages who live long distances from a technical institute campus or possess a schedule that keeps them from coming to campus during regular hours. We will accomplish this through:

- Providing additional educational opportunities during evenings and weekends
- Creating more online courses
- Making more use of the Digital Dakota Network
- Opening additional off-campus learning centers
- Taking advantage of new learning technologies such as podcasts, vodcasts, and others.

EXAMPLES:
- WDT partnership with BHSU to provide additional evening opportunities along with our own evening programs.
- Starting both the Southern Hills and Northern Hills learning center initiatives.
- HCL sanctioned online equine management program and HLC acceptance of future online degree programs.
- Virtual welding technology

Target the greatest needs
The technical institutes will work with South Dakota business and industry to ensure that new and existing programs focus on developing student skills in areas of greatest workforce need. Additionally, we will work in partnership to create new ways of attracting students to these careers, including enhanced workplace internships, cooperative education, scholarships, and forgivable loans supported by industry. Examples:

- New Field Engineering Tech and Allied Health programs
- Re-design of the carpentry program based on industry recommendations
- Deadwood gaming certificate program
- Welding program for the Southern Hills

Build excitement about South Dakota careers
We will spread the message to students of all ages that dreams can come true in South Dakota. We will work in partnership with business and industry and K-12 school systems to:

- Increase dual enrollment opportunities for high school students
- Target students who have no postsecondary education plans
- Create career academies and summer institutes for middle school and early high school students in priority career fields
- Promote South Dakota careers in elementary and middle schools in interesting, age-appropriate ways
EXAMPLES:
- Promoting and enhancing the dual enrollment programs with Rapid City Schools
- New dual enrollment program with the Hot Springs schools.
- Aligning activities and initiatives with secondary career cluster initiatives (i.e. Scrubs Camp which we hosted November 8th bringing over 200 high schools students to explore the health careers cluster)

Create national career training centers
Regardless of the success of all other strategies, South Dakota must also focus on creating a net in-migration of workers.

Technical institutes, along with business and industry partners and the Regental system should focus on creating national training centers focused on careers and skills in greatest demand.

These national training centers will bring to South Dakota students from across the country who are interested in these career fields. Once they are here, we will attempt to retain them by promoting South Dakota’s exceptional quality of life and by educating them about the state’s career opportunities. Examples:

- WDT partnership with the School of Mines in Materials Science grants activities.
WDT Core Abilities

Core abilities are essential workplace skills that cut across occupational and academic titles. They are broad, common abilities that students must possess to be prepared for the work force and for lifelong learning.

Core abilities are different from course competencies in that they are not course-specific. They are not taught in lessons. Instead, they are broader skills that run through courses and lessons. These abilities enable learners to perform competencies.

Core abilities are comprised of transferable skills, attitudes and abilities expected to be mastered by learners completing a program. They go beyond a specific program, are integrated throughout the learning experience and are institutional.

The following core abilities and indicators are derived from the mission statement and objectives of WDTI and its guiding principles:

- **Life skills**—An individual applies the principles of physical and psychological wellness to his or her life.
  - Take responsibility for own behavior.
  - Balance family, work, finances and personal needs.
  - Relate personal values and goals to the work environment.
  - Recognize the importance of personal wellness.

- **Analytical skills**—An individual applies the principles and strategies of purposeful, active and organized thinking.
  - Evaluate technology.
  - Identify problems.
  - Apply an appropriate problem solving process.
  - Make informed decisions.
  - Respect others’ points of view.
  - Differentiate fact from opinion.
  - Experiment with original ideas.
  - Accept ambiguity.

- **Communication skills**—An individual is able to apply appropriate writing, speaking, and listening skills in order to precisely convey information, ideas, and opinions.
  - Use standard English principles (spelling, grammar, and structure).
  - Use language and details appropriate to the level of audience.
  - Check for accuracy.
  - Present information in a readable form.
  - Listen.
• Technology Skills—An individual possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to use a computer and other technology methods utilized within his or her chosen field.
  o Use technology to communicate.
  o Solve problems using technology.
  o Use appropriate technology to manage information.
  o Recognize the impact of technology.

• Teamwork techniques—An individual is capable of working with others to complete tasks, solve problems, and resolve conflicts.
  o Demonstrate respect in relating to people.
  o Cooperate and resolve conflicts effectively.
  o Participate in shared problem solving.

• Social values—An individual possesses an awareness of differences in backgrounds and cultures, and demonstrates respect while working with different backgrounds/cultures.
  o Acknowledge personal prejudices and biases.
  o Appreciate perspectives of people outside own background/culture.
  o Work collaboratively with persons from other backgrounds/cultures.

• Employability—An individual possesses and applies effective work habits and attitudes within the classroom or training situation.
  o Manage time and workload.
  o Attend classes as scheduled.
  o Turn in quality work.
  o Adhere to safety rules and regulations.
  o Act professionally to fulfill job duties within chosen field.
  o Demonstrate flexibility and self-directedness in learning.