

AURORA COLLEGE MANDATE AGREEMENT 2022-2024



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PREAMBLE

This Aurora College Mandate Agreement (ACMA), between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and the Aurora College Board of Governors, sets out the shared strategic priorities and the scope of activities undertaken by Aurora College for a specific period of time. This includes an outline of the role Aurora College performs in the Northwest Territories (NWT) post-secondary education system and how it will build on its strengths to achieve its vision and help drive system-wide objectives and government priorities. Aurora College is only permitted to engage in or carry on activities that are within its mandate.

The requirement for an ACMA is established in the Post-Secondary Education Act and the process for Aurora College is further defined in the Aurora College Act. The structure and required components of the ACMA is outlined in the Aurora College Mandate Regulations. These legislative documents can be found online at:

<https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/legislation/>

The establishment of this ACMA came at the request of the Minister to the Aurora College Administrator on August 12, 2022.

Following further direction from the Minister, the ACMA may be renewed in the event of substantive policy or program changes that would affect joint commitments made in the ACMA. Any such amendment would be mutually agreed by the Minister and Board of Governors following the legislated process.

Post-secondary Education Planning and Reporting

Aurora College is engaged in institutional planning on an annual and five-year cycle. This planning is reflected in the ACMA through the shared priorities for the system. The planning and reporting are intended to ensure continuous quality improvement of the institution and satisfy the occasional review by the Campus Alberta Quality Council for continued recognition.

ECE and the GNWT also engage in an annual planning cycle that focuses

on performance, business and capital planning and budgeting. Aurora College planning and reporting feeds into the annual GNWT business and capital planning, reporting and budgeting cycle.

The planning and reporting documents of Aurora College and the GNWT include:

- Aurora College Corporate Plan
- Aurora College Strategic Plan
- Academic Plan
- Aurora Research Institute Strategic Plan
- Government Strategic Planning and Business Planning

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

Vision

Every resident of the NWT has an equitable opportunity to reach their full potential by obtaining a post-secondary education from institutions that are student centred, accessible, high quality, relevant and accountable.

Goals

The goals for the overall post-secondary education system are to:

1. Prioritize student success
2. Increase access to post-secondary education opportunities
3. Remain responsive to

labour demands in the NWT

4. Remain responsive to local and regional needs
5. Support growth of the knowledge economy

AURORA COLLEGE'S VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION

Through the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university, we will establish a university in the North and for the North that creates equitable opportunities for residents across the Northwest Territories to reach their full potential.

MISSION

Demonstrate leadership in the delivery of relevant and meaningful education and research rooted in strong connections to Northern land, tradition, community and people.

VALUES



RESPECT

We care for one another and foster relationships based on trust, respect and fairness. We respect others and the land, water, air and animals.



INCLUSIVENESS AND DIVERSITY

We foster a culture of equity and inclusion that celebrates different ways of being, knowing and doing.



INNOVATION

We inspire and nurture innovative thinking, continuous discovery and creative expression.



ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

We hold ourselves to high standards of ethical behaviour and take responsibility for our actions. We recognize and protect the right of the individual to search for knowledge, wherever knowledge is to be found.

AREAS OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH SPECIALIZATION

Areas of specialization are at the core of a post-secondary education institution's identity. They signal the institution's teaching and research focus to current and prospective students, educators, researchers, funders and partners.

As part of the transformation process, they will inform a wide range of changes to Aurora College that will help to define what success means after it becomes a polytechnic university. They will also help to ensure overall success by shaping ongoing investments in teaching and research programs, student supports and facilities.

In the process of transforming into a polytechnic university, Aurora College will leverage current human resources and infrastructure as a foundation for enhancement and growth across five areas of teaching and research. It is important to note that these areas of specialization are not themselves teaching or research programs. Rather, they are broad

themes that help to focus investment and ensure success in realizing the vision, mission and values of Aurora College, as well as the vision and goals of the overall post-secondary education system.

The areas of teaching and research specialization outlined in this document draw from a previous report from the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) entitled Initial Areas and Teaching Research Specialization for the Polytechnic University (2020). In the context of this document, they provide a clear direction toward where Aurora College is headed as it gets closer to the launch of the polytechnic university in 2025.

The areas of teaching and

research specialization are based on a set of measures that have guided their development and will continue to guide their implementation over the coming years. They have also been informed by wide-ranging engagements related to the transformation process, starting with initial engagements from 2017 reflected in the Aurora College Foundational Review Report to feedback on the Polytechnic University Areas of Teaching and Research Specialization Discussion Paper in September 2020.

In the context of transformational change, how Aurora College changes can be just as important as what changes. Aurora College must continue to support

existing students and researchers during the transformation process and balance the need to be responsive with the need to be practical when it comes to the scope and pace of change. Success across all areas of specialization may not come quickly, but through incremental changes in the right order and at the right time Aurora College will create the conditions for their full implementation following launch of the polytechnic university.

Although Aurora College cannot be everything to everybody, as a leader in the NWT post-secondary education system it will demonstrate excellence in teaching and research, and ensure increased access to post-secondary education opportunities for Northerners. This includes responding to different ways of being, knowing and doing in teaching and research to ensure that access is equitable and benefits all Northerners.

Foundational Learning

Aurora College will strive to find a place for every resident who seeks an opportunity to further their skills, knowledge

and abilities through post-secondary education. This means meeting students where they are in their educational journey and being supportive through the entire journey, from applying to a program offered by a community learning centre or campus right through to employment success. This requires a learning-centred approach that aligns institutional success with student success. It also means specializing in programs and support that provide students with the foundational knowledge, skills and abilities to pursue their education and career goals, regardless of their starting point.

Aurora College will continue to offer academic upgrading and access programs to increase options for students to take advantage of the ever-growing range of certificate, diploma and degree programs. Following transformation to a polytechnic university, foundational learning is anticipated to continue as a key area for enhancement and growth of the institution.

Skilled Trades and Technology

This area of specialization focuses on skilled trades, with a particular focus on the application of new and

emerging technology. In the NWT, trades make up an important segment of the labour market and training will target areas where there is a high potential for employment. In particular, increasing labour demand from non-renewable resource extraction and contaminated site remediation will create opportunities for journeypersons and tradespeople. Whereas a large segment of the labour force within this area of specialization comes from outside the NWT, the polytechnic university will strive to increase employment opportunities for Northerners.

The trades are evolving into technologically advanced careers. This includes trades such as plumbing or carpentry that increasingly incorporate new and emerging technology. For example, there is now a requirement in many fields to combine advanced math and computer programming skills with manual skills. Responding to this trend and keeping pace with changing labour market demands requires close and ongoing collaboration with NWT employers, with the overarching aim of preparing students for

the jobs of the future. For this reason, the area of specialization references both trades and technology.

This is an area of specialization with great potential for research programs that seek innovative solutions to issues around construction and maintenance of Northern infrastructure, including housing, transportation, communications and energy. Applied research, conducted for and with businesses, builds innovation skills that advance student ingenuity and industry-level commercialization. The growing deterioration of some infrastructure, as well as the associated hazards to the well-being of residents in small communities, is driving an increasing need to adapt and build resilience.

Earth Resources and Environmental Management

This area of specialization encompasses earth resources and environmental management as interconnected themes that can be addressed through a

common set of teaching and research programs. Within this area of specialization students will gain theoretical and applied knowledge in environmental analysis and problem solving. Teaching and research will advance efforts to manage the natural environment and learn about local climate change.

Environmental management involves decisions, strategies, programs and projects to sustainably use the environment in line with broader social values and objectives. Environmental managers work in the public, private and non-governmental sectors and are responsible for lessening environmental impacts and ensuring that all applicable legislative requirements are fulfilled. The NWT has cutting-edge processes and governance structures in place for environmental impact assessments that create unique opportunities for teaching and research.

Overlapping substantially with environmental management is teaching and research related to earth resources. Earth resources are anything

extracted from the ground. From exploration to extraction, remediation and reclamation, the labour demands and research opportunities related to this sector are significant and reflect a critical part of the NWT's economy. As one of the largest users of high-technology equipment and applications, the earth resources sector requires practitioners who have the skills to keep up with these advances. Technical and management positions increasingly require post-secondary education and it is important that NWT residents are first in line for these employment opportunities.

Increased participation of NWT residents in the earth resources and environmental management sector will depend on the accessibility of high-quality and relevant education opportunities. However, to be effective, programs must also be grounded in the realities of the NWT. The diverse lands, cultures and ways of life in the NWT intertwine the legislation, policies, practices and partnerships that shape the earth resources sector

and guide environmental management.

Incorporating these strengths into teaching and research at the polytechnic university will support the people, cultures and communities that rely on a strong economy and healthy environment.

There is already an active research community in the NWT focused on studying different aspects of climate change and adaptation. Much of this work contributes to national and international efforts in documenting, monitoring and modelling climate change in the physical environment, and there is a significant demand for applied adaptive research to support information and community needs within the NWT. This includes the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing tools that have been a feature of many Northern research projects and will be increasingly important under this area of specialization.

Research that intersects environmental and social research priorities benefits NWT communities and

complements work around cultural sustainability. This includes efforts to improve understanding of the impacts of development and climate change on Northern cultures, and to improve the preservation and use of cultural practices and traditional knowledge.

Northern Health, Education and Community Services

This area of specialization focuses on empowering people to help and support others in Northern communities. This will include teaching and research that supports physical, mental and emotional health in a manner that fosters personal and community resilience. It will also include training for educators who will, in turn, provide care, mentorship and support to generations of Northerners. Teaching and research in this area of specialization requires an understanding of the people, cultures and land that define Northern communities.

This specialization will respond to the health and social support needs of the

people and communities of the NWT. It includes programs that graduate Northerners who will go on to work in our health centres, hospitals, schools and childcare facilities. It also responds to gaps in knowledge and opportunities for increased program effectiveness through a diverse range of research programs.

Aurora College will continue to develop a diverse set of health and education research programs. This research takes different forms, including participatory action research, which seeks to understand the world by trying to change it, collaboratively and following reflection. This typically involves researchers and community members working together to understand a problem and changing it for the better.

Business and Leadership

Being a leader is not a position, it is about a person's ability to guide and support others. Leaders face a range of challenges that can impact the culture within their team, the development of their team members and the future of

their organizations. Innovation and entrepreneurship go hand-in-hand and will benefit from a Northern perspective. This includes social entrepreneurship, an approach that focuses on the development, funding and implementation of solutions to social, cultural or environmental issues.

These efforts will support and be informed through close collaboration with the business community. The NWT has untapped economic potential and skills, built through

business and leadership, which will support opportunities for economic diversification, create jobs and strengthen communities.

Federal, territorial, Indigenous and community governments, as well as non-governmental organizations and businesses require employees with business and leadership education. More specifically, they require education that can help their employees succeed in a Northern

social and economic context.

Teaching and research in business and leadership will complement the other areas of specialization. Being a leader in positions related to Northern technology and innovation; earth resources and environmental management; and Northern health, education and community service requires the knowledge, skills and ability to identify and respond to local economic, social and political conditions.

SHARED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Aurora College and the GNWT maintain a range of strategic priorities. The strategic priorities listed here are where the interest of both overlap. They are intended to help inform decision making and guide the allocation of resources. Aurora College and GNWT may pursue other opportunities that arise, so long as it does not deviate from these priorities or undermine opportunities for success.

Establish a Polytechnic University

As reflected in the Priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly and Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories (2019-2023), the successful transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university is a priority.

This priority overarches all work to be undertaken for the duration of the ACMA. The success of Aurora College should be examined in the context of transformational change and progress tracked in term of steps toward becoming an effective, efficient and sustainable polytechnic university that is equipped to meet the needs of current

and future generations of Northerners.

Perhaps most importantly, success in any one area of the ACMA must not come at the expense of or otherwise risk success in the multi-year transformation process. As such, this ACMA is about building a foundation for successful launch of the polytechnic university in 2025 and continued success through the remainder of the transformation process to the end of 2026.

Implement a Tricameral Governance System

Following legislative changes to the Aurora College Act in 2021, Aurora College will transition to a new system of tricameral governance. A “tricameral” system simply means there are three governing bodies. In the case of Aurora College, this will include:

- Board of Governors
- Academic Council
- Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council

Not only will there be a new governance system, but the relationship between the Aurora College Board

of Governors and the Minister will also change to reflect national standards and best practice in post-secondary education. In particular, Aurora College is becoming more arm's length from government and establishing a new approach to collaborating and supporting success.

The successful transition to a new way of collaborating and a new governance system is a critical milestone in the establishment of a polytechnic university. Both Aurora College and the GNWT will remain vigilant of emerging risks and actively explore every opportunity to promote success in this area.

Increase Access to Post-Secondary Education

As part of the transformation process, Aurora College will continue planning steps to increase access for NWT residents to post-secondary education opportunities. Equitable pathways into the post-secondary education system will require an expanded scope of

programs available in small communities across the NWT. It will also require new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, including through combinations of classroom learning, applied learning at worksites, on-the-land learning and distance learning.

Aurora College will continue to prioritize engagement with Indigenous and community governments, JK-12 education authorities and ECE as it develops a new approach to student pathways and new opportunities for community learning.

Develop New and Enhanced Programs

Aurora College will follow processes of continuous quality improvement that include the timely review of all programs. Remaining effective, efficient and sustainable requires that Aurora College make informed decisions about how to effectively apply resources for maximum benefit to NWT residents. This includes remaining responsive to ever-changing needs of students and employers, as well as being mindful of the overall capacity of Aurora College

and the need to ensure student success across all programs.

Ultimately, the launch of any new program will be contingent on approval by the Aurora College Board of Governors, compliance with NWT regulator processes under the Post-Secondary Education Act and the availability of funding.

Education

Following outcomes of the recent Bachelor of Education Program Review, Aurora College and ECE will collaborate in the development of a proposal for re-introduction of a Bachelor of Education (BEd) program. Such a program aligns with Aurora College's areas of specialization for teaching and research, and addresses an area of significant labour demand in the NWT.

Social Work

Following outcomes of the recent Social Work Diploma Program Review, Aurora College, Department of Health and Social Service, and ECE will collaborate in the development a proposal for introduction of a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program. Such a program aligns with Aurora College's areas of specialization for

teaching and research, and addresses an area of significant labour demand in the NWT. It is also recognized as an area of pressing importance to the people and communities of the NWT.

Environmental Management

Aurora College currently operates an Environmental Natural Resource Technology Diploma program. Graduates of the program possess the ability needed to succeed as technicians and officers in natural resource and environmental management careers including wildlife, forestry, marine and freshwater fisheries, planning, water resources, environmental protection, parks, land claim resource management, oil and gas and mining.

Aurora College is currently reviewing the Environmental Natural Resource Technology Diploma Program as part of their newly developed regular scheduled program review processes. This program is being considered as the new made-in-the-NWT degree program that was identified in the Foundational Review. The results of this external review will determine if this diploma program will move into a degree program

but continuing with both a diploma and degree exit. This program experiences the benefits of collaboration among several government departments such as Department of Environment and Natural Resource, Department of Industry Tourism and Investment, Department of Justice and ECE. The recommendations from the program review may identify additional opportunities for certificate and micro-credentials in this area.

Facilitate Growth of the Knowledge Economy

Strengthening the internal research capacity of Aurora College and positioning it as a facilitator of external research projects are strategic priorities and will be key to growing the NWT knowledge economy over the coming years.

As Aurora College transforms into a polytechnic university,

teaching and learning will increasingly be informed by current research and, to the greatest extent possible, educators should be participating in research projects. In turn, the success of research projects will depend on the capacity of faculty to conduct research. Strengthening the relationship between research (knowledge creation), and teaching and learning (knowledge dissemination) is a key part of the transformation process and will help put Aurora College at the centre of the knowledge economy.

Through the transformation process, Aurora College will also establish externally facing supports that will allow the future polytechnic university to become a leader in Northern research. Enhanced and expanded research capacity that is rooted in the NWT will also create new opportunities for GNWT departments,

Indigenous and community governments, non-governmental organizations and industry to develop, fund and implement research projects. All post-secondary education systems rely on collaborative relationships that help to identify real-world problems and spur innovative solutions.

Contribute to the Economic and Social Development of NWT Communities

Aurora College will prioritize the economic and social development of NWT communities in the planning and implementation of programs and services. This may include steps to maximize the direct and indirect economic benefits to communities and seeking ways of integrating Indigenous ways of being knowing and doing into programs and services.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

As per the Aurora College Act

Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
Establish a Polytechnic University			
Aurora College will submit Institutional Quality Assurance self-study to the Board of Governors for approval	Jun-23	Aurora College	The Board of Governors review and approve Institutional Quality Assurance self-study.
The Board of Governors will submit a request to the Minister of ECE for establishment of a polytechnic university	Jun-23	Aurora College /ECE	The Minister responds to the Board with approval and directs the Board to work with ECE on an institutional quality assurance review.
ECE will send a request to Campus Alberta Quality Council to initiate the institutional quality assurance review process.	June/July 2023	ECE	Campus Alberta provides a formal response to ECE's request.
The Board of Governors will direct the development of a quality assurance self-study based on the requirements of the Campus Alberta Quality Council	June/July 2023	Aurora College	The self-study is completed and provided to Campus Alberta Quality Council for review.
The Board of Governors, along with senior staff, will host the external review of college facilities, policies, procedures and programs by assessors from the Campus Alberta Quality Council virtually and/or on-site	Mar-24	Aurora College	Campus Alberta Quality Council completes its virtual and/or on-site review.

Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
Complete Institutional Quality Assurance Evaluation	Sept 2024 or earlier	Aurora College /ECE	Campus Alberta Quality Council completes an organizational review of Aurora College, culminating in a recommendation to the GNWT regarding whether Aurora College meets CAQC-established organizational quality standards.
Implement a Tri-Cameral Governance System			
Re-establish the Board of Governors	Mar-23	Aurora College /ECE	The Board of Governors were appointed and oriented to the work of the Board in February 2023.
			The Board of Governors have met once in March 2023.
Establish the Academic Council	Aug-23	Aurora College	The Academic Council has met before September 2023.
Establish the Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council	Mar-24	Aurora College	The Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council has met once in April 2024.
Increase Access to Post-Secondary Education			
Establish student pathways in community learning centres and on campuses	Aug-24	Aurora College	Pathways for students in community learning centres and campuses are documented in the Academic Plan.
Increase opportunities for students in community learning centres	Aug-24	Aurora College	Courses leading to post-secondary education certificates are delivered in community learning centres using a hybrid model that may include face-to-face and distance education deliveries.

Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
Develop New and Enhanced Programs			
Re-establish and update, as necessary, the program development policy to include the BOG	Aug-23	Aurora College	<p>Program development unit is established.</p> <p>Program Advisory Committees are established.</p> <p>Engagement with GWNT Departments, employers, Indigenous Governments and Organizations will be included.</p> <p>The Academic Council is established.</p> <p>The IKHC is built into the approval process.</p>
1 st Year of General Studies Arts and Science Program Implemented	Fall 2024	Aurora College	<p>First year BEd and BSW students can enrol along with general arts students.</p> <p>All curriculum and program development work will be completed prior to the end of this Mandate ending July 1, 2024.</p>
1 st Year of Bachelor of Education Program Implemented	Fall 2024	Aurora College /ECE	<p>The Committee overseeing the process meets monthly to make decisions about the contents of the degree.</p> <p>All curriculum and program required for the first year implementation will be completed by the end of this Mandate, ending July 1, 2024.</p>

Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
1 st Year of Bachelor of Social Work Implemented	Fall 2024	Aurora College /HSS	<p>The Aurora College Program Development Unit overseeing the process meets monthly to make decisions about the contents of the degree.</p> <p>All curriculum and program development work required for the first year implementation will be completed by the end of this Mandate ending July 1, 2024.</p>
A made-in-the-NWT degree has been identified and work has begun.	Aug-23	Aurora College /ECE	<p>A design team has been established with subject matter experts, instructional designers, and instructors to begin the program development process.</p> <p>A committee to oversee this development has been established.</p>
Facilitate Growth of the Knowledge Economy			
Aurora College and ECE will work together for the ECE to take on the research licensing function under the <i>Scientists Act</i> , including the publishing of the annual compendium of research.	Apr-23	Aurora College /ECE	Transition completed.

Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
The Aurora Research Institute (ARI) continues to work with researchers to advance the knowledge agenda for the NWT.	Aug-24	Aurora College	<p>ARI continues to publish research on their site.</p> <p>Establishment of the Office of Research Services.</p> <p>In all external and internal communication, ARI will be rebranded as an arm of Aurora College.</p> <p>Aurora College will continue to produce Xàgots'eèhk'ò (Education in the North Journal)</p> <p>Aurora College will continue to strive to remain in the Top 50 Research Colleges in Canada.</p>
Contribute to the Economic and Social Development of NWT Communities			
Aurora College uses NWT Labour Market demand to make decisions about the types of programs that are required to enhance the economic and social development of the NWT.	Aug-24	Aurora College /ECE	The Skills for Success Action Plan (2021-2025) priority 3.1 - NWT residents are provided an opportunity for education and skills training to enter and advance in the workplace - is considered when new programs are initiated.
Aurora College continues to enhance deliveries of courses that may lead to post-secondary certificates and diplomas in small communities.	Aug-24	Aurora College	Each community learning centre is delivering at least one course online that may lead to a post-secondary education certificate or diploma.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND METRICS

1. Number of full-time students by community and program.
2. Number of part-time students by community and program.
3. Number of full-time students who declare they are NWT residents.
4. Number of students who self-declare as Indigenous.
5. Budget variance.
6. Number of active research projects associated with Aurora College.

TERM

The term of the Mandate should conclude on July 1, 2024. However, the ACMA will remain valid until a renewed ACMA is approved by the Minister.



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