

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

TO THE FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE AURORA COLLEGE
FOUNDATIONAL REVIEW



RÉPONSE DU GOUVERNEMENT

AUX CONSTATATIONS ET
AUX RECOMMANDATIONS
DE L'EXAMEN DES PRINCIPES
FONDATEURS DU COLLÈGE AURORA

Le présent document contient la traduction française du résumé.

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Message from the Minister



Postsecondary education is essential to social and economic development in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Economic inequality, social divisions, and improved health and well-being can be addressed, in whole or in part, through greater access to postsecondary education. From an economic perspective, ensuring an increase in skilled workers is critical to the territory's productivity, innovation and economic competitiveness. We know we

need to continue to foster the advancement of our knowledge economy in the NWT, a sector of the economy that relies heavily on the academic and research activities of postsecondary institutions. As a territory, we continue to face great challenges, but I firmly believe that we also have tremendous potential that can be realized through advancements in our postsecondary education system.

The importance of having a postsecondary education institution located in the NWT that reflects the values and interests of our residents and communities cannot be overstated. Over the past 50 years, Northerners have relied on Aurora College for a wide range of education and training opportunities. As the College has evolved, it has expanded the range of available programming and the scope of research activities in the NWT, while at the same time building collaborative relationships with institutions from across Canada. As the only public postsecondary education institution in the NWT, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is responsible for ensuring it remains effective and efficient, and that it meets the needs of students both now and into the future.

The Aurora College Foundational Review has provided an opportunity to step back and examine fundamental aspects of the College. At its core, the work ahead is about establishing a strong foundation upon which the institution can continue to grow and adapt in response to the increasing and ever changing demands being placed on postsecondary education institutions. As well, the development of a vision for the future of postsecondary education is necessary and will build on current strengths as we seek to address the needs of residents and employers.

An overarching priority moving forward will be to ensure we are able to maintain a strong institution with three vibrant campuses, each with quality programs that are sustainable and which utilize, and build on, the assets of the communities where they are provided. As we strengthen our foundation we must also work towards developing a postsecondary institution that has specialized programs valued across Canada and the world. This report outlines a path forward that can achieve these goals.

Establishing the path forward for Aurora College has benefited from engagement with stakeholders from across the NWT. As decisions around the future of the College impact all of our communities, the process has also benefited from ongoing collaboration with Members of the Legislative Assembly. Moving forward, continued engagement with stakeholders and collaboration with Members of the Legislative Assembly will be essential to our success.

The Honourable Caroline Cochrane
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment

Executive Summary

In 2017, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (Minister) committed to completing an Aurora College Foundational Review (Review) to establish a model for Aurora College that is responsive to changing labour market demands and student needs, both now and in the future.

Following an independent examination of Aurora College by MNP LLP, a Review Report was submitted on May 4, 2018 that identified issues in the areas of governance, accountability, academic program management, operations, and student recruitment and retention. In response to these issues, and in order to position Aurora College to meet changing labour market demands and student needs, as well as to advance the knowledge economy in the NWT, it has been concluded that the current state of Aurora College requires significant change.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) accepts the overarching recommendation in the Review Report that Aurora College be transformed into a polytechnic university. There are currently a number of successful polytechnic universities across the country, including institutions such as Kwantlen Polytechnic University, University of Ontario Institute of Technology and Ryerson University. Though the change will prove transformational for the Northwest Territories (NWT), there is much experience to draw from across other provincial jurisdictions as we implement change.

The Department of Education Culture and Employment (ECE) will now begin working with the College to develop a detailed Implementation Plan to guide the transformation. Throughout all stages of the transformation process, decisions with regard to the pace of change will be evaluated and considered to ensure implementation timelines remain appropriate and achievable. The Review Report also makes 67 recommendations which describe ways of strengthening Aurora College and lays the foundation for establishing a polytechnic university. As outlined in this report, the GNWT has either accepted or partially accepted all 67 of these recommendations.

The transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university represents a significant change that, in the short-term, will be challenging. In order to ensure the transformation is completed in a timely and effective manner, an Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will be hired to lead the transformation and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will assume a more direct governance role until a new Board of Governors can be established. These are interim measures that will not continue past the implementation period. It is recognized that following the successful transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university the new institution must be able to function at “arm’s length” from government.

The new institution will continue to function with a three campus model, with the Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith, Yellowknife North Slave Campus and Aurora Campus in Inuvik.

Following the overall vision, and strategic direction for the polytechnic university, each campus will establish areas of specialization. Ongoing investments in the polytechnic university by the GNWT, as well as strengthening and building new strategic partnerships with industry, Canadian universities, the federal government and community and Indigenous governments, will ensure academic and research excellence in these areas of specialization and assist in increasing student success. This approach is expected to result in new opportunities for long-term sustainable growth at each campus. ECE will also continue to support improvements to Community Learning Centres and will work to increase access to postsecondary education in communities across the NWT.

The transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university is anticipated to create a new range of opportunities for prospective students and the territory as a whole. More Northerners will be able to develop skills needed for the jobs of the future, and will be able to do so in the NWT. This will have an added benefit of mitigating the economic leakage that results from students leaving the NWT to study in other Canadian postsecondary institutions. As the new polytechnic university matures, students from other provinces and territories will be increasingly drawn to unique postsecondary learning opportunities in the NWT, as it is recognized as “the place to be” for defined areas of specialization.

Teaching at a polytechnic university is grounded in applied learning. Students start with a foundation in practical knowledge and then move beyond the theoretical to test what they have learned. The new institution will continue to focus mainly on applied and technical programs, as has been the case with Aurora College in the past, but with a wider range of credentials/qualifications available to students. At polytechnic institutions, students have the opportunity to bridge certificate and diploma credentials into bachelor’s degrees, allowing for a great deal of flexibility within a defined range of academic programs. Teaching and research will be geared toward the evolving needs of regional, national and global employment markets.

Building on the work of Education Renewal that is being undertaken in the JK-12 education system, ECE will establish new student pathways extending from the secondary school system into the postsecondary education system. This is a key element of the transformation as it will allow students to begin working toward postsecondary education qualifications at an early age. The accessibility of postsecondary education opportunities will significantly improve for northern students when they are able to enter the polytechnic university having already met some of the educational and training requirements of a postsecondary qualification, such as a trades certificate, apprenticeship, diploma or degree.

It is important to keep in mind that the Review Report and Government Response are not a business case, nor are they a capital plan. They are an assessment of our needs and a proposal of how we can best meet those needs. The process of transforming an existing institution provides the opportunity for a more strategic rate of change compared to developing an entirely new institution. Rather than starting from scratch, the transformative process will build on existing Aurora College infrastructure, programming and human resources over an extended period of time. This will allow for a fiscally responsible rate of growth in pursuit of a clearly defined goal with measurable outcomes and defined timelines.

Establishing the path forward has been a long process involving a great deal of public and stakeholder engagement, and Members of the Legislative Assembly have played a key role in the decision making process. The plan to establish a polytechnic university is a declaration of where we need to be well into the future if we are to keep pace with the changing demands of postsecondary education, and meet the needs of students and the labour market. The path proposed in this report is about more than simply fixing problems; it is about creating new opportunities for future generations of Northerners. As such, the process of transforming Aurora College will begin with creation of a NWT-wide vision for postsecondary education. This vision will provide context for the College's vision, mission and goals and help shape the transformation process.

Although the need for immediate operational changes has become apparent, there will be additional changes required as the operational model for the polytechnic university evolves. Such changes will require further input from the Members of the 18th and 19th Legislative Assemblies. What is proposed here should not be considered a complete set of required changes, but rather the changes we know must be made at this stage of the transformation as we embark on a path toward establishment of a polytechnic university in the NWT. As we move forward, our actions will require continuous evaluation and strategic reviews with the overarching goal of meeting the postsecondary education vision defined by the residents of the NWT.

Résumé

En 2017, le ministre de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation (ci-après le « ministre ») s'est engagé à mener un examen des principes fondateurs du Collège Aurora (ci-après l'« examen ») afin de créer pour le Collège un modèle qui soit adapté aux nouvelles demandes du marché du travail et aux besoins des étudiants, tant aujourd'hui que demain.

Après son examen indépendant du Collège, MNP LLP a déposé le Rapport sur l'examen des principes fondateurs du Collège Aurora le 4 mai 2018. L'entreprise mandataire y cerne des lacunes liées à la gouvernance, à la responsabilisation, à la gestion des programmes de formation, à l'exploitation ainsi qu'au recrutement d'étudiants et à leur maintien aux études. En réaction à ce constat et afin que le Collège Aurora réponde aux nouvelles demandes du marché du travail et aux besoins des étudiants, mais aussi que l'économie du savoir prospère aux TNO, il a été convenu que des changements profonds s'imposent.

Le gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (GTNO) accepte la recommandation générale du Rapport, soit que le Collège Aurora doit devenir une université polytechnique. Il y a déjà diverses universités polytechniques florissantes au pays, dont l'Université polytechnique Kwantlen, l'Institut universitaire de technologie de l'Ontario et l'Université Ryerson. Bien qu'il s'agisse d'une véritable transformation aux TNO, l'expérience d'autres provinces au pays sera très utile dans la concrétisation d'un tel changement.

Le ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation (MÉCF) doit maintenant concevoir un plan détaillé de mise en œuvre de pair avec le Collège Aurora. À toutes les étapes du processus, la vitesse de déploiement sera dûment évaluée pour veiller à ce que l'échéancier demeure adéquat et réaliste. Le Rapport comprend 67 recommandations qui décrivent des façons de renforcer le Collège Aurora et de jeter les bases d'une université polytechnique. Tel qu'établi dans les présentes, le GTNO a accepté en tout ou en partie toutes ces recommandations.

La transformation du Collège Aurora en une université polytechnique est un changement majeur qui sera difficile à concrétiser à court terme. Pour assurer une mutation à la fois efficace et rapide de l'établissement, un sous-ministre associé à la refonte de l'éducation postsecondaire sera embauché pour piloter le dossier, et le MÉCF assumera une gouvernance plus directe jusqu'à la création d'un nouveau conseil des gouverneurs. Il s'agit de mesures intérimaires qui ne dureront que le temps de la mise en œuvre. On s'entend pour dire que la nouvelle université polytechnique doit être indépendante du gouvernement une fois le processus de transformation achevé.

Le modèle à trois campus – Thebacha (Fort Smith), Slave Nord (Yellowknife) et Aurora (Inuvik) – sera conservé.

Chaque campus aura ses spécialités, tel qu'établi dans l'approche globale et l'orientation stratégique de l'université polytechnique. Les investissements soutenus du GTNO dans l'université polytechnique, de même que la création ou la consolidation de partenariats stratégiques avec l'industrie, les universités canadiennes, les gouvernements fédéral et autochtones et les administrations communautaires, assureront l'excellence de l'enseignement et de la recherche dans ces secteurs spécialisés et favoriseront une plus grande réussite chez les étudiants. Une telle approche devrait se traduire par de nouvelles possibilités de croissance à long terme pour tous les campus. Le MÉCF continuera de soutenir les améliorations aux centres communautaires d'apprentissage et d'œuvrer à un plus grand accès à l'éducation postsecondaire dans les collectivités ténoises.

La transformation du Collège Aurora en université polytechnique devrait se traduire par une gamme de nouvelles possibilités non seulement pour les futurs étudiants, mais bien l'ensemble du territoire. Un plus grand nombre de Ténos pourront acquérir les compétences nécessaires aux emplois de l'avenir, et ils pourront le faire chez eux, aux TNO. Cela aura l'avantage de limiter les pertes économiques dues au départ des étudiants inscrits dans d'autres établissements postsecondaires du pays. Avec le temps, l'université polytechnique pourrait développer une offre de formation postsecondaire unique intéressant un nombre croissant d'étudiants d'autres provinces et territoires, les TNO devenant un incontournable dans certains domaines de spécialisation.

L'enseignement dans une université polytechnique est fondé sur l'apprentissage pratique. Les étudiants commencent par acquérir les connaissances pratiques nécessaires, puis vont au-delà de la théorie pour mettre en pratique leurs acquis. Ce nouvel établissement continuera de miser principalement sur les programmes d'études techniques et appliquées, comme l'a fait le Collège Aurora jusqu'à maintenant, mais offrira aux étudiants un plus grand éventail de formations et de qualifications. Dans les établissements polytechniques, les étudiants peuvent transformer leur certificat ou diplôme dans un secteur en baccalauréat, ce qui leur confère une grande souplesse de choix au sein de l'éventail de programmes offerts. L'enseignement et la recherche seront axés sur les besoins changeants des marchés de l'emploi régionaux, national et mondial.

S'inspirant du Renouveau de l'éducation entrepris dans le réseau scolaire de la prématernelle à la 12^e année, le MÉCF créera de nouveaux cheminements scolaires qui feront le pont entre le réseau du secondaire et celui de la formation postsecondaire. Il s'agit d'un aspect clé de la transformation, puisqu'il permettra aux étudiants de travailler dès leur jeune âge à l'acquisition des compétences nécessaires à leurs études postsecondaires. Les étudiants ténois bénéficieront d'un bien meilleur accès à l'éducation postsecondaire s'ils peuvent déjà répondre à certaines des exigences théoriques et pratiques de leur spécialité au moment de s'inscrire à l'université polytechnique, que ce soit pour y obtenir un certificat professionnel ou un diplôme, ou encore pour y effectuer un apprentissage.

Il ne faut pas oublier que le Rapport et la réponse du gouvernement à celui-ci ne constituent pas une analyse de rentabilité ni un plan d'investissement : ce sont respectivement une analyse de nos besoins et une proposition sur la meilleure façon d'y répondre. Cette mutation donne l'occasion au gouvernement d'adopter un rythme plus stratégique dans l'adoption des changements nécessaires, ce qui n'aurait pas été possible avec la création d'un tout nouvel établissement. Le processus de transformation va donc miser à long terme sur l'infrastructure du Collège Aurora, ses programmes et ses ressources humaines, ce qui favorisera un taux de croissance responsable sur le plan financier en fonction d'un objectif clair aux résultats quantifiables et à l'échéancier précis.

Convenir de la voie à emprunter est un long processus qui nécessite beaucoup d'échanges avec la population et les parties prenantes, et les députés territoriaux jouent un rôle clé dans la prise de décisions. Le plan de création d'une université polytechnique se veut la déclaration de ce que nous devons devenir à très long terme pour nous assurer de répondre aux besoins changeants dans le milieu de l'éducation postsecondaire, et donc à ceux des étudiants et du marché du travail. La voie proposée dans le présent rapport ne se limite pas à la résolution de problèmes : elle crée de nouvelles possibilités pour les générations futures de Ténos. Ainsi, le processus de transformation du Collège Aurora commencera par l'établissement d'un idéal pour l'éducation postsecondaire aux TNO, de sorte à mettre l'approche, la mission et les objectifs du Collège en contexte et à mieux définir le processus de transformation.

Bien qu'il soit manifeste que des changements opérationnels immédiats s'imposent, d'autres changements seront nécessaires au fil de l'évolution du modèle d'exploitation de l'université polytechnique. De tels changements requièrent davantage de rétroaction des députés des 18e et 19e assemblées législatives. Le présent document, plutôt que d'énoncer une série définitive de changements, présente ceux qui s'avèrent incontournables à cette étape du processus de transformation pour en venir à la création d'une université polytechnique aux TNO. Alors que nous entamons ce virage, nos décisions devront constamment être évaluées d'après l'idéal défini par les Ténos en matière d'éducation postsecondaire afin de s'assurer qu'elles sont stratégiquement viables.

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Introduction

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is responsible for ensuring that Aurora College, as the primary publicly-funded postsecondary education institution in the territory, is meeting the needs of residents, employers and communities.

In 2017, in the face of declining enrolments, declining graduation rates and an increased number of students leaving the Northwest Territories to pursue their studies, the Minister committed to completing a Review to establish a model for Aurora College that is responsive to changing labour market demands and student needs, both now and in the future.

Independent Review

The Review has been carried out in two stages. The first stage called for an independent contractor to provide an Aurora College Foundational Review Report (Review Report) following their examination of the College.

A contractor was hired following a Request for Proposals process. This is a project-based process involving methodology, qualifications, and price as the main criteria that define a winning proponent¹. The contractor and project requirements are contained within a Terms of Reference for the Review².

The contract to examine Aurora College and complete a Review Report was awarded to MNP LLP (MNP). They brought to the project an extensive range of expertise and experience conducting similar reviews of postsecondary education institutions in Canada.

MNP applied an integrated approach to collecting information through data and documentation review, stakeholder engagement and a jurisdictional review. Their examination of the College and background research was conducted during the period of November 2017 to January 2018. The compilation of key findings, recommendations and report drafting took place during the period of February 2018 to April 2018.

¹ Information regarding the procurement process is available at <https://contracts.fin.gov.nt.ca>

² Review documents are available at <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/aurora-college-foundational-review>

The Review Report was delivered by MNP in May 2018. Following the Terms of Reference for the Review, MNP examined five themes, each responding to questions raised by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) as follows:

Governance focused on a review of the current governance structure of the College to determine if it meets the criteria for good governance, allows for the establishment and pursuit of educational and research priorities, supports efficient and effective operations and clearly defines roles and responsibilities. The scope of the governance review included an assessment of clarity of roles and responsibilities of the Aurora Research Institute.

Accountability considered the link between accountability measures and strategic objectives which, in turn, must be clearly aligned to the institution's mission, vision and values. Highly successful institutions take a shared leadership approach to the development and refinement of their institutional accountability programs which thereby generates trust and respect in the process. The attributes of effective and innovative accountability measures were examined to assist in establishing a framework that leads to desired postsecondary outcomes.

Academic Program Management focused on how the College monitors and aligns academic programming with current and emerging labour market demands and the needs of learners. This included an examination of decision-making processes and criteria regarding program assessment and improvement, integration of strategic plans with academic programming decisions to maintain labour market relevance, and leveraging strategic partnerships to increase opportunities for the students of the College.

Operations included a review of policies and procedures to examine the levels of clarity, completeness, accessibility and alignment with leading practices. This stream also included the assessment of the *Aurora College Act* and its alignment with the operational needs of the College, as well as the assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the current delivery model of the College's various campuses and learning centres. The examination considered whether the current model meets the needs of NWT residents, and the overall effectiveness of current partnerships between the College and other postsecondary institutions.

Recruitment and Retention of Students aimed at determining the major factors impacting student recruitment and retention at the College, with focus on whether the College's current recruitment processes, programs and services are attracting sufficient numbers and types of students, as well as promoting student well-being and success.

Government Response

The Government Response to the Findings and Recommendations of the Aurora College Foundational Review (Government Response) represents the second stage of the Review, namely the results of an examination of the feasibility of each recommendation and the articulation of a path forward for Aurora College. The requirements and parameters of the Government Response are contained within a Terms of Reference³.

This stage included three objectives:

1. Determine where the Government will accept, partially accept or not accept each recommendation in the Review Report;
2. Provide an explanation of the Government's Response to each recommendation in the Review Report; and
3. Where appropriate, indicate the next steps in implementing the recommendation.

The following principles guided the GNWT's determination of the feasibility of each recommendation:

1. Provide transparency and disclosure related to the justifications for the response to each recommendation of the Aurora College Foundational Review;
2. Consider the challenges pertaining to the NWT including: geography, climate, cost of living and population projections;
3. Pursue fiscal and operationally sustainable options that are realistic given the broader fiscal framework of the GNWT;
4. Consider cultural differences in communities across the territory and how such differences may have an impact on the operations and activities of the College;
5. Ensure that each recommendation is clear and evidence-based; and
6. Be considerate of the broader strategic objectives contained in the GNWT Mandate, legislation and policy.

³ Review documents are available at <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/aurora-college-foundational-review>

To help determine the Government Response, the Minister and ECE staff traveled to each of the three campus communities and engaged with community leaders, Indigenous leaders, Aurora College staff, Aurora College students and members of the public. The Minister has also received letters from individuals and organizations across the NWT. These engagements and written input provided different perspectives on the findings and recommendations of the Review Report, all of which has been considered when deciding the path forward for Aurora College.

The Government Response also reflects input from Members of the Legislative Assembly. Following completion of the Review Report in May 2018, the Minister has been engaged with the Standing Committee on Social Development (SCOSD) and other Members of the Legislative Assembly around the Review Report, development of a Government Response and the postsecondary education needs of Northerners. This has been part of an ongoing collaboration between the Minister and SCOSD that, moving forward, will continue to support the development of an Implementation Plan for the outcomes of the Review.

Key Findings of the Review

In the 2016-17 academic year, most full-time students attended programs at the Yellowknife North Slave Campus (174) closely followed by the Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith (164) and the Aurora Campus in Inuvik (105). The trend is very different for part-time students; with the majority of students attending the Thebacha Campus (765) followed by the Yellowknife North Slave Campus (488) and the Aurora Campus (483).

Excluding those engaged in coursework through Continuing Education, in 2016-17 approximately 24% of students enrolled at Aurora College were in the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Program, 19% in a University and College Access Program or an Occupation or College Access Program, 17% in a Certificate Program, 15% in a Degree Program, 14% in a Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Programs, and 11% in a Diploma Program.

As context to the findings of the Review, the Review Report highlights the declining student enrolment at Aurora College, with the 2016-17 numbers marking a distinct drop from past years. With regard to full-time students, a sharp decline in enrolment has been apparent over five years with a 26% drop between 2012-13 and 2016-17. The decline of part-time student enrolment has been more recent but equally concerning, with a drop of 33% between 2014-15 and 2016-17.

There were also concerns raised in the Review Report around the process for making programming decisions at the College, including the relationship between the College and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE). Aurora College has been expected to operate at “arm’s length” from government, but this has not been achieved. In recent years, ECE has become more directly involved with operational decision making and strategic planning at Aurora College. In 2016-17, the College depended on approximately \$6 million of in-kind services (i.e., services provided without charge) from the GNWT. This comes in addition to ECE funding that accounts for approximately 65% of Aurora College’s total revenue. These figures suggest an extremely high degree of dependence on government relative to other institutions across Canada.

Following a comprehensive examination, the Review Report concludes that the present state of Aurora College necessitates a complete and deliberate overhaul, namely the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university. It proposes that such a transformation will lead to the delivery of world class programming and transform the College into a destination university in the north and for the north. More Northerners will be able to develop skills needed for the jobs of the future, and will be able to do so in the NWT. This will have an added benefit of mitigating the economic leakage that results from students leaving the NWT to study in other Canadian postsecondary institutions. As the new polytechnic university matures, students from other provinces and territories will be increasingly drawn to unique postsecondary learning opportunities in the NWT, as it is recognized as “the place to be” for defined areas of specialization.

The Review Report puts forward three key findings to support a polytechnic university. These findings represent the reasons why such a change is needed. First, it is noted that the advances in higher education are increasing at a rapid rate and the College needs to be better equipped to respond to these changes on an ongoing basis. It is about more than catching up; it is fundamentally about being able to sustain ongoing improvements.

Second, the Review Report highlights the need for a modified approach to investment in postsecondary education, namely one that sees postsecondary education as a primary economic driver in the NWT. First and foremost, it is about seeing education as a means of engaging the NWT population more broadly in lifelong, integrated learning. Through this lens, investments in postsecondary education can be viewed as key to developing the skilled workforce required to engage in both current and future labour market opportunities, including those required to advance the knowledge economy. Many other benefits extend from success in this regard, including the advancement of social and community development.

Third, the Review Report notes that Aurora College, in its current form, is not able to attract the types and level of postsecondary education investment available to a polytechnic university. This is critical on multiple levels, as the growth and sustainability of the institution requires both increased levels and new forms of investment. The idea of co-investment partnerships is not new to Aurora College, but it is clearly limited by the current institutional model.

Stemming from these three key findings, the Review Report identifies multiple issues at Aurora College that are presented within the five themes (Governance, Accountability, Academic Program Management, Operations, and Recruitment and Retention of Students). The key findings give context to these issues and make clear the need for transformational change, rather than an approach that addresses each issue independently within the existing institution. Transformational change requires a simultaneous shift in the organization's underlying strategy, processes and culture. It is through transformational change that Aurora College will be able to reliably depart from the status quo to pursue long-term development and growth of the institution in a way that is sustainable.

Some findings in the Review Report are specific to an Aurora College campus, including the Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith, the Yellowknife North Slave Campus or the Aurora Campus in Inuvik. The unique challenges and opportunities associated with each campus must also be considered if a complete transformation of the overall institution is to be achieved.

Thebacha Campus

The Thebacha Campus is located in Fort Smith, a community of approximately 2,500. During the 2016-17 academic year, the Thebacha Campus had 164 full-time and 765 part-time students.

Programs that are currently delivered at the Thebacha Camus include: Office Administration; Business Administration; Early Childhood Development (via distance); Environment and Natural Resources Technology; Bachelor of Education; Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training; as well as University, College and Occupations Access Programs.

Fort Smith has been home to the College's headquarters since 1992, when the headquarters of Arctic College, the institution that preceded Aurora College, was moved from Yellowknife to Fort Smith. However, the history of postsecondary education in Fort Smith extends back to 1968 when a Heavy Equipment Operator course was offered at Fox Holes, just west of Fort Smith. In 1969, the training being done at Fox Holes was moved to Fort Smith when the Adult Vocational Training Centre was established.

Fluctuations in overall enrolment over the past five years was a concern noted in the Review Report, particularly with regard to Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Programs. Aside from a mobile trades training unit based at the Aurora Campus, the Thebacha Campus is home to all of Aurora College's Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Programs. Enrolment in these programs experienced a sharp decline over five years, with a 36% drop between 2012-13 and 2016-17. During administration of the NWT's Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Program, ECE has noted an increasing number of requests from apprentices to enrol at institutions in Alberta rather than Aurora College.

Informed by engagements with Aurora College and program administrators, instructors and members of the NWT Apprenticeship Board, the Review Report noted the following reasons for the low enrolments at the College:

- The perception that some students seek the opportunity to live and train in a larger center;
- Concerns over safety of students due to a lack of security;
- Challenges with student housing; and
- The lack of opportunities for students to enhance their quality of life and earn additional income through part-time work.

Additionally, apprentices noted the following reasons for applying to other colleges:

- Classes are routinely cancelled causing apprentices to apply elsewhere;
- Difficulty accessing appropriate resources, including via the College website;
- Concerns over the quality of instructors; and
- A lack of other housing options available in Fort Smith.

The Review Report also noted a perceived lack of recreational activities for students within Fort Smith and the Thebacha Campus. However, follow-up engagements suggest there is a reasonable selection of recreation options. Recreational infrastructure in Fort Smith currently includes a community hall, arena, curling rink, three gymnasiums and an indoor swimming pool.

The Review Report identified that student housing connected to Thebacha Campus has faced challenges as a result of ageing and a lack of upkeep. It was also mentioned that clarity is needed on whether this upkeep is the responsibility of the College or whether it falls under the mandate of the Department of Infrastructure. During engagement sessions following the release of the Review Report it was highlighted that the main student residence supporting Thebacha Campus was previously used as a Residential School and that this legacy greatly discourages its use and appropriateness as a College residence.

Yellowknife North Slave Campus

The Yellowknife North Slave Campus is located in Yellowknife, a city of approximately 20,000. During the 2016-17 academic year, the Yellowknife North Slave Campus had 174 full-time and 488 part-time students.

Programs that are currently delivered at the Yellowknife North Slave Campus include a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Post Graduate Certificate in Remote Nursing; Business Administration; Social Work Diploma; Early Learning and Child Care Diploma; Personal Support Worker; Community Health Representative Certificate; as well as University, College and Occupations Access Programs.

The Review Report outlines that the Yellowknife North Slave Campus does not have a permanent facility in Yellowknife and suggests that it is leasing two floors in the “United Church building”. However, to be clear, the College leases three floors of commercial space and a further seven floors of residences for student housing from the not-for-profit NWT Community Services Corporation as the owner and manager of the building. The Review Report further indicates that this facility has not been designed as a College and does not meet the needs of students. In particular, space for students to meet, study and socialize, as well as limitations in classroom space and for instructor’s offices is mentioned. The Tallah Building is also leased by the College as well as residence space at Stanton Suites. Concerns with regard to Yellowknife North Slave Campus facilities were reiterated during engagement at the Yellowknife North Slave Campus and by the public, following the release of the Review Report.

Aurora Campus

As the Review Report highlights, the Aurora Campus in Inuvik is the newest Aurora College Campus. Inuvik is a community of roughly 3,250 people. During the 2016-17 academic year, the Aurora Campus had 105 full-time students and 482 part-time students.

Programs currently delivered at Aurora Campus include an Environment and Natural Resources Technology Diploma; an Office Administration Diploma and Certificate; Business Administration Diploma and Certificate; Practical Nursing Diploma; as well as University, College and Occupations Access Programs.

In 1995, the former Science Institute of the Northwest Territories was amalgamated with Aurora College in the NWT and Arctic College in Nunavut. The portion which now functions as a division of Aurora College is called the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) and is headquartered in Inuvik. ARI offers licensing and research assistance in the NWT. As the research division of Aurora College, ARI's mandate is to improve the quality of life for NWT residents by applying scientific, technological and Indigenous knowledge to solve northern problems and advance social and economic goals.

As outlined in the Review Report, student residences connected to Aurora Campus and ARI are mostly new and modern, but they are not utilized to their full capacity as a result of low enrolment and policies limiting access to student housing.

Establishing a Polytechnic University

The Review Report presents a vision and pathway for the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university. In the Review Report, this future institution is referred to as the “Northern Canada Polytechnic University” (NCPU). In this report, this model is referred to simply as a “polytechnic university”.

It is important to note that a process of transforming an existing institution represents a more gradual rate of change compared to developing an entirely new institution. Rather than starting from scratch, this transformative process builds on existing Aurora College infrastructure, programming and human resources over an extended period of time. This will allow for a fiscally responsible rate of growth in pursuit of a clearly defined goal.

What is a Polytechnic University?

Generally, a polytechnic university combines the practical approach of a college education and the depth of study usually associated with a university program. Polytechnic programs are skills-intensive and technology-based. Hands-on learning opportunities provide students with practical training for in-demand jobs. Program and curriculum decisions at polytechnic universities are also made in close collaboration with representatives from industry, ensuring graduates attain skills that are relevant to the current job market.

The transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university represents a significant organizational change that is anticipated to create a new range of opportunities for prospective students and the territory as whole. Teaching at a polytechnic university is grounded in applied learning. Students start with a foundation in practical knowledge and then move beyond the theoretical to test what they have learned. The new institution would continue to focus mainly on applied and technical programs, as has been the case with Aurora College in the past, but with a wider range of credentials/qualifications available to students. At polytechnic institutions, students have the opportunity to bridge certificate and diploma credentials into bachelor’s degrees, allowing for a great deal of flexibility within a defined range of academic programs. The teaching and research will be very much geared toward the evolving needs of regional, national and global employment markets.

Emphasis is also given in the Review Report to the need for student pathways extending from the secondary school system into the postsecondary education system. This is a key element of the transformation as it will allow students, if they choose, to begin working toward postsecondary education qualifications at a very early age. The accessibility of postsecondary education will be significantly improved for many Northerners when prospective students are given the opportunity to enter the polytechnic university having already met some of the educational and training requirements of their chosen program.

Research is also a critical component of a polytechnic university and focuses on practical and commercial research generally based on industry needs. Research isn't undertaken solely for its own sake, but to develop products and processes to fulfill a defined need. This approach provides students with valuable, hands-on experience that will better prepare them for the labour market as well as build direct connections with future employers.

Incremental Changes

The Review Report makes 67 recommendations, most of which represent incremental steps toward improvements. These improvements are intended to help establish a strong foundation upon which a new kind of institution can continue to grow and develop over time. However, incremental changes alone will not lead to the creation of a higher education system in the NWT that meets the diverse needs of students, employers, industry and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents. For these needs to be met in an effective and sustainable manner, the overall approach to change must follow the overarching recommendation in the Review Report that Aurora College be transformed into a polytechnic university.

The Review Report provides an Implementation Plan towards the transition of Aurora College to a polytechnic university over the next six to eight years. While next steps for implementation are further elaborated upon later in the Government Response, it is clear that there will be deviations from the proposed Implementation Plan put forward in the Review Report. In some areas there may be the potential to move more quickly, while in others a more measured approach will be required. Throughout all stages of the transformation process beyond the Government Response, decisions with regard to the pace of change will be evaluated and considered to ensure implementation timelines remain appropriate.

How Will this Benefit the Northwest Territories?

In 2014, the GNWT partnered with The Conference Board of Canada to develop an overview of the socio-economic profile and labour market forecast for the NWT over 15 years. It forecasted there will be 28,500 to 36,700 job openings in the NWT, with approximately 78% of these job openings requiring college, apprenticeship training or university education. The demand and competition for skilled workers will only intensify in the coming years with an aging workforce and people leaving the labour market in large numbers. A polytechnic university will better serve NWT long-term higher education and applied research needs through the offering of select elements of a baccalaureate and applied studies institution, a polytechnic institution and a community college. The development of these elements will be heavily shaped by sectors with in-demand jobs and skilled labour shortages.

Serving the communities in the NWT has been a core part of the Aurora College mandate and this will remain a fundamental component of a polytechnic university. The College's transformation will require a re-examination of the Community Learning Centres (CLCs) to better understand how small community residents are able to more easily access and complete a postsecondary education.

It is already envisioned that any approach to extending postsecondary education access to small community residents should include the development of an integrated learning environment where students can begin earning postsecondary credits while they are still in the secondary school system. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has made significant progress toward establishing an integrated learning environment following collaboration between the Education Renewal and Skills 4 Success initiatives, as well as work on High School Pathways.

Specific benefits of a polytechnic university include:

- Engagement in research, just like other universities, but with a different approach that is more in line with the current and future needs of the NWT;
- Close relationship with businesses, as polytechnic research is all about solving problems that businesses bring to them;
- Curricula designed with employers and industry sectors in mind, combined with a strong focus on graduate employment outcomes;
- Offering advanced postsecondary education opportunities that are generally more accessible to students of varying social and economic backgrounds; and
- Access to a broader range of certifications, ranging from apprenticeship and occupational certifications to PhD's, all under the same institution and with a focus on meeting industry and northern needs.

Currently, there are experienced northern researchers working at, or in association with, Aurora College. The transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university is a way of building on that experience by creating a more visible and clearly defined research presence. With a more visible research presence that is anchored in the NWT, a polytechnic university would help attract new federal research dollars to northern projects and help forge new partnerships with the private sector and other academic organizations and institutions. The unique characteristics of the NWT offer distinct advantages to researchers that may be leveraged to help draw increased investments to the knowledge economy.

As the GNWT continues to support the knowledge economy, based on the unique culture, climate and geography of the NWT, there are a number of unique opportunities before us. For example, an opportunity to support the knowledge economy through its approach to the application of traditional knowledge in policy development, program design and service delivery. Through the Knowledge Agenda: Northern Research for Northern Priorities initiative, traditional knowledge based research is increasingly being represented in subject areas like cultural sustainability, environmental stewardship, health and wellness, natural resource management and sustainable communities. There may also be significant commercial opportunities in the development and/or application of technologies suited for arctic climates, as well as climate change monitoring and adaption, among others.

Perhaps more significantly, the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university would help to ensure a much greater portion of research investment and resulting knowledge remains in the NWT, rather than supporting the advancement of researchers working from southern institutions. In this way, investment in the establishment of a polytechnic university represents an investment in the knowledge economy more broadly, opening up new and exciting opportunities for economic growth in NWT.

GOVERNANCE

Current Status

Under the current governance structure, each member of the Aurora College Board of Governors (Board) is appointed by the Minister. Each member is required to fulfill their obligations as outlined in the *Aurora College Act* and to follow the direction of the Minister. The President reports to the Board, but also follows the direction of the Minister.

In accordance with section 9(2) of the *Aurora College Act*, the Board membership is to include:

- (a) one member for each region;
- (b) one member from among the staff of Aurora College;
- (c) one member who is a student of Aurora College;
- (d) any additional members who the Minister considers to have expertise that would contribute to the operation of Aurora College.

In June 2017, the Board was temporarily replaced by a single Administrator who was appointed in accordance with section 31(1) of the *Aurora College Act* which states:

Where, in the opinion of the Minister it is in the public interest to do so, the Minister may appoint an administrator for Aurora College.

One of the areas of focus for examination under the Review was governance. As such, the appointment of an Administrator has helped to maintain stability and continuity while the Review was underway.

The Path Forward

The GNWT accepts the overarching recommendation that Aurora College should be transformed into a polytechnic university.

Having accepted this goal as the destination for change, the remaining recommendations can be assessed with a view to making the changes necessary to support this transformation.

As part of the transformation into a polytechnic university, the Review Report outlines a system of governance very different from the one that is currently in place at Aurora College. However, it is clear that the potential for success in all areas will be greatest under a governance system that more effectively demands, recognizes and rewards success.

We agree good governance of a postsecondary education institution means ensuring accountability, transparency and effectiveness at the highest levels. For these principles to be realized, they must be enshrined in all aspects of the governance system, including the legislation, regulations, policies and procedures that guide the institution.

We agree the governance system outlined in the Review Report requires strong leadership, both inside and outside the institution. A new approach to the leadership of Aurora College will be implemented during its transformation into a polytechnic university in order to allow for significant and widespread change to occur with minimal disruption to the ongoing operation of the College. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will also temporarily take a more direct role in overseeing and supporting the College and Executive Leadership Team in order to ensure the transformation is completed as outlined in this report.

In the long term, establishing an accountable, transparent and effective institution will rely on the appropriate relationship with government. In particular, it is increasingly evident that Aurora College must be empowered to function at “arm’s length” in its operations and strategic decision making. We remain committed to ensuring that, during the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university, the new institution is able to maintain the appropriate level of operational and strategic independence going forward.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation G-1:

With consent of the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, ECE should assume the higher education governance role and responsibility for the next four to six years, while NCPU is being established, and eliminate the role of the Administrator.

Partially Accept

- In place of a Board of Governors, Aurora College is governed by a single Administrator that was appointed by the Minister. The Administrator will remain in place until a Board can be re-established under the conditions outlined in the Government Response. Having a single Administrator that receives direction from the Minister has helped to maintain stability and continuity while changes to the College are being considered and implemented.
- We agree that the long-term sustainability of the institution requires foundational changes to the College that may only be achieved with the close support and oversight of ECE. This will be for the shortest time possible in order to support the successful transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university.
- However, the role of the Administrator or Board cannot be eliminated without legislated changes to the *Aurora College Act*. As such, we will explore options for increasing collaboration between ECE, the Aurora College Executive Leadership Team, the Aurora College Administrator and the Minister throughout the transformation period.

G-1

Partially Accept

G-1 ————— ○ —————
Partially Accept

G-2 ————— ○ —————
Partially Accept

Recommendation G-2:

Hire a Deputy Minister of Higher Education that will develop and drive an Implementation Plan to pursue this vision with a clear mandate to open NCPU by 2024. This includes formalizing the Deputy Minister’s roles, responsibilities, performance metrics and targets and regularly reviewing (e.g. semi-annual) progress in the achievement thereof.

Partially Accept

- The position of Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will be created to oversee the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university.
- The Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal supervises, administers and directs all aspects of the operation of the College, including the delivery of College programs at the three campus locations and Community Learning Centres.
- The Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will lead the development of a vision for postsecondary education in the NWT. However, responsibility for “higher education” more generally, including matters outside the operations of Aurora College or not directly related to the establishment of a polytechnic university, will remain the responsibility of the Deputy Minister, Education Culture and Employment. For example, responsibility for the Student Financial Assistance Program; Apprenticeship Trades and Occupational Certification Program; and oversight of private and not-for-profit postsecondary organizations/programs operating in the NWT would rest with the Deputy Minister of ECE.
- The priorities of the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will be mandated by the Premier and progress towards established targets and key performance indicators will be reviewed on an on-going basis.
- This arrangement is intended to last the duration of the transformation period, or for a more brief time. This will be contingent on the implementation of relevant governance structures and institutional stability.

Recommendation G-3:

The Deputy Minister of Higher Education should evaluate the current leadership team and recruit for a VP Academic Affairs, VP Finance and Administration, VP Advancement and VP Applied Research.

Partially Accept

- We agree that the approach proposed in the Review Report has clear advantages to the current structure of the Executive Leadership Team at Aurora College.
- However, the structure will not be decided at this time. Informed by an evaluation of the leadership team, and taking into consideration the structure proposed in the Review Report, it will be the responsibility of the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal to decide on the structure of the Executive Leadership Team.

G-1 —————
Partially Accept

G-2 —————
Partially Accept

G-3 —————
Partially Accept

G-4 —————
Partially Accept

Recommendation G-4:

In the short term, establish an Advisory Board made up of independent and knowledgeable members that can support and advise the Deputy Minister of Higher Education during the transformation towards NCPU.

Partially Accept

- Rather than an Advisory Board, we will establish an Advisory Committee to provide advice and guidance to the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal on operational matters during the transformation.
- The Advisory Committee will consist of individuals who possess the necessary expertise and qualification to support the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal in all decisions related to capital planning, marketing, communication, human resources, information technology and other operational decision-making.

Governance

G-1 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-2 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-3 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-4 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-5 ————— ○
Accept

Recommendation G-5:

In the short term, establish an Academic Advisory Council made up of independent and knowledgeable members that can support and advise the Deputy Minister of Higher Education on all academic matters.

Accept

- We will establish an Academic Advisory Council to support and advise the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal.
- The Academic Advisory Council will consist of individuals with the necessary expertise and qualifications to support the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal in all decisions relating to academic programming and academic support services of the polytechnic university.
- The Academic Advisory Council would also provide insight into the labour market needs that will ultimately translate into program needs, be it the creation, improvement or elimination of programs. They would also provide deeper insights into the outcomes needed from programs developed so the skills of the students align with industry needs upon program completion.

Recommendation G-6:

For NCPU to be accredited as a university, the Institution will need to re-introduce (at a suitable time, e.g. 2021/22) a more appropriate and arm’s length governance model. A bicameral governance model is recommended that will share decision making authority between a Senate (responsible for academic decisions) and a Board (responsible for administrative decisions). Introduce appropriate standing committees in support of both the Senate and the Board with associated terms of references for the Senate, Board and standing committees. For specific recommendations to improve Board operations, please refer to GB-1 to GB-6.

Partially Accept

- Currently, an institution may only be recognized (or accredited) as a university in the NWT with the express authority of an Act as stated in section 150 of the *Education Act*. ECE will soon present new legislation for consideration by the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories to replace section 150 of the *Education Act*. The primary objective of this new legislation will be to create a process of recognition that ensures the effective governance and quality assurance of postsecondary institutions and their programs.
- We recognize the need to establish a more appropriate and arm’s length governance model.
- We recognize the benefits of a system of shared decision making between a Board and Senate. This approach will be considered when developing governance models for the new institution.

G-1 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-2 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-3 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-4 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-5 ————— ⊙
Accept

G-6 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-1 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-2 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-3 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-4 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-5 ————— ○
Accept

G-6 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-7 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-8 ————— ○
Partially Accept

Recommendation G-7:

Update or develop governance policies and procedures to support the implementation of a bicameral model, including, but not limited to:

- Board bylaws
- Senate bylaws
- Terms of Reference for the Board, Senate and standing committees

Partially Accept

- Following a final decision on the future governance model, we will develop appropriate governance policies and procedures to support implementation.

Recommendation G-8:

Execute the Implementation Plan as depicted on page 109 in section 9.0 of this Report.

Partially Accept

- Following Recommendation G-2, the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will develop and drive the Implementation Plan.
- A revised Implementation Plan will be developed that aligns with the sequencing proposed in the Review Report, but that maintains a timeline better reflecting the decision making processes of the GNWT and the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.
- The milestones/actions identified in the Review Report will be adapted and incorporated into the revised Implementation Plan.
- The pace of change will be evaluated and considered to ensure implementation timelines remain appropriate throughout all stages of the transformation process.
- A monitoring and evaluation framework will be incorporated into the development of the Implementation Plan.

Recommendation G-9:

Review and update the Act and make changes required to move towards establishment of a polytechnic university including, but not limited to:

- Establishment of polytechnic university
- Purpose of Institution (Section 3)
- Structure of the Institution
- Governing authority
- Board of Governors
- Senate
- Clarify responsibilities and reporting relationships of the Minister, Department, President (Deputy Minister Higher Education), Board and Senate
- Expand the Board’s role with respect to developing bylaws to govern College administrative and academic matters (Section 16(k))
- Expand the Board’s role (in the interim Deputy Minister Higher Education) with respect to the establishment of programs and courses with the Minister’s role limited to approval of the Academic Programming Plan (Section 7(1)(b))

Accept

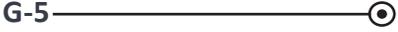
- We are developing a new legislative framework to govern postsecondary education to replace section 150 of the *Education Act* as the overarching framework for the creation of all types of postsecondary institutions. The primary objective of this new legislation will be to create a process of recognition that ensures the effective governance and quality assurance of postsecondary institutions and their programs.
- Changes to the *Aurora College Act* will be made in accordance with the requirements of the proposed postsecondary legislative framework. These changes are anticipated in 2019.
- Additional changes to the *Aurora College Act* will follow the revised Implementation Plan (Recommendation G-8).

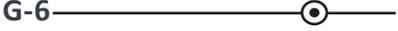
G-1  Partially Accept

G-2  Partially Accept

G-3  Partially Accept

G-4  Partially Accept

G-5  Accept

G-6  Partially Accept

G-7  Partially Accept

G-8  Partially Accept

G-9  Accept

Recommendation G-10:

The GNWT to consider transferring the responsibility for issuing of research licensing to another department in the GNWT.

Accept

- The Aurora Research Institute is a division of Aurora College which licenses and coordinates research that does not fall under the *Wildlife Act* or *Archaeological Sites Act*.
- The Review Report highlights that this responsibility may not align with the current mandate of Aurora College and that this role should be undertaken by a GNWT department.
- As Aurora College transitions to a polytechnic university, being both a major contributor in the field of research and the body that regulates all NWT research activities could result in a perceived or real conflict of interest.
- As recommended, we will consider options for transferring the Aurora Research Institute's responsibilities for issuing research licenses to one or more GNWT departments. This aligns with the approach already taken for research related to wildlife and archeology in the NWT.

Recommendation G-11:

Forge a co-investment partnership with a major university through the establishment of a joint venture outlining the terms and conditions of the multi-year relationship.

Accept

- We will engage with major universities across Canada to establish a multi-year agreement.

G-1 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-2 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-3 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-4 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-5 ————— ○
Accept

G-6 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-7 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-8 ————— ○
Partially Accept

G-9 ————— ○
Accept

G-10 ————— ○
Accept

G-11 ————— ○
Accept

Recommendation G-12:

Further the applied research agenda of NCPU through ARI and continue to integrate applied research in academic programming.

Accept

- We agree an applied research agenda will be a critical component of a polytechnic university and further establish a knowledge economy in the NWT.
- It is important to note this will not come quickly but will be realized as the institution matures and begins to build additional research capacity.
- It is anticipated decisions around applied research - research that is not theoretical, but that seeks to solve real-world problems and is based on a clearly defined need - will be shaped by the Academic Advisory Council, leadership, faculty, and particularly, external stakeholders from the private and non-governmental organization (NGO) sector, as well as community and Indigenous governments.
- Strategic partnerships will be developed with the business community and NGO sectors whereby both the polytechnic university and private enterprise will benefit from shared expertise and work together in the development of processes and products.

G-1  Partially Accept

G-2  Partially Accept

G-3  Partially Accept

G-4  Partially Accept

G-5  Accept

G-6  Partially Accept

G-7  Partially Accept

G-8  Partially Accept

G-9  Accept

G-10  Accept

G-11  Accept

G-12  Accept

Governance (Board)

GB-1 ————— ○

Accept

GB-2 ————— ○

Accept

Recommendation GB-1:

The College, with input from ECE, should develop a skills matrix that outlines the skills the Board should have to effectively fulfill its mandate.

Accept

- We will help guide the development of a robust governance structure.
- A skills matrix will be developed to ensure Board members have the necessary competencies and, as a whole, the Board comprises the necessary skills and experience to provide strategic direction and oversight.
- An in-depth understanding of Northern issues and context will be a key competency of all Board positions.

Recommendation GB-2:

Develop a Board recruitment and appointment process that considers skills in addition to regional representation thereby ensuring the Board has the prerequisite skills to fulfill its mandate as outlined in the Terms of Reference (see Recommendation GB-4).

Accept

- A Board recruitment process will be developed that considers specific competencies following the skills matrix identified in Recommendation GB-1.
- The Board will include regional representation.

Recommendation GB-3:

Based upon the developed skills matrix and updated Board recruitment and appointment process, the College with the assistance of ECE, to search for appropriately skilled Board members and to recommend to the Minister the appointment of new Board members.

Accept

- Following a revised Implementation Plan for the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university, ECE will work with the institution's leadership to determine the most appropriate method(s) to recruit appropriately skilled Board members.
- The recruitment of new Board members will be informed by the skills matrix and follow an updated and transparent Board recruitment and appointment process.

GB-1 
Accept

GB-2 
Accept

GB-3 
Accept

GB-4 
Partially Accept

Recommendation GB-4:

The Board, upon being re-established should develop a detailed Terms of Reference that outlines the roles and responsibilities of Board members, as well as accountabilities and reporting requirements.

Partially Accept

- The new Terms of Reference will outline the roles and responsibilities of Board members, as well as accountabilities and reporting requirements.
- However, ECE will work with the polytechnic university leadership to develop the Terms of Reference, as well as accountabilities and reporting requirements, in advance of re-establishing the Board.
- Once established, it will be the responsibility of the Board to update or make changes to the Terms of Reference, accountabilities and reporting requirements and submit them for approval by the Minister.

Governance (Board)

GB-1 ————— ○

Accept

GB-2 ————— ○

Accept

GB-3 ————— ○

Accept

GB-4 ————— ○

Partially Accept

GB-5 ————— ○

Accept

Recommendation GB-5:

The College should develop a robust orientation process to provide Board members with an overview of:

- The Act
- The College
- Board member roles and responsibilities
- Overview of key stakeholder groups and other significant partnerships and relationships
- The postsecondary industry and the changes affecting higher education, both in Canada as well as around the globe.

Board members should complete formal orientation training and, on an annual basis, undertake “refresher training” to reiterate key concepts or address areas of change. In addition, the Board should receive ongoing education on matters that will improve the skills and abilities of Board members.

Accept

- An orientation process and a structured training program for all Board members will be developed and implemented.

Recommendation GB-6:

The Board, under the guidance of the Board Chair, should conduct annual performance evaluations of the Board as well as individual members to identify strengths, challenges and opportunities for improvement. Action plans should be developed to address (either for the Board as a whole or on an individual basis) the opportunities for improvement, including assigning responsibility and timelines for their completion.

Accept

- Annual performance evaluations will require the Board to examine their performance, including that of the Board Chair and individual members, in order to determine areas for improvement.
- A formal Board evaluation process, including action plans involving specific timelines to address areas of concern, will be developed and implemented.

Recommendation GB-7:

Review and update the Act and make changes required to move towards reinstatement of the Board:

- Expand the role of the Board with respect to appointing and supervising the President (Section 19(1)).
- Limit the direction that the Minister imposes on the Board to allow it to provide oversight of the College (Section 8(2)).

Accept

- Section 8(2) and section 19(1) of the *Aurora College Act* will be amended as per the above recommendation.
- Empowering the Board in this way aligns with the Government's commitment to ensure that, in the long term, Aurora College experiences an increased level of operational and strategic independence.
- The Minister will continue to be ultimately responsible for Aurora College and hold the Board accountable for achieving agreed objectives, as well as upholding the vision and mission of the institution.

GB-1  Accept

GB-2  Accept

GB-3  Accept

GB-4  Partially Accept

GB-5  Accept

GB-6  Accept

GB-7  Accept

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ACCOUNTABILITY

Current Status

Aurora College has reached the conclusion of its ten-year Strategic Plan (2006 to 2015) and four-year Business Plan (2009 to 2013). The latter includes capital project requirements, budgets and financial projections.

The process of establishing a new long-term Strategic Plan for Aurora College began in 2014. This was put on hold at the request of Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) when the Department began developing the Skills 4 Success Initiative, which included the development of a labour demand model to inform decisions about education and skills development programming.

In 2014, ECE put forward an “Accountability Framework for the Education and Training of Adults in the Northwest Territories” with the aim of providing for greater consistency in the collection of baseline and comparison data on the adult and postsecondary education system, enabling future planning, arranging for assessments of programs and services, and streamlining of reporting. The framework also set out a process for ECE to establish targets in collaboration with the College, for consultations across the GNWT on adult and postsecondary programming, for consolidated reporting, and for periodic program evaluations along with auditing of select performance measures. However, the full implementation of the framework was unsuccessful and capacity around monitoring and reporting continues to be developed.

A ten-year Strategic Plan for the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) was developed and runs from 2016 to 2026. It includes a vision, mission, six principles and five goals that guide the activities, growth and evolution of the Aurora Research Institute⁴.

In June 2016, the GNWT Financial Management Board adopted a Planning and Accountability Framework which set the requirement for Aurora College to produce an annual Corporate Plan in compliance with the *Financial Administration Act*. Following from this, a Corporate Plan and Interim Strategic Plan was produced by the College, covering the 2017-18 fiscal year.

The Aurora College long-term strategic planning process resumed in 2016, but was put on hold in 2017 when the Minister announced the

Accountability

Accountability begins by linking desired outcomes with strategic objectives which, in turn, must be clearly aligned to the institution’s mission, vision and values. Accountability generates trust and respect through a process that includes:

- Planning, which will outline intentions;
- Monitoring of measures and carrying out reviews of programs to track performance and ensure quality;
- Reporting on progress against stated intentions; and
- Understanding respective roles and relationships both inside and outside the institution.

⁴ <http://nwtresearch.com/about-us/strategic-plan>

Aurora College Foundational Review (Review). Prior to being put on hold, a public survey had been deployed and some engagements had taken place with Aurora College partners and key stakeholders, including Indigenous Organizations, Community Governments, Members of the Legislative Assembly, GNWT departments, Aurora College staff, students, prior Aurora College Board Members as well as NWT high school students. The information gathered as part of the strategic planning process was forwarded to MNP for consideration as part of the Review.

The institution's primary means of reporting is through the Aurora College Annual Report⁵. This report provides an update on the activities of each school within the College, student supports, enrolments, as well as an audited financial statement.

Following an examination of monitoring and reporting, the Review Report found that the College has not provided consistent, numerical data on key performance indicators typical of postsecondary education institutions in Canada. It also found disconnects between planned targets and measured results, with annual reports failing to provide clear comparisons. The Review Report also noted that key terms, such as "enrolment" and "completion" were being used inconsistently in reporting which has undermined the GNWT's confidence in the information being provided by the College.

Overall, the findings in the Review Report suggest that the reporting of key indicators is largely deficient across Aurora College. Recent efforts to implement accountability measures have been undermined by poor availability of data and a lack of administrative capacity. However, the most pressing issue was the lack of alignment in intentions, mandate and priorities. Past strategic plans were excessive in length and did not provide a clear, concise and coherent path forward for the College.

A notable exception to the broader issues surrounding accountability measures has been the Northern Adult Basic Education (NABE) Program, a multi-year program aimed at improving literacy and numeracy in the NWT. NABE was identified in the Review Report as an example of where Aurora College has demonstrated progress in establishing an effective system of monitoring and reporting.

⁵ http://www.auroracollege.nt.ca/_live/documents/content/Annual_Report.pdf

The Path Forward

One of the first actions to be taken by the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal in response to the Review Report will be to oversee a process for establishing an NWT-wide vision for postsecondary education. Following this, ECE will begin working with the College to develop a strategic plan, with detailed milestones, and an annual operational plan, which will include capital and ongoing financial requirements. This work will respond to input from the Members of the 18th and 19th Legislative Assemblies, through regular meetings with SCOSD and during the capital planning process.

Strategic and operational plans will make the progress of the College in transitioning to a polytechnic university transparent. They will also make clear the extent to which ECE is meeting the commitments made as part of its response to the Review Report.

The successful transformation of Aurora College will rely heavily on increased accountability, including the availability and effective reporting of key indicators. However, accountability can only be maintained if the appropriate tools are made available, and there is capacity to properly utilize those tools. Ensuring this capacity will be a priority moving forward.

It is also recognized as important that accountability relationships (i.e., the role of decision makers) be distinguished between those roles that are strategic versus operational. As explained in the Review Report, strategic accountability falls within the role of the Minister and the Board in approving the vision and strategic plans. In contrast, ECE staff are responsible for advising on plans and the College administration is responsible for preparing plans, implementing programming and reporting on the results. Such distinctions are critical to maintaining an arm's length relationship between the College and GNWT. However, as a public institution, Aurora College will also remain accountable to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories which may, at its discretion, question the efficiency or effectiveness of the institution or any of its programs.



Response to Recommendations

Recommendation A-1:

Priority #1: ECE, in concert with College senior officials, provide leadership in convening during 2018 a jurisdiction-wide, higher education future state commission, whose role it is to facilitate the development of the jurisdiction's Ends (i.e., Values, Vision, Mission, and Outcomes).

Partially Accept

- We recognize the need to articulate a clear vision for postsecondary education in the NWT.
- The term “future state commission” that was used in the Review Report is not consistent with political terminology in Canada. Federal/provincial/territorial governments do sometimes commission a formal public inquiry into a defined issue, however, these are typically referred to as a “Royal Commission”. Given the composition and nature of a Royal Commission, this kind of approach does not fit with the spirit of what is being recommended in the Review Report.
- Establishing an NWT vision for postsecondary education will be a collaborative process led by the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal, and it will include input from the public and key stakeholders.
- The outcomes of the visioning exercise will be shared publically by the Minister as part of a GNWT Framework for Postsecondary Education.

Recommendation A-2:

Sustain a planning framework for the College that is comprised of:

- A five-year Strategic Plan, with three-year detailed milestones, covering both the College and the Aurora Research Institute,
- An annual Operational Plan which includes capital and ongoing financial requirements.

Taken together, these two plans should provide for the alignment of goals (outcomes) to those of the Department Business Plan as well as the priorities as set out in the Minister's mandate letter. In addition, the combination of these two plans should serve to describe, in a succinct format (e.g., fewer than 20 pages each), the operating environment including relevant trends for the College, the opportunities and risks that are faced, the educational and research programs to be maintained, the student and administrative services that will be delivered, and any time-bound initiatives to address specific, more foundational needs (e.g., technology, staffing, etc.). Finally, the performance indicators should be specified under the appropriate goals (outcomes) with supporting detail on related targets and explanations of what is being measured (i.e., "what do the indicators mean?").

Accept

- ECE will work with the College to develop a five-year Strategic Plan, with three-year detailed milestones, and an annual Operational Plan, which will include capital and ongoing financial requirements.
- The Strategic Plan will include a new vision for the College to help guide it on the path to becoming a polytechnic university.

A-1 
Partially Accept

A-2 
Accept

Accountability

A-1 —————○—————
Partially Accept

A-2 —————○—————
Accept

A-3 —————○—————
Partially Accept

Recommendation A-3:

Engage now, and then on a five-year cycle, in a comprehensive results-based budgeting evaluation of portfolios of programs and services aligned to the goals (outcomes) of the College. This encompassing evaluation should first assess relevance in terms of meeting current and anticipated needs of students, the institution, communities and the GNWT. For those portfolios of programs and services that are found to be relevant, the evaluation can advance to the consideration of questions on efficiency in the use of College resources and effectiveness in delivering results. For those programs and services that are found to be no longer relevant, a sunseting strategy should be adopted.

Partially Accept

- Following the development of a Strategic Plan, ECE will work with the College to complete a results-based budgeting evaluation aligned with the College's goals.
- Moving forward, the institution will complete these on a regular cycle. However, the duration of each will be decided as part of their initial development.
- This approach will focus on results, with the production of budgets structured around the institution's goals and the development of monitoring and evaluation systems that are focused on the results achieved with it.

Recommendation A-4:

Revise the annual reporting process of the College to provide for:

- A report that is submitted to the Minister through the Department for accountability purposes, and which contains an approved dashboard setting out the core performance indicators, associated targets, and current along with past fiscal year results.
- A summary report that is succinct and visual in its presentation, all oriented to demonstrating results to a public audience and which is made openly available.

In concert with this, expand the core set of performance indicators for the College as described to also include:

- The views and ratings of surveyed employers of College graduates, with a related target on the level of satisfaction with graduate student performance.
- The views and ratings of surveyed students, Indigenous and overall, on gained, non-academic skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving, etc.) and confidence during their time with the College (based on a combination of an online survey link promoted by, and supporting “mail in” versions of the survey made available through, Student Success Centre staff).
- The views and ratings of existing (e.g., Indigenous governments) as well as new (e.g., Industry Advisory Boards) partners on such matters as the success of College programs and services in meeting needs along with the frequency and meaningfulness of engagement and communications by the College.
- Student success metrics, such as retention rates, graduation rates, time to completion rates, learner pathway progress, etc.

Accept

- Improving transparency is a priority for the GNWT, and we recognize the importance of greatly improving the College’s annual report.
- We will revise the annual reporting process and work toward integrating a core set of performance indicators.
- The annual reporting process will continue to include public reporting.

A-1 ————— ○
Partially Accept

A-2 ————— ○
Accept

A-3 ————— ○
Partially Accept

A-4 ————— ○
Accept

Accountability

Recommendation A-5:

In parallel with the College's Student Information System upgrade, put in place trained staff, processes and tools to sustain data quality and reporting, including a data dictionary and classification framework.

Accept

- The GNWT has invested in the development of a new Student Information System (SIS) for Aurora College. Implementation is expected in March 2019.
- SIS user training for staff and faculty has begun and will continue prior to full implementation.

A-1 —————○—————

Partially Accept

A-2 —————○—————

Accept

A-3 —————○—————

Partially Accept

A-4 —————○—————

Accept

A-5 —————○—————

Accept

Academic Program Management

Academic programming comprises the core, required and elective courses that lead to a degree, diploma or certificate. In addition, the College offers apprenticeships and trades courses that meet the requirements of the NWT Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Program.

Academic program management explores how the College monitors and aligns its academic programming with current and emerging labour market demands along with the needs and skills of learners. This includes:

- Decision-making processes and criteria regarding the creation, elimination, continuation and improvement of academic programs;
- Integration of strategic planning with academic programming decisions and maintaining relevance to future NWT labour market demands; and
- Strategic partnerships with other postsecondary institutions and how they could be leveraged to increase opportunities for students.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Current Status

Aurora College provides academic programming through the Continuing Education Program and six academic schools (Developmental Studies; Arts and Science; Business and Leadership; Education; Health and Human Services; and Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training). In addition to a broad range of trades and apprenticeship training and certificate, diploma and degree programs, the College offers Adult Literacy and Basic Education, Literacy and Essential Skills courses, and a variety of Continuing Education classes through 21 Community Learning Centres.

The creation, review and elimination of academic programming of the College are currently guided by two policies. Policy B.13 Establishment of New Programs specifies the approach for the establishment of new programs and Policy G.08 External Evaluation describes the external evaluation of programs and services. A specific policy guiding the suspension and elimination of programming does not exist.

Policy B.13 Establishment of New Programs outlines that programs can be developed as needed, describes what should be included in the new program proposal, and the levels of review required for approval. However, the Review Report found that this policy lacks details to support the development of a robust New Proposal Brief, which is critical to ensuring the new program proposal is aligned to the 15-year forecast for NWT jobs in demand described in the Northwest Territories Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment report prepared by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) in conjunction with The Conference Board of Canada.

Policy G.08 External Evaluation outlines that all programs/services are to be evaluated at least once every five years. The Review Report submits that program reviews are not being conducted every five years in line with this policy. The development of an Academic Programming Review Framework is suggested in the Review Report and would include a five-year rotational review schedule.

The Path Forward

Programming, at any postsecondary institution, needs to be approached in a comprehensive manner and needs to find its roots in the vision and strategic direction of the institution, as these define the identity of the institution and informs prospective students of the type of education they can expect to receive.

As part of the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university, it will become critical for the new institution to understand which programming is effective, meets labour market demands and meets the needs of key stakeholders. Such decisions must align with the vision, mission and goals for the institution that will, in turn, align with the NWT's vision for postsecondary education more broadly. At the same time, programming must meet accredited organizational standards through a rigorous quality assurance review process in its respective disciplines and be continuously updated to keep pace with changing labour market and workplace demands.

Once the institution's vision has been established, an outline of the curriculum that will be offered by the polytechnic university can be developed. As noted in the Review Report, the key to establishing a destination university is offering world-class curriculum, customized to the northern realities and culture supported by a distinct student experience that incorporates the hospitality and customs of the NWT.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation APM-1:

The VP Education and Training to develop and implement Academic Program Development and Review Frameworks that outline the approach taken to program development, reviews and suspension/termination. This should include a five-year rotational review of all programs.

Accept

- We agree that the implementation of this framework is required and recognize that it will support broader efforts to ensure the institution operates at arm's length from the GNWT.
- The vision, mission and goals of the institution will guide the development of the Academic Program Development and Review Frameworks.
- We support continuously updating programs to ensure they keep pace with changing labour and workplace demands.

Recommendation APM-2:

The VP Education and Training to enhance or develop the following policies:

- Policy B.13 titled "Establishment of New Programs" to create a new program development process which includes sufficient detail to effectively support decision making with respect to new programming.
- Develop a Suspension/Termination Policy to support decision making when programs no longer meet needs and objectives.

Accept

- We agree that the enhancement of these policies is required in order to ensure programs remain effective and efficient.
- Updates to existing policies and the development of new policies will be communicated to staff and students upon their approval. Policies will remain easily accessible to staff and students following their approval.

APM-1	_____○
Accept	
APM-2	_____○
Accept	

Academic Program Management

APM-1 ————— ○

Accept

APM-2 ————— ○

Accept

APM-3 ————— ○

Accept

APM-4 ————— ○

Accept

Recommendation APM-3:

The VP Education and Training to enhance Policy G.08 to include additional details with respect to the process and content required of a program review.

Accept

- We agree that the enhancement of this policy is required.
- The program review process outlined in the Review Report, including seeking feedback on student experience, will be adapted for use by the institution.

Recommendation APM-4:

The VP Education and Training to conduct a program review for both the Social Worker Diploma as well as the Bachelor of Education as a matter of priority to determine whether the programming: is of sufficient quality to continue, continue with major improvements required, or needs to be suspended/eliminated.

Accept

- The review of the Social Work Diploma Program and the Bachelor of Education Program will be the first programs reviewed following implementation of new Academic Program Development and Review Frameworks (Recommendation APM-1) and related policies (Recommendations APM-2 and APM-3).

Recommendation APM-5:

The VP Education and Training to continue to review all programs to determine their relevancy and overall quality in support of the establishment of NCPU and the labour market needs of the NWT. Priority should be given to the two programs currently suspended by the Minister (noted in the previous recommendation) followed by the Bachelor and Master of Nursing.

Accept

- All Aurora College programs will be reviewed following the Academic Program Development and Review Frameworks (Recommendation APM-1).
- Following a review of the Social Work Diploma Program and the Bachelor of Education Program, the Bachelor of Nursing Program will be the next program to be reviewed (the Master of Nursing Program is not currently offered by Aurora College).

APM-1 —————

Accept

APM-2 —————

Accept

APM-3 —————

Accept

APM-4 —————

Accept

APM-5 —————

Accept

APM-1 ————— ⊙

Accept

APM-2 ————— ⊙

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APM-3 ————— ⊙

Accept

APM-4 ————— ⊙

Accept

APM-5 ————— ⊙

Accept

APM-6 ————— ⊙

Accept

Recommendation APM-6:

The Deputy Minister of Higher Education, in conjunction with the Chair of the School of Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training to develop a plan to enhance the student experience for trades and apprenticeship courses to increase the attraction and recruitment of future students. This plan should be aligned with the centres of specialization that have been created. This plan could consist of one or a combination of the following:

1. Enhancing the student experience by creating recreational opportunities for students in Fort Smith and creating a positive space where students can socialize and interact after campus hours – the College could investigate the opportunity to collaborate with the local municipality and industry on this initiative.
2. Address housing and safety concerns that will increase potential students' appetite to enrol.
3. Introduce additional learning modes through the establishment of mobile learning that could travel to the various communities within the NWT. This type of course offerings could be developed in conjunction with the CLCs. See Section 5.4 for additional details.

Accept

- As part of the new Student Experience Model (Recommendation RR-7), the College will work to enhance the student experience at all campuses. These plans will be aligned to the defined centres of specialization for each campus (Recommendation APM-8).
- During development of a Student Experience Model, we will work with the College and community and Indigenous governments to explore ways of promoting and increasing the accessibility of recreational facilities by students. However, contrary to some of the findings in the Review Report, we have noted that several recreational opportunities are already accessible to Aurora College students in Fort Smith, Yellowknife and Inuvik.
- Engagements with students at each of the three campus communities in follow-up to the Review Report has confirmed a need for increased space for students to socialize and interact after regular campus hours at each of the three campuses.

- Safety concerns, the condition of student housing, and its cultural appropriateness, will be examined and addressed as soon as possible and will be given additional and ongoing consideration as part of a Student Experience Model and when looking at student housing.
- The potential for additional Mobile Learning Centres will be examined.

Recommendation APM-7:

The Chair of the School of Trades, Apprenticeships and Industrial Training to develop an annual course calendar which outlines the timing of all courses offered during the year and post this on the College's website. The timing of courses should be discussed and agreed upon with employers and trade associations to ensure the timing is appropriate and apprentices have the time to attend.

Accept

- We will ensure a course calendar specific to trades, apprenticeships and industrial training is developed and aligns more closely with the needs of employers.
- We will publish the course calendar on the College's website to improve program consistency and assist students in planning and preparation.

APM-1	_____○
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APM-2	_____○
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APM-3	_____○
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APM-4	_____○
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APM-5	_____○
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APM-6	_____○
Accept	
APM-7	_____○
Accept	

Academic Program Management

APM-1 ————— ○

Accept

APM-2 ————— ○

Accept

APM-3 ————— ○

Accept

APM-4 ————— ○

Accept

APM-5 ————— ○

Accept

APM-6 ————— ○

Accept

APM-7 ————— ○

Accept

APM-8 ————— ○

Accept

APM-9 ————— ○

Accept

Recommendation APM-8:

The new VP Academic Affairs for NCPU, in conjunction with the Advisory Academic Council, to establish programs that align to the overall vision, strategic direction, centres of specialization, and distinct brand of NCPU. Ensure that all components of program delivery include sufficient details and addresses the following in a consistent manner:

- Curriculum
- Streams offered
- Entrance and adherence to entrance requirements
- Standards students need to achieve in order to graduate
- Laddering opportunities.

Accept

- Moving forward, newly established programs must align to the overall vision, strategic direction and centres of specialization developed through the transformation to a polytechnic university.

Recommendation APM-9:

Develop an Academic Plan that is aligned with the establishment of NCPU and is created around the centres of specialization.

Accept

- An Academic Plan will be developed at the appropriate stage of the transformation to a polytechnic university and will be created around the centres of specialization at each campus.

Recommendation APM-10:

Regularly review strategic partnerships and relationships to ensure their ongoing relevance and effectiveness. Delegate the responsibility of academic partnerships to the VP Academic Affairs and allocate the research relationships to the VP Applied Research.

Partially Accept

- Strategic partnerships and external relationships will be reviewed regularly to ensure their ongoing relevance and effectiveness.
- The Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will determine the structure of the Executive Leadership Team and their associated responsibilities.

Recommendation APM-11:

Critically select and pursue a partnership with a credible institution in Alberta, British Columbia or Saskatchewan (based on proximity) to assist with the establishment of NCPU during and following the transition period to a polytechnic university.

Partially Accept

- We will pursue partnerships with Canadian institutions to assist with the transformation to a polytechnic university.
- The credibility of the institution will be paramount, but geographic proximity will not limit the choice of potential partners.

Recommendation APM-12:

Pursue a co-investment partnership with a major university in support of the research mandate of NCPU.

Accept

- We will pursue co-investment partnerships with major universities in support of the research mandate of the polytechnic university.

APM-1 
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APM-2 
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APM-3 
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APM-4 
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APM-5 
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APM-6 
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APM-7 
Accept

APM-8 
Accept

APM-9 
Accept

APM-10 
Partially Accept

APM-11 
Partially Accept

APM-12 
Accept

Academic Program Management

Recommendation APM-13:

Develop a collaborative relationship with the NWT public and separate school divisions to create an integrated learning environment.

Accept

- We will engage with NWT education authorities around the creation of an integrated learning environment between secondary and postsecondary education.
- This will expand on work already underway through Education Renewal to develop new high school pathways. Work-to-date has included the development of different possible exit points out of high school, graduation requirements, instructional hours, trades programming and career transition supports.
- We will also engage with community and Indigenous governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, in the creation of an integrated learning environment. Within these conversations, options available for early childhood education and parental support will be considered.
- The role of Community Learning Centres and how to best incorporate their role within an integrated learning environment will also be given consideration.

Recommendation APM-14:

Pursue other strategic partnerships and relationships required to establish NCPU.

Accept

- The increased potential for strategic partnerships is recognized as being a key benefit of establishing a polytechnic university in the NWT.
- During and following the establishment of a polytechnic university, new and enhanced strategic partnerships will be continually sought, both inside and outside the territory.

APM-1	_____○
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APM-2	_____○
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APM-3	_____○
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APM-4	_____○
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APM-5	_____○
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APM-6	_____○
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APM-7	_____○
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APM-8	_____○
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APM-9	_____○
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APM-10	_____○
Partially Accept	
APM-11	_____○
Partially Accept	
APM-12	_____○
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APM-13	_____○
Accept	
APM-14	_____○
Accept	

Recommendation APM-15:

The VP Community and Extensions to undertake an NWT-wide local needs assessment to determine the needs of each region and CLC.

Accept

- An assessment of local needs will be completed for each region and Community Learning Centre.
- This work will build on similar initiatives already underway, including work being done around the Access Program Redesign pilot, Northern Adult Basic Education Program workplan, and further curriculum development to better meet the needs of northern students.
- This work will also help to strengthen connections between the secondary and postsecondary systems as well as between Community Learning Centres and Aurora College campuses.

APM-1	_____○
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APM-2	_____○
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APM-3	_____○
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APM-4	_____○
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APM-5	_____○
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APM-6	_____○
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APM-7	_____○
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APM-8	_____○
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APM-9	_____○
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APM-10	_____○
Partially Accept	
APM-11	_____○
Partially Accept	
APM-12	_____○
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APM-13	_____○
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APM-14	_____○
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APM-15	_____○
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Academic Program Management

APM-1	_____○
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APM-2	_____○
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APM-3	_____○
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APM-6	_____○
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APM-7	_____○
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APM-8	_____○
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APM-9	_____○
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APM-10	_____○
Partially Accept	
APM-11	_____○
Partially Accept	
APM-12	_____○
Accept	
APM-13	_____○
Accept	
APM-14	_____○
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APM-15	_____○
Accept	
APM-16	_____○
Accept	

Recommendation APM-16:

The regional Program Heads, in collaboration with the VP Community and Extensions to develop a Comprehensive Centre Plan (CCP) which, combined, results in a three-year CLC Comprehensive Institutional Plan (CLC-CIP) that is based on the NWT-wide local needs assessments. This CLC-CIP should be integrated into the overall institutional CIP. Include an evaluation of the viability of other modes of teaching such as technology-based learning, self-directed learning and mobile course offerings and determine its feasibility.

Accept

- We remain committed to strengthening postsecondary education opportunities for residents in small communities through the existing network of Community Learning Centres.
- A Comprehensive Centre Plan will be developed for Community Learning Centres and will tie into an overall Comprehensive Institutional Plan. It will address which programs should be delivered at which Community Learning Centre, strengthen connections to Aurora College campuses and to the secondary school system.
- The potential for enhancements to Community Learning Centres will be explored through an examination of other models for program delivery.

Recommendation APM-17:

The VP Community and Extensions, in collaboration with the regional Program Heads and Campus Directors, to review the feasibility of entering into co-partnership agreements for the delivery of relevant regional courses at the CLCs. Co-partnership could consist of sharing resources (land, buildings, lease, etc.) and jointly deciding on the courses that are regionally relevant.

Accept

- The feasibility of co-partnership agreements for the delivery of courses at CLCs will be explored, including the potential for formal partnerships with community and Indigenous governments.

APM-1	_____○
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APM-2	_____○
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APM-3	_____○
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APM-4	_____○
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APM-5	_____○
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APM-6	_____○
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APM-7	_____○
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APM-8	_____○
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APM-9	_____○
Accept	
APM-10	_____○
Partially Accept	
APM-11	_____○
Partially Accept	
APM-12	_____○
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APM-13	_____○
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APM-14	_____○
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APM-15	_____○
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APM-16	_____○
Accept	
APM-17	_____○
Accept	

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OPERATIONS

Current Status

Aurora College is established through the *Aurora College Act* and follows the direction of the Minister. It is the only public postsecondary institution in the NWT. The majority of students are Indigenous and many are from small, remote communities. The College delivers programs and services as close to NWT communities as possible through a network of three campuses (Thebacha in Fort Smith, Yellowknife North Slave and Aurora in Inuvik) and 21 Community Learning Centres.

The College has posted its Policy and Procedures Manual on the home page of its website. According to policy B.01 Purpose and Structure of the Policy and Procedures Manual, the Manual is the central source of all College policies and procedures.

Following an examination of the policies and procedures for the College, the Review Report identified that policies are generally out-of-date, are not subject to regular review and do not reflect current operations of the College. As noted in the recommendations below, a variety of other operational challenges were identified, including the need for an improved relationship between Aurora College and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE).

Operations

The operational business model of an institution determines how services are being delivered, how many resources are allocated to specific tasks and activities, and defines employees' roles, responsibilities, levels of authority and reporting lines.

Operations describes the processes carried out to meet the requirements of relevant legislation, regulations and policies, as well as the institution's own mission, goals, policies and strategic plan. Creating and maintaining relationships with external partners is also an operational matter.

The Path Forward

Addressing longstanding challenges through the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university creates the context for a great number of improvements to the institution's operations. Some improvements will require changes within the College, while others may require changes to its relationship with ECE and/or legislative change. The overall number of operational changes proposed in the Review Report highlights the importance of taking a structured approach to the transformation process. A structured approach is recognized as being critical in the sustainability of changes over the long term. The operations must not only follow the relevant legislation, regulations and policies; they must also embody the vision, mission and goals of the polytechnic university.

Although the need for immediate operational changes has become apparent, there will be additional changes required as the operational model for the polytechnic university evolves. How and when these changes are required will be incorporated within the Implementation Plan (Recommendation G-2 and G-8). What is proposed here should not be considered a complete set of required changes, but rather the changes we know must be made at this stage of the transformation as we embark on a path toward the establishment of a polytechnic university in the NWT.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation O-1:

Enhance the Policy Development Framework to include details on when and how often policies are subject to a review and develop a terms of reference for the Policy Working Committee.

Accept

- The Policy Development Framework will be enhanced to include when and how often policies will be reviewed.
- A terms of reference for the Policy Working committee will be developed.

Recommendation O-2:

Conduct a comprehensive policy review to determine the gaps that currently exist based on a comparison against the legislation, GNWT policies and leading practices. Develop or update policies to address gaps identified.

Accept

- A gap analysis will be conducted on current policies and used to inform the development of new policies throughout the transformation process.

Recommendation O-3:

The Policy Working Committee to develop and implement a regular policy review schedule and process to ensure all policies are subject to review at least once every three to five years.

Accept

- The Policy Working Committee will create a policy review schedule and conduct reviews as recommended.

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Recommendation O-4:

The College to review the current organization structure at the leadership level and determine, based on the new strategic direction, whether there is an opportunity to streamline and consolidate the structure. In line with recommendation G-3, hire a VP Academic Affairs, VP Applied Research, VP Finance and Administration, and VP Advancement and update job descriptions based on new portfolios.

Partially Accept

- Informed by an evaluation of the leadership team, and taking into consideration the structure proposed in the Review Report, the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will decide on the structure of the Executive Leadership Team.

Recommendation O-5:

The Deputy Minister of Higher Education, in collaboration with the VP Education and Training (VP Academic Affairs) to fill the two Academic Chair vacancies: Academic Chair School of Arts and Science and Chair School of Health and Human Services.

Accept

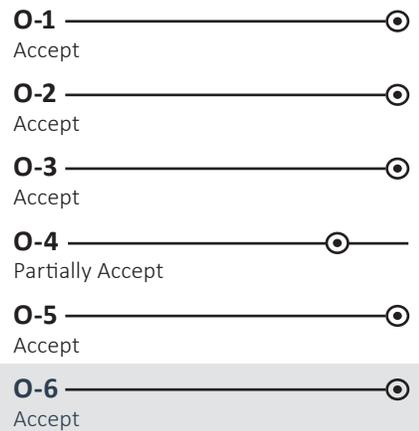
- We agree that staffing of vacant positions is critical to the effective operations of the College.

Recommendation O-6:

The Institution, with the assistance of GNWT's HR specialists, to introduce a robust performance evaluation process for all employees that is founded in the job descriptions and performance metrics. This includes establishing annual performance goals and conducting at least semi-annual performance assessments.

Accept

- Aurora College is already subject to the GNWT Performance Development process that is outlined in the Review Report.
- GNWT Performance Development is a marriage between performance management and employee development based on the GNWT's Competency Model. Performance Development occurs on an annual basis; and it starts with setting effective work objectives, understanding GNWT's Core Competencies, and setting learning goals, followed by regular communication between a supervisor and employee in support of achieving the established work objectives, demonstrating behaviours that support the competencies, and achieving the learning goals.
- Aurora College faculty and staff are utilizing the GNWT Performance Development process, including the use of the ePerformance system. We will work with the College to help ensure that faculty and staff continues to make use of the GNWT Performance Development process.
- We recognize that some faculty and staff may be hired for a defined term, for example to instruct a specific program or course. We will work with Aurora College to ensure increased opportunities for these staff to participate in the GNWT Performance Development process.



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Recommendation O-7:

The Institution to consider providing additional responsibilities to the Campus Directors in that they provide direct supervision and oversight of all campus staff including instructors and registration personnel and include the campus directors in the creation and membership of the Academic Advisory Council (see Recommendation G-5). This proposed change would effectively result in a matrix structure whereby instructors and registration personnel have a dual reporting role, to their local campus director for local needs and operational purposes and to the academic chairs and Registrar for decisions and actions of a strategic nature.

Accept

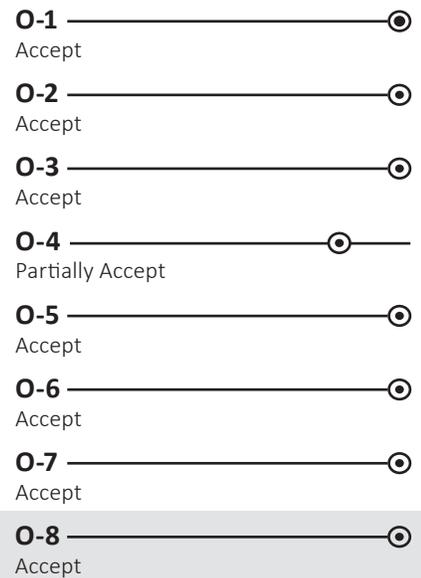
- The responsibility of the Campus Directors will be examined to assess the potential benefits of assigning them joint supervision of staff at their campus.
- Campus Directors will be considered for membership on the Academic Advisory Council (Recommendation G-5).

Recommendation O-8:

The institution, in conjunction with ECE and the NWT public and separate school divisions to create an integrated learning environment that consists of close collaboration between the JK-12 school system and the College. This collaboration should focus on a review of high drop-out rates, low completion rates and poor transition rates between the high schools and the College (see Section 7.2 for supporting statistics). Based on this, the College and JK-12 system combined should develop solutions to address these gaps.

Accept

- Building on engagements with NWT Education Authorities around the creation of an integrated learning environment between secondary and postsecondary education (Recommendation APM-13), the College, ECE and Education Authorities will explore ways of addressing low postsecondary completion rates and poor transition rates between the secondary and postsecondary systems. Consideration will also be given to whether there are further partners that can help to inform this process.
- This will expand on work already underway through Education Renewal. Low completion rates is a complex problem and Education Renewal takes a comprehensive approach by addressing the underlying factors that are known to contribute to students falling behind and dropping out of school.



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Recommendation O-9:

The President (Deputy Minister of Higher Education) and executive leadership team and the NCPU main campus to be located in Yellowknife. Based on the centres of specialization created, determine the programming that will be offered in Fort Smith and Inuvik and the regional community centres.

Partially Accept

- The new institution will continue to function with a three campus model, with the Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith, Yellowknife North Slave Campus and Aurora Campus in Inuvik. If and where a “main campus” will be assigned will not be decided at this time.
- During the transformation period, the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will be located in Yellowknife. The location of the Executive Leadership Team will be examined by the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal.
- To the greatest extent possible, negative short-term social or economic impacts resulting from the transformation of Aurora College will be avoided. Over the long-term, it is hoped that the establishment of a polytechnic university will create opportunities for growth in staff and students at each campus and expanded economic opportunities for all three campus communities.
- The process for making program changes will follow commitments made in the Academic Program Management Section of this report.

Recommendation O-10:

The Institution should pursue opportunities with ECE to fund increased access to bandwidth in support of its programming needs and to address concerns raised with respect to the lack of internet access at both campuses and residences.

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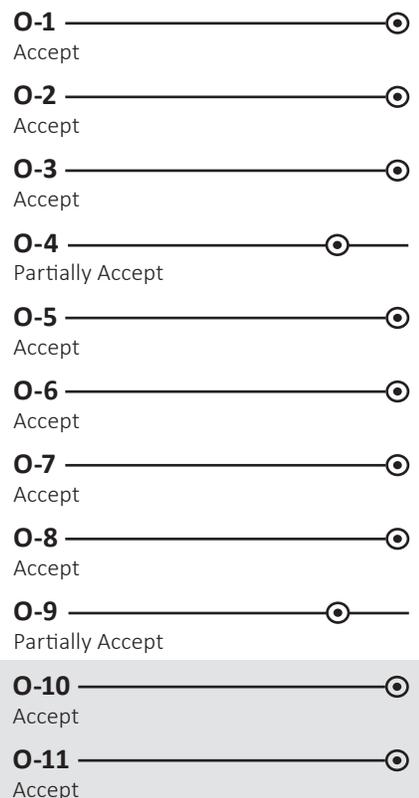
- We will work with the institution to help ensure alignment of available bandwidth and programming needs.
- The use of technology for program delivery will also be considered as part of overall planning and programming processes.
- As part of a comprehensive policy review to be done at the institution (Recommendation O-2), Policy E.01 Electronic Information Learning Environment will be updated to address concerns raised with respect to internet access.

Recommendation O-11:

The Institution should implement a new Student Information System to ensure it has accurate information on which to base critical decisions and support overall funding applications, programming decisions, accountability reporting, etc. In addition, staff should be trained appropriately in the use of the new system in line with Recommendation A-5.

Accept

- The GNWT has already provided capital funding to support the implementation of a new Student Information System at Aurora College. The implementation process continues to progress and we anticipate deployment in March 2019.
- SIS user training for staff and faculty has begun and will continue prior to full implementation.
- Relevant policies and procedures will be updated to align with the new system and business processes associated with the Student Information System.



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Recommendation O-12:

The Institution should enter into discussions with ECE with respect to the responsibility for student housing and determine if this responsibility could be transferred to another department of GNWT (e.g. Housing Corporation), thereby allowing student housing to be maintained in a more structural manner, ensure housing is safe and meets minimum quality standards.

Accept

- We agree that work needs to be done to better ensure housing is safe and meets minimum quality standards.
- Over the next year, we will examine options to establish a new approach to the management of student housing that is able to meet the immediate and long-term needs of students in a sustainable manner.

Recommendation O-13:

The College should address security concerns identified in Fort Smith either through employing additional security personnel or through the installation and monitoring of security cameras at the campus as well as student residences.

Partially Accept

- The findings in the Review Report do not provide a fair and consistent representation of the experiences of most students at Aurora College, particularly with regard to security concerns in Fort Smith. This is likely due to a limited amount of student input.
- However, we agree that the safety of students and staff is a paramount concern at all campuses. As such, the systems in place to ensure the safety of student and staff will be examined and any gaps will be addressed.

Recommendation O-14:

The College should develop a ten-year Capital Plan aligned to the new Strategic and Academic Plan which details the design and build of the new NCPU campus in Yellowknife that will be state of the art and become a destination institution for generations to come.

Partially Accept

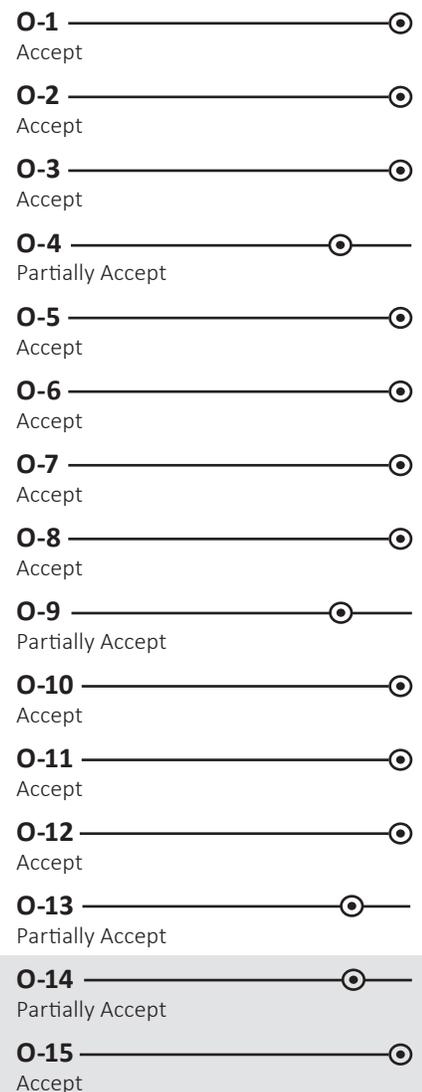
- We will work with the institution and community governments to develop a ten-year Capital Plan aligned with the new Strategic and Academic Plan.
- Decisions with regard to infrastructure needs, including the building of a campus in Yellowknife, will be informed by the development of the Capital Plan as well as the Strategic and Academic Plans.
- Implementation of the ten-year Capital Plan will be via the GNWT Corporate Capital Planning Process.

Recommendation O-15:

The College should ensure that requested changes to policy to allow local students access to housing in the Inuvik residence are addressed and the policy is updated in a timely manner.

Accept

- Changes will be made to allow local Aurora College students in Inuvik to access Aurora Campus student housing.



Recommendation O-16:

The College should develop a communication and marketing strategy aligned with the new vision and strategic plan. This plan should include, but not be limited to:

- Creating a new brand and logo
- Designing a new and modern website
- Developing a communication strategy that spans the period from the inception of the vision through to the launch of NCPU in 2024. The communication strategy and plan should outline frequent and regular communications and media releases aimed at key stakeholders, communities and the public at large both within the NWT as well as throughout Canada to support the planning, development and implementation of NCPU and the key milestones that will be achieved.

A marketing strategy should outline how success stories are shared with the larger community and how the design and build of the NCPU is launched.

Accept

- The transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university will be led by the Associate Deputy Minister for Postsecondary Education Renewal and will involve the development of a communications and marketing strategy that is aligned to the new vision and Strategic Plan, including consideration of possible re-branding and re-naming of the College.
- As outlined in subsequent recommendations regarding the recruitment and retention of students, the development of a communications and marketing strategy for the institution at all campuses will be conducted.
- At the discretion of the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal, accountability for the communications and marketing strategy, as well as overall responsibility for communications and media relations, may be assigned to a member of the Executive Leadership Team of Aurora College.
- A detailed communications strategy will also provide transparency and accountability throughout the transformation process.

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O-11	Accept
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O-13	Partially Accept
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O-16	Accept

Recruitment and Retention of Students

The effective delivery of programs requires a student services function that properly supports students. The quality, accessibility and consistency of services provided to students play a crucial role in the attraction and recruitment of students, and in enhancing the learning experience.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS

Current Status

Overall, the 2016-17 enrolment numbers marked a distinct drop from past years. With regard to full-time students, a sharp decline is apparent over five years with a 26% drop between 2012-13 and 2016-17. The decline of part-time students is more recent but equally concerning, with a drop of 33% between 2014-15 and 2016-17. Looking specifically at the number of apprentices studying at Aurora College, there was a sharp decline over five years, with a 36% drop between 2012-13 and 2016-17.

Such stark declines over a relatively short period suggest that a new approach to recruitment and retention is needed. Although this is only one part of the overall approach to strengthening the institution outlined in this report, it will be critical if success is to be achieved.

A notable finding in the Review Report was that available student services vary between campuses. In particular, it noted a lack of important services such as financial and mental health counselling, as well as career path coaching. The Review Report also highlights that the College does not have a consistent and robust approach towards the recruitment of students. It has been trying to be “everything, to everybody, everywhere.” This speaks to a lack of identity of the College and a lack of vision as to who their core target group is and what future employers, communities and labour markets can expect from its graduates.

The Path Forward

The development of a Strategic Enrolment Management Plan will raise the profile of the institution for northern and other students through a clear brand, world-class programming and improved student support services. However, it is important to also acknowledge additional factors that have undermined the ability of the College to build a clear brand.

An increased rate of enrolment can only be sustained if the programs and services offered support a clear and consistent identity for the institution. To this end, the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university is critical. The “polytechnic” approach matters, as it means a focus largely on programming and research that is skills-intensive and technology-based. The name “university” also matters. Degrees granted by institutions other than universities continue to face credibility challenges, both in Canada and abroad. We know from examples across Canada and the world that polytechnic universities have a unique advantage when partnering with industry to establish new academic and research programs.

Establishing a strong and vibrant institution will allow for the implementation of a Strategic Enrolment Management Plan that is built around a clear vision for what prospective students will gain by making the NWT their first choice for their studies. The NWT, as a whole, will benefit from northern and other students being attracted by certificate, diploma and/or degree programs in a clearly defined area of specialization. Grounding centres of academic and research specialization in each of the three campuses will help each campus establish their own clearly defined identity within the broader Strategic Enrolment Management Plan for the polytechnic university.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation RR-1:

Based on the long-term strategic plan, an Strategic Enrolment Management Plan (SEM) Plan should be developed with associated tactics, metrics and anticipated outcomes. Assign accountability to a senior administrator for the SEM Plan and overall responsibility for student enrolment, recruitment and the student experience. The plan should identify where it will attract students from (local, national and international), and direct attraction and recruitment at the identified target student market. The SEM Plan should include the following:

- The primary and secondary targets for the number and type of students the College seeks to attract. This should be aligned with its vision, learning outcomes and the academic programming plan. Once this is established, identify the goals and targets for each metric to allow for evaluating the progress towards timelines and goals.
- A data-rich environment which enables data-driven decision making and supports timely assessments of the SEM Plan, strategies and tactics. The student information system will enable data mining and analysis so trends, relationships and tracking can be monitored to improve attraction, qualification, application and registration processes.
- Business processes and practices that align with the College's Academic Program Plan and operational processes tied to the identified SEM initiatives.
- An integrated communication and marketing management plans to support the SEM Plan and processes, support College promotion to its target students and lays the foundation for educating and training all faculty and staff about the plan.

Accept

- A Strategic Enrolment Management Plan will pay particular attention to attracting and supporting NWT-based students, and will be developed with associated tactics, metrics and anticipated outcomes.
- At the discretion of the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal, accountability for the Strategic Enrolment Management Plan and overall responsibility for student enrolment, recruitment and the student experience will be assigned to a member of the Executive Leadership Team.

RR-1

Accept

Recruitment and Retention of Students

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Recommendation RR-2:

Marketing and communication methods and processes need to be designed to ensure up-to-date tools are in place which convey the vision, learning outcomes, benefits and features of NCPU. Based on the identified SEM Plan, create marketing and communication plans that take a focused and organized approach to marketing the programs to prospective students, and lays the foundation for communicating the plan to faculty and staff. As part of its SEM, NCPU should seek to modernize marketing methods (e.g., through social media) to reach out to and attract the identified potential student pool and achieve multi-point, yearly contact for NWT students from Grade 7 onwards.

Please also refer to Section 6.3 and Recommendation O-16.

Accept

- We will ensure the creation of marketing and communication plans that take a focused and organized approach to marketing the programs to prospective students and lays the foundation for communicating the plan to faculty and staff.

Recommendation RR-3:

Adequate resources and talent management should be assigned to the student attraction, recruitment and marketing functions and that the resources align with the SEM. Ensure there is clarity around roles and responsibilities to ensure a greater focus on student recruitment. Consider adding additional resources including additional full-time Recruitment Officers, and Student Recruitment Ambassadors to support student recruitment efforts.

In the future, consideration should be given to recruiting student volunteers to serve as “Student Recruitment Ambassadors” to support student attraction, recruitment and marketing. These students would have responsibilities such as attending career fairs, conducting campus tours, conducting student feedback sessions and supporting student orientation. This would be a good opportunity to enhance their confidence, develop leadership, public speaking and marketing skills while facilitating positive interactions with potential and current students and contributing to enhancing the overall campus experience.

Accept

- The Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will work with ECE to ensure the Strategic Enrolment Management Plan is properly resourced and there is clarity around the roles and responsibilities of staff.
- The potential for “Student Recruitment Ambassadors” will be explored.

Recommendation RR-4:

Develop an annual student recruitment calendar aligned to the SEM Plan to ensure there is a consistent approach applied each year to how and when programs are promoted to the potential students.

Accept

- An annual student recruitment calendar aligned to the Strategic Enrolment Management Plan will be developed.

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Recruitment and Retention of Students

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Recommendation RR-5:

Improve the student intake / assessment process to ensure students are properly assessed and have the prerequisites to support consistency in the application process and ensure the best chance of students' success. Improvements include:

- Maintain application and eligibility guidelines and criteria for all programs and ensure they are being followed.
- Consider confirming the role of the CLCs and utilizing them to support student assessment, career counselling and upgrading. For prospective students across NWT who do not meet the criteria for admission into their chosen program, the CLCs can provide potential students with career counselling and support to upgrade their academic readiness and skills, as required, to meet the requirements for the program of their choice.

Accept

- The Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will be tasked with improving the student intake process to ensure students are properly assessed and have the prerequisites to support consistency in the application process.
- ECE will also continue to support improvements to Community Learning Centres and will work to increase access to postsecondary education in communities across the NWT.

Recommendation RR-6:

Provide better support for career planning for potential and current students so students are better able to understand potential career opportunities within the NWT, the difference between apprentice and unaccredited programs, etc. Consider partnering with industry for providing information about careers with potential students and adding career counsellors to Student Services.

Accept

- NWT labour market data forecasts between 28,500 and 26,700 job openings in the NWT to the year 2030 with 78% of those job openings requiring postsecondary education. The Skills 4 Success Action Plan is focused on bridging education and employment gaps with targeted supports.
- ECE is in the process of hiring six Career and Education Advisors to work with NWT students and youth to help them navigate their best academic path from classroom to career.
- The Career and Education Advisors will work with students in Grades 9-12 and with youth aged 18-24 to support informed decision making regarding their education and career paths. These groups represent one-third of the NWT's future workforce and their success is critical to the NWT's economic success.
- The Career and Education Advisors will research and develop new student resources to support their advisory services. They will pilot the new resources in all regions and will liaise closely with existing ECE Service Centres and Aurora College campuses.

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Recruitment and Retention of Students

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Recommendation RR-7:

Consider developing a Student Experience Model to guide the development of services that meet the evolving needs of students and reflect the needs of adult learners.

Services to be considered include:

- Student registration and assistance with form completion
- Financial counselling
- Health and wellness services including mental health and addictions counselling
- Daycare options
- Student association services, including clubs and events
- Additional residences that accommodate families
- Life skills and budgeting

Instruction Elements:

- Admission requirements
- Progression criteria
- PLAR
- Pre-testing, assessment/ screening
- Regular review of progress
- Identification of new learning requirements and individual learning pathway
- Career, academic and personal advising
- Continued follow-up and support

Accept

- The Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal will be tasked to develop a Student Experience Model.
- The services and instructional elements of Community Learning Centres will also be considered as part of a Student Experience Model.

Recruitment and Retention of Students

Recommendation RR-8:

A more customer service, student-centric approach to the delivery of services must be the primary focus by enhancing communication about available services to students and expanding the student service desk hours especially over the lunch hour and after 4:00 p.m. (particularly during the registration period). Support improved delivery of student services through consistent practices as there should be a basis of consistent services for all students regardless of the campus or program they attend.

Accept

- We agree there is a need for consistency in the services provided across all campuses, as well as the importance of a service-oriented, student-centric approach. In the process of considering steps to address student recruitment and retention, the needs and priorities of students will be fundamental.
- The use of technology and social media platforms will also be further explored to help better serve the needs of students.
- The benefits of expanding student service desk hours over the lunch hours and after 4:00 p.m. will be examined by Aurora College and steps will be taken to ensure such supports are easily accessible to students.

Recommendation RR-9:

Obtain clarity on the issues around privacy of information, as well as the collection and sharing of student information to support the students' success and well-being. Improve documentation and communication between Student Services and instructors within campuses and across campuses.

Accept

- We will work with the institution to review relevant Aurora College policies, including C.16 Access to Student Records, E.01 Electronics Information, G.10 Release of Information, and G.11 Retention/Storage of Student Records.
- We will provide training for staff on the protection of privacy and sharing of personal information.

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Recruitment and Retention of Students

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Recommendation RR-10:

Review the job design for the student counsellor position and develop consistent job descriptions. Ensure the appropriate credentials are required for the varying types of counsellors. (i.e. psychological or personal counselling, career counselling, mental health, addictions, etc.)

Accept

- We agree that the job design for the student counsellor position should be reviewed and that student support staff must hold the appropriate training and certifications for the work that they are undertaking.
- Appropriate links to the broader health system should also be made as necessary.

NEXT STEPS

The public release of the Government Response to the Review Report completes the two-stage process that has made up the Review: (1) the Review Report drafted by the independent contractor, MNP, and (2) the Government Response. However, the conclusion of the Review process is clearly only the first step towards transforming Aurora College.

In the near-term, it is expected that the Minister will release a new mandate letter for Aurora College in order to provide clear direction consistent with the Government Response.

The search for an Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal continues to proceed and it is anticipated that this individual will be established in this role in late 2018 or early in 2019.

As recommended in the Review Report and a common theme during the Ministers' engagement in campus communities, there is the need for the articulation of a clear vision for postsecondary education in the NWT. This visioning process will be one of the early priorities of the Associate Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Renewal. The Associate Deputy Minister will also oversee development of an Implementation Plan for the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university.

Steps will be taken in the near-term to establish an Advisory Committee to support and advise the decisions of the Associate Deputy Minister. In the same fashion, an Academic Advisory Council will be established that can support the Associate Deputy Minister on academic matters. Other early activities will also include the implementation of a new Academic Program Review Framework and the undertaking of individual program reviews.

As noted previously, new legislation for consideration by the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories to replace section 150 of the *Education Act* will soon be presented. The primary objective of this new legislation will be to create a process of recognition that ensures the effective governance and quality assurance of postsecondary institutions and their programs. While not an outcome of the Review process, this legislation will help to shape the pathway by which Aurora College will incrementally transform from a College to a polytechnic university and, as a result, the feedback and discussion that surrounds this legislation will be of interest.

Several milestones/actions are presented in the Review Report as key markers on the journey toward the establishment of the polytechnic university from the fall of 2018 through to the start of the academic year in September 2024. These can be seen as a recommended sequence of events related to the transformation process and there will clearly be deviations from the proposed plan. In some areas, there may be the potential to move more quickly, while in others a more measured approach will be required. As we move forward, all decisions will receive continued consideration and scrutiny for their merit and appropriateness, and through the lens that they provide an overall benefit to students and residents of the NWT.

Monitoring and Communicating Progress

The Minister will continue to be the primary spokesperson in communicating actions resulting from the Review. The Administrator, and Department or College leadership may provide updates and information as necessary. The Implementation Plan for the transformation of the College to a polytechnic university will include a monitoring and evaluation framework to better allow progress to be communicated and help to ensure that targets are met.

Aurora College will continue to share their Annual Report, Corporate Plan and other communications materials that will help communicate specifics on the transformation of the College. The Government Response to the Review Report is about defining the path forward for Aurora College, but more work is needed to clearly identify the capital and operational costs of transforming Aurora College into a polytechnic university. This work will be done following the direction of the 18th and 19th Legislative Assemblies of the Northwest Territories.

Funding and Capital Planning

As previously noted, the process of transforming an existing institution allows for a more gradual rate of change compared to developing an entirely new institution. Aurora College already has established human resource capacity and significant physical infrastructure in each of the three campus communities and in Community Learning Centres across the NWT. However, the transformation to a polytechnic university cannot begin without first strengthening the very core of the institution to support sustained growth. In the Review Report, a strong core means implementing wide ranging reforms, particularly in the areas of governance and accountability.

We know that establishing a polytechnic university will require significant investments. The GNWT has and will continue to make significant investments in postsecondary education, including a recent investment of more than \$5 million in the Centre for Mine and Industry Training. Moving forward, increased dialogue with stakeholders and institutional partners will help inform the determination of capital and financial needs of a polytechnic university and identify opportunities for increasing the institution's external funding and revenue sources.

The successful transformation of the institution will include forging new co-investment partnerships with industry, employers, governments and other postsecondary education institutions. The growth of programming in Aurora College campus communities will also warrant discussion around partnerships and investments with municipal and Indigenous governments. This partnership model has been successful in similar transformations of postsecondary institutions across Canada.

Increasing Opportunities for Northerners

Following the Priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly, the GNWT Mandate 2016-2019 (Revised) continues to guide an ambitious agenda for improvements to postsecondary education in the NWT. The overarching goal of these improvements has been to increase opportunities for Northerners to engage in quality postsecondary education programs and achieve the skills, knowledge and attitudes for employment success.

In addition to this Review, GNWT Mandate items related to postsecondary education include calls to develop and foster the knowledge economy, offer online delivery of community government training curriculum to build capacity for careers that focus on community governance, develop legislation that outlines a quality assurance system on the basis of which postsecondary education institutions will be recognized in the NWT, develop and promote postsecondary education programs designed to meet NWT needs in high-demand occupations, and promote and improve student financial assistance to support NWT youth in developing the skills and abilities to meet their potential.

Although this Review is only one part of a broader agenda, the outcomes are expected to have a significant and long-lasting impact. The transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university will eventually see the expansion of the range of credentials that can be attained in the NWT, while at the same time ensuring that academic and research programs are of the highest standard. Building on Aurora College's 50 years of service, the new polytechnic university will continue to benefit Northerners for generations to come.

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