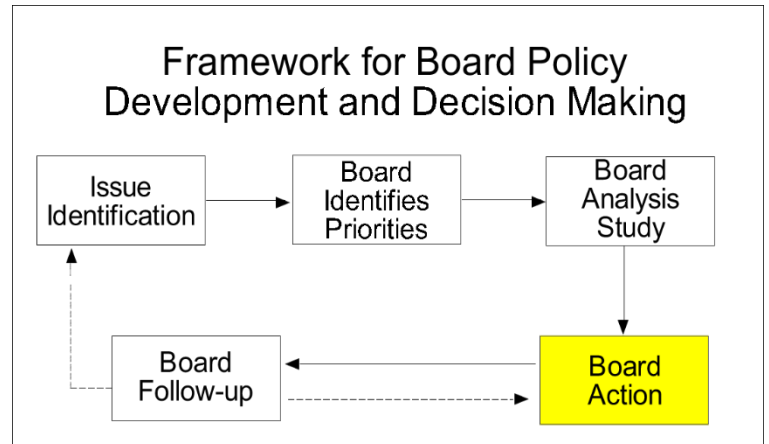


# Iowa State Board of Education

## Executive Summary

June 8, 2023



**Agenda Item:** Indian Hills Community College Comprehensive Accreditation Report

**State Board Priority:** Preparing Learners for Tomorrow's Workforce  
Ensuring Equity in Education

**State Board Role/Authority:** Iowa Code section 260C.47(3) grants authority to the State Board of Education to determine whether the programs of a community college shall remain accredited.

**Presenter(s):** Amy Gieseke, Chief  
Bureau of Community Colleges

Matt Thompson, President  
Indian Hills Community College

**Attachment(s):** One

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the State Board grant continued accreditation for Indian Hills Community College (IHCC). A state interim accreditation visit will be conducted in fiscal year 2028.

**Background:** Attached is a report of the evaluation of IHCC for continued state accreditation as an associate degree-granting institution. The Iowa Department of Education conducted the interview portion of the evaluation on February 20-21, 2023. This report reflects the review

team's observations and determinations made during IHCC's comprehensive visit. As mandated by Iowa Code section 260C.47, the accreditation team, including two external peer reviewers, assessed IHCC's compliance with eight Iowa State Accreditation Standards via a structured process of document review and interviews. The team also reviewed the most recent Higher Learning Commission (HLC) regional accreditation report to ensure that any findings have been addressed. Iowa's process has been designed not to duplicate the HLC accreditation process.



# **Accreditation Report Comprehensive State Evaluation**

Indian Hills Community College

February 20-21, 2023 – Fiscal Year 2022-2023

State of Iowa  
Department of Education  
Grimes State Office Building  
400 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

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Indian Hills Community College  
Comprehensive Accreditation Evaluation  
FY 2023 (Academic Year 2022-2023)**

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**Indian Hills Community College**  
**Comprehensive Accreditation Evaluation**  
**FY 2022-2023**  
**Conducted February 20-21, 2023**

**Purpose of the Evaluation**

The purpose of this review was a scheduled accreditation evaluation of Indian Hills Community College (IHCC) by the Iowa Department of Education (Department) as mandated by Iowa Code section 260C.47.

**INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW**

**College History**

IHCC was established as Merged Area XV by the Iowa Board of Public Instruction on June 3, 1966. The college began operations on July 1, 1966, at the Ottumwa Regional Airport under the governance of a nine-member board of trustees. Then known as Iowa Tech-Area XV Community College, the college offered technical programs that included those formerly operated by the Ottumwa Community School District. The newly-renovated North Campus (formerly known as the “Airport Campus”) is where the college’s Aviation Maintenance Technology, Aviation Pilot Training, Welding Technology, Commercial Driver Training and Diesel Technology programs are currently taught. This campus covers 215 acres and is located seven miles northwest of Ottumwa.

On July 1, 1968, the Merged Area XV board assumed responsibilities for operations of Centerville Junior College, which had been established by the Centerville Community School Board in 1930. The IHCC Centerville Campus was completed in 1970 on a 72-acre site in the northwest part of the community. Current programs offered at the Centerville Campus include arts and sciences courses, Agricultural Sciences and Construction Technology.

The boards of IHCC and Ottumwa Heights College merged operations on July 1, 1979. Ottumwa Heights was a private college operated by the Sisters of Humility of Mary. Its roots can be traced back to the 1860s, when the Visitation Academy was established in Ottumwa. The St. Joseph Academy was founded in 1925, and its name was changed to Ottumwa Heights College five years later. The Ottumwa Heights College campus was situated on 126 acres and was purchased by the IHCC Board of Trustees in 1981, becoming the IHCC Ottumwa Campus.

Since 1981, the IHCC Ottumwa (main) Campus has experienced many facility renovations and the new construction of facilities to house academic programs and improve the overall student experience. The Advanced Technology Center was completed in the fall of 1990. This 125,000 square-foot building houses the college’s many technical programs. The Rural Health Education Center opened in May 2007 to serve as a classroom and laboratory building for the college’s health programs, as well as a conference and meeting facility for area health care organizations. IHCC completed renovations in 2013 of the Tom Arnold Net Center, home to year-round recreation for students and residents of Ottumwa and the surrounding area. The college opened the Regional Entrepreneurship Center, a 10,000 square-foot facility dedicated to small business development and incubation services during 2014, where they are currently incubating numerous small businesses. Through this facility, IHCC provides small business development and outreach across its ten-county service region.

Additionally, in 2017, IHCC renovated 11,000 square-feet of career and technical lab space in the Advanced Technology Center to better serve students in the Robotics and Automation program, Computer Networks and Security program and Electronic Engineering Technician program. During 2015, IHCC renovated the Centerville Campus Multipurpose facility and in 2017 completed a Centerville Campus housing expansion project that increased housing capacity by 22 beds and created study space for on-campus students. They also completed

renovation of the main campus library to create a more learning-focused, modern facility to meet the needs of student, faculty and community members. In 2019, IHCC completed a Welding Technology and Diesel Technology facility expansion on the North Campus to meet business and industry workforce needs.

In November of 2021, IHCC passed a \$28 million bond referendum which will be used to fund a new campus in Centerville. Other major improvements include Live Virtual Learning (Zoom) classrooms in each of the college's 19 partnering school districts completed in time for fall 2022, a criminal justice training center set to open in Summer 2023, a performing and visual arts addition with construction slated to begin in fall 2023 and a student wellness center.

## **Institutional Profile:**

IHCC changes lives by inspiring learning, diversity, social enrichment and regional economic advancement. IHCC is a comprehensive two-year degree-granting institution accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The college offers over 50 career and technical education (CTE) programs; 22 transfer majors; and Associate in Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) degrees at three campus locations: Ottumwa Main Campus, Ottumwa North Campus and Centerville Campus. The college extends educational opportunities and services within its region through the operation of four county service centers, two regional centers and additional concurrent enrollment and career academy programs in partnership with area high schools. The percentage of students that are jointly enrolled in high school and college is 43.7 percent, which ranks sixth among Iowa's community colleges (College Profile, 2021).

IHCC enrolls 4,234 students annually in degrees leading to university transfer and preparation for direct employment. IHCC ranked sixth in credit awards among Iowa's community colleges with 689 awards, which is a 2.2 percent increase over the last five years (College Profile, 2021). In the 2020-2021 academic year, IHCC's students achieved a 37.7 percent graduation rate, which is eleventh highest in the state; a 21.8 percent transfer rate, which is twelfth in the state and a 46.7 percent success rate, which is twelfth in the state. Additionally, the college ranked tenth in non-credit contact hours and fourteenth in distance education enrollment (College Profile, 2021).

## **Visit Overview**

Staff from the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation of the Department along with two external reviewers performed a comprehensive accreditation review and site visit of IHCC on February 20-21, 2023. During the on-site visit, the accreditation team was very impressed with IHCC. It was apparent during the visit that IHCC staff and faculty pride themselves on having a strong focus on student success, a culture of continuous improvement, strong connections to the community and collaboration across the college. IHCC's Strategic Priorities are evident in their work and college leadership do any excellent job connecting various planning processes across campus.

## **Special Topic Summary - *General Education and Tying General Education Outcomes to Non-Academic Areas***

As part of the comprehensive accreditation review process, colleges select a continuous improvement topic that aligns with an area of growth and/or interest for the college. The Department then facilitates a conversation on this topic during the visit. For its topic, IHCC selected tying general education outcomes to non-academic areas. Staff from Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC), Southwestern Community College (SWCC), Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and Southeastern Community College (SCC) joined the visit for a discussion on how IHCC can incorporate general education into non-academic areas.

During the special topic discussion, all guest colleges gave an overview of how they assess general education and/or institutional outcomes in their academic courses and programs. They then discussed how they assess co-curricular and non-academic areas, with each college being at different stage in the assessment of non-academic areas. For example, NICC is currently working on defining the term "co-curricular." SCC stated that they have a co-curricular definition and have identified several clubs and departments that fit their co-curricular

definition. The representative from SCC emphasized that assessment is not necessarily something that is well-known to student affairs professionals like it is with faculty, and that education is key in successful implementation of co-curricular assessment.

SWCC's goals for non-instructional assessment include developing strategies to support student learning in at least one general education area, developing and implementing a process for assessing the impact on student learning and participation from all non-instructional divisions. To help with non-academic assessment, SWCC hosts a non-instructional assessment day that is held in conjunction with faculty assessment days. During the session, SWCC staff also showed different iterations of their Non-Faculty Assessment Form that is used for non-instructional assessment. SWCC representatives also stated that they are very intentional about sharing information between instruction and non-instructional divisions.

The representatives from DMACC discussed how a Student Affairs Assessment group is responsible for non-academic assessment. They discussed their use of the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) as a guiding framework for non-academic assessment, ultimately resulting in the writing of Essential Development Outcomes that are paired with existing DMACC Learning Outcomes, creating DMACC Collegewide Outcomes. Non-academic areas use the Functional Unit Self-Assessment Guide (SAG) Process for the assessment of the Essential Development Outcomes. DMACC reiterated that they are very intentional about connecting student affairs with academic affairs during their assessment processes.

Following presentations from each of the guest colleges, IHCC staff and faculty had an opportunity to ask questions and engage in conversation that will be used to help drive next steps in connecting general education outcomes to non-academic areas at IHCC.

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<sup>1</sup> Information for this section was primarily obtained from: <https://www.indianhills.edu/about/mission.php>

<sup>2</sup> Information for this section was obtained from the IHCC Website and from the 2021 IHCC Community College Profile Report.

## **ASSURANCE SUMMARY STATE STANDARDS**

The college's previous interim accreditation report from 2018 did not result in any findings that needed to be addressed by IHCC. The 2018 Department team did recommend, however, that college staff document their CTE program review process in its entirety in order to integrate the review into their strategic planning and budgeting processes to show how they close the loop for continuous improvement. During the FY23 comprehensive accreditation visit, the Department team was impressed with the improvements made in CTE program review documentation and the connections made to strategic planning. Additionally, when comparing the college's programs in the state curriculum database and the college catalog, the FY18 team found several discrepancies. The FY23 review noted similar curriculum discrepancies but these were resolved by the college prior to the visit.

### **Compliance with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Criteria**

The Department team reviewed the most recent report and information from HLC available at the time of this evaluation. IHCC's most recent HLC accreditation letter provided adequate evidence that IHCC has continuing regional accreditation. The college is on the Open Pathway and has an upcoming 4-year assurance review in 2024 with the next reaffirmation of accreditation in 2029-2030. They also have a multi-site location visit in April 2023.

In the most recent HLC report, core component 4.B was met with concerns. Because of this, IHCC had an interim report due in May 2022 to describe their progress in general education learning outcomes assessment and co-curricular program assessment. After IHCC's interim report was reviewed, HLC reported that the evidence demonstrated adequate progress in the area of focus. IHCC plans to continue to do work in the area of general education assessment in non-academic areas as evidenced by their choice of special topic for this accreditation visit. Additionally, for their Quality Initiative project the college chose to review and revamp its general education curriculum, with efforts focused on institutionalizing general education at IHCC.



## Faculty Qualifications

All community college-employed instructors who are under contract as of July 1, 2011, who teach in CTE or arts and sciences (including adjuncts) are required to meet minimum faculty standards (Iowa Code section 260C.48). The Department team provided IHCC a random list of 25 faculty members who taught credit courses in the previous year. IHCC then provided personnel files for these faculty regarding qualifications, including supporting documentation such as college transcripts, employment applications to illustrate related work experience and third-party licensure or certification, if applicable. Members of the Department team then examined the files to determine whether faculty member qualifications complied with current Iowa Code on faculty standards for courses taught during academic year 2021-2022 (i.e., fall 2021 and spring 2022).

Following a thorough review of the 25 random faculty personnel files, members of the Department team met with IHCC's Vice President, Learning & Engagement; Executive Dean, Centerville Campus & Academic Services and several other deans and department chairs to learn about the college's faculty qualification review process and to discuss a few concerns raised during the review. Most of the files provided showed evidence of utilizing the appropriate faculty qualification review process as well as the materials provided by the statewide Faculty Standards Task Force in an effort to establish statewide consistency and compliance with HLC and Iowa criteria. The college also has a good process for ensuring faculty files contain most recent professional licenses.

While the Department team found that most faculty were well-qualified for the courses being taught, there were several examples of faculty members teaching disciplines not on their qualification forms. Additionally, there were some credentials and degrees that were earned but not in the faculty file. While the move to a new hiring system will help IHCC with faculty hiring and qualifications, the Department team **strongly recommends** process improvements to ensure files are complete and all prefixes for which an instructor is teaching have been reviewed and added to the faculty qualifications form. The college may also want to consider exploring the functionality of their student information system (SIS) to prevent faculty members from being assigned to prefixes for which they are not qualified.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Faculty Teaching Load

Teaching loads of full-time instructors must not exceed the faculty load limits set forth in Iowa Code. This is the case for CTE instructors, as well as for arts and sciences instructors (Iowa Code section 260C.48). To check compliance with this standard, the Department team reviewed the instructional loads of a random sample of 25 faculty members for whom IHCC provided documentation of their academic year 2021-2022 (i.e., fall 2021 and spring 2022) teaching loads. A discussion with the Vice President, Learning & Engagement; Executive Dean, Centerville Campus & Academic Services and several other deans and department chairs about load processes clarified the steps that the college takes to load both arts and science and CTE faculty.

IHCC provided adequate documentation of the teaching loads of the faculty members under review. Although some of the calculations had to be explained to the Department team due to several faculty members teaching independent study courses, and due to IHCC being on a quarter system, the documentation provided demonstrated that instructional assignment practices are sound and compliant. Additionally, the Department team was pleased with how IHCC's mutual consent process is well-documented via a separate faculty contract. It is **recommended** that IHCC formalize the process and policy around independent study, as independent studies appear to count towards load differently across campus.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Special Needs and Protected Classes

Community colleges shall provide equal access to the full range of program offerings and services including, but not limited to, recruitment, enrollment and placement activities for students with special education needs or protected by state or federal civil rights regulation. Students with disabilities shall be given access to the full range of program offerings at a college through reasonable accommodations (Iowa Administrative Code 24.5(3)), with information regarding how to access such accommodations provided in a disability statement. In addition, community colleges shall have nondiscrimination statements ensuring access to educational programs and employment for state and federally protected classes. This nondiscrimination statement must list all state and federally protected classes; provide the name/title and contact information of the person(s) designated to coordinate equity, Title IX and Section 504 compliance and provide contact information for the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in Chicago, Illinois. The nondiscrimination and disability statements may be separate or the college may choose to combine them.

The Department team conducted a desk review prior to the onsite visit in which they reviewed IHCC's Americans' with Disabilities Act (ADA) and nondiscrimination statements, policies, statements and practices in marketing and recruitment publications, handbooks, the college catalog, the college's website and sampled course syllabi. During the onsite visit, the Department team reviewed additional documentation and conducted interviews with faculty, students and staff associated with disabilities services to ensure compliance with this state standard.

In both the desk review and onsite visit, the Department team saw evidence of numerous collegewide efforts to create a welcoming environment for all students, to provide accommodations for students with special needs and to provide opportunities for underrepresented students in particular programs of study. Some of these observed efforts include the following:

- IHCC has a clear student complaint process. Complaints are split into multiple forms based on the type of complaint.
- Students have access to several different clubs and activities, such as Allies for Equity Club, Sewing Club, International Students Organization, Anime Club, Aero Club, activities hosted by student housing and music lessons.
- The college employs two full-time mental health counselors on campus and also has a Counseling and Prevention Resource Center (CPRC) and Risk Assessment Team, demonstrating a strong focus on student mental health.
- There are numerous activities and events that promote diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), including a Warrior EDGE Committee that builds grassroots momentum for DEI efforts.
- Google Translate is available on each college webpage to translate the narrative to any language selected.
- The CTE program review template includes a question regarding the adoption of Open Education Resources (OER), illustrating the college's efforts to expand access to learning at minimal cost to students.
- The Office of Disability Services serves all of IHCC's campuses. Students were aware of where to go for these accommodations.
- Instructors can submit alerts for students they have concerns about through IHCC's Early Alert process.
- IHCC continues to add College and Career Transition Counselors (CCTCs) with the goal of getting them into all of their school districts.
- Students reported feeling safe on campus and having a sense of belonging. They also said that faculty and staff are readily available, accessible and that they were well prepared for their academic programs.

The Department team applauds IHCC's commitment to the success of all students. As it relates to the college's nondiscrimination statement, the Department team **recommends** the following:

- To improve the legibility of the nondiscrimination statement on small, printed marketing materials, consider utilizing a short nondiscrimination statement that directs the reader online to the full version of the statement.
- Utilize a syllabus management system or "locked" syllabus template to ensure nondiscrimination statements, accommodation statements and other required elements are consistent across syllabi.

- Consider using the best practice outlined by the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) National Network to focus on the positive term of accessibility instead of disability when possible.

**Finding:** During the desk review and site visit, the Department team noted that the annual and continuous nondiscrimination statements were not consistent on the college's website, major publications and student recruiting materials. For example, there were inconsistencies in the email addresses used in the statements, the contact names listed, the state and federally protected classes listed and the OCR contact information. The Department team will review this standard again in six months to ensure that both statements are consistent and contain all required protected classes and contact information.

## CTE Program Evaluations and Review

There are a variety of state standards related to the offering of CTE programs included in Iowa Code, Chapter 258, 281—IAC 46.7(4), and 281—IAC 24.5(4). These standards include numerous requirements related to program and award length, program content, labor market demand, articulation, advisory committees and more. All CTE programs (including new programs and changes to existing programs) must be approved by the Department. Standards for CTE programs are included in the Program Approval: Guidelines for Iowa Community Colleges guide and in the State Accreditation Guide on the Department website. Community colleges are required to review at least 20 percent of their CTE programs annually, standards for which are provided in the aforementioned program approval guidelines on the Department website. The Department team reviewed IHCC's CTE program review process, program review schedule and a random sample of recent CTE program review materials to ensure compliance with the CTE program evaluation review standard. For the standards regarding program advisory committees' composition, roles and responsibilities, the Department team reviewed a random sample of CTE advisory committee membership lists and meeting minutes to ensure compliance.

IHCC follows a three-year program review cycle, including transfer majors, which is more frequent than the five-year cycle mandated by Iowa Administrative Code. The CTE program review process includes the use of Strategic Planning Online (SPOL) software to house information such as relationships with the community, accreditation, assessment results, future planning and other summaries. Program review faculty complete a standardized program review template, which is also found in SPOL, and summarize their results in a presentation at the completion of the review. During program review, program faculty set goals that are evaluated during the next program review cycle.

The Department team was impressed with the additional following practices related to program review at IHCC:

- At the beginning of each program review cycle, Institutional Research staff give a live demonstration of how program review works and provide sample program review documentation and a data handbook to faculty members involved.
- The program review template asks important questions regarding enrollment, recruitment and retention of under-represented groups. Template questions also address different aspects of transfer, such as transfer of underrepresented groups, articulation partnerships and how graduates benefit from them, analysis of transfer approaches and strategies for engaging students in transfer opportunities.
- Assessment of program learning outcomes are incorporated into the program review process. Program faculty reflect on whether or not students are meeting outcomes, and they complete assessment reports three times a year. Additionally, assessment forums provide an opportunity for faculty members to discuss learning that is occurring in the classroom.
- IHCC uses creative ways to increase the enrollment of underrepresented groups into CTE programs. Examples include the Gems camp, advertising of programs in Spanish, researching the motivations of underrepresented groups, using Perkins funding to support a bilingual recruiter and providing online textbooks in different languages.
- The evaluation of program review is standardized by using a rubric. Programs that have issues identified by the leadership team, such as low enrollment, high equipment costs, etc., are required to do an additional Program Improvement Plan that involves additional goal setting.
- The college has been exploring ways for programs to work strategically with other programs to support students.

- Program faculty are involved in IHCC’s Plans for Excellence and strategic planning process.
- IHCC has recently adopted an agenda template to ensure that substantive conversations are occurring during Advisory Committee meetings. The college also provides an orientation packet, which outlines roles and responsibilities and has a copy of the curriculum and last program review document, for new Advisory Committee members. Additionally, there is an annual reception and dinner for Advisory Committee members to thank them for their service to the college.

To continue improving the program review process, the Department team **recommends** the following:

- Consider adding a question to the program review template about how the costs of the program are proportionate to the educational benefits received, as required in Chapter 258, 281—IAC 46.7(4).
- Consider ways to formalize and document how programs connect to general education. The Department team sees an opportunity here as the college works on general education and institutional outcomes.
- Provide more thorough documentation of Advisory Committee member demographic information and explore strategies to recruit a more diverse pool of Advisory Committee members.
- Encourage program use of the Advisory Committee meeting agenda template to ensure robust, meaningful discussion at all committee meetings.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

### STICS Curriculum Review

The Department utilizes a web-based platform (State of Iowa Curriculum System, or STICS) for its program approval process and maintains a database of approved programs and courses. This platform performs compliance checks on all programs offered by each college. The Department program quality consultant reviewed this compliance check for IHCC’s programs to ensure compliance with the state program standards. Additionally, a manual comparison of IHCC’s approved academic programs in the state’s database with those provided in their college catalog was conducted. Overall, minimal edits were needed to align the college catalog with STICS, and there were only a few instances where awards were out of compliance in regards to technical core or general education credits. The Department team was impressed with how the college corrected nearly all curriculum discrepancies prior to the accreditation visit.

It was apparent from the interviews that IHCC has very sound curriculum practices. Curriculum changes submitted by faculty members are reviewed and approved by the college’s Academic Review Committee. The college uses Acalog for the catalog and Curriculog for approving internal curriculum. With Acalog and Curriculog being owned by the same company, there is “communication” from Curriculog to Acalog so that any curriculum changes are reflected in the catalog. The Academic Review Committee demonstrates shared governance by including broad representation from across the college. The committee includes personnel from financial aid, advising, online learning, information technology, administration and faculty. IHCC also lists program learning outcomes for all programs in the catalog, including transfer majors, and is very intentional about laddering awards in CTE programs.

The Department team noted during the desk review that there are several “Transfer Pathways” in the catalog for subject areas that do not have approved transfer majors. According to Iowa Administrative Code 281 Chapter 21.3(2), terms that contain or are synonymous with the term “major” or which imply a specialization within a subject area should not be used in a transcript, catalog or marketing materials. It is **strongly recommended** that IHCC change the term to “Academic Pathway” or “Advising Pathway” and to move these links under the General Education Course Requirements for the A.A. and A.S. degrees.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

### Strategic Plan

Community colleges are required to update their strategic plans at least every five years as a guide for the community and its decision-making (Iowa Code section 256.31(4)). The Department team reviewed IHCC’s most recent strategic plan and interviewed selected staff to ensure compliance with this standard.

IHCC utilizes a three-year strategic planning cycle, demonstrated by their 2021-2024 plan. The current strategic plan, which is focused on IHCC's vision, mission and values, limits the number of strategic priorities to three, helping to focus the institution on major priorities. *Student Success* is the number one priority and the driving force for the work of the college. The second priority, *Economic Vitality*, refers to being responsive to business and industry needs. Finally, *Community Engagement* means intentionally engaging smaller campus communities in a more meaningful way. Each strategic priority has multiple goals, and key performance indicators (KPIs) are tracked through institutional effectiveness software called SPOL. There was substantial internal stakeholder input, as well as input from alumni in surrounding counties and advisory committee members, in the development of the strategic plan, followed by Leadership Team goal discussions, Management Council review and Board of Trustees review and input. The plan was developed using a great deal of survey data, such as the Covid Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) Survey, Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA), Great Colleges to Work For Survey and Guided Pathways Survey. The college provided multiple examples of change initiatives resulting from strategic planning, including the creation of the Business Solutions Division focused on economic vitality and solutions for workforce challenges.

The Department team was especially impressed with IHCC's Plans for Excellence model. These Plans for Excellence are departmental goals aligned with institutional strategic plan priorities. Plans are reviewed quarterly by the Leadership Team for progress. This keeps faculty and staff on track to ensure they are meeting their goals. The Plans for Excellence contain a budget line for each project, providing for alignment between strategic planning and budgeting. The college shares budgets with faculty members during the program review process and facilitates discussions on how to be most effective with available funds. Additionally, the college's Grants Committee intentionally and strategically seeks out grants that tie to the institution's strategic plan.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Physical Plant and Facilities

Each community college must present evidence of adequate planning, including a board-approved facilities plan. The community college's plan must meet state and federal requirements as outlined in the state accreditation guide. The Department team reviewed IHCC's most recent facilities plan, approved by the board in October 2019, and interviewed the Director, Physical Facilities; Assistant Director, Facilities; Director, Campus Safety & Security; Vice-President and Student Development & Operations regarding the college's facility planning process and decision-making structure to ensure compliance with this standard.

The Department team was impressed with IHCC's facilities, which incorporated advanced technology and were student-friendly. The 2019 Facilities Plan is the most recent version of the plan. It was developed with feedback from faculty, staff and students. The current facilities plan does not include the work that is planned as part of the recent bond referendum. The college ensured the Department team that they were working with two architectural firms and different construction managers for the next facilities plan. The Department team was especially impressed with the following as it relates to IHCC facilities:

- The capital improvement process was recently tied to program review, ensuring that ongoing facilities improvements also involve discussions with faculty members.
- The college has a strong Emergency Response Plan that consists of different action plans.
- There is a strong focus on security and safety at IHCC as evidenced by improvements with the campus camera system, implementation of body cameras, more coverage with lighting and a strong security presence 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- Security staff at IHCC receive annual training on firearms and complete 32 hours of continuing education training in areas such as mental health, crisis evaluation, weapons and de-escalation.
- IHCC ensures ADA compliance through the use of vendors that come to campus and check facilities. They also respond to student issues that arise and examine ADA concerns discovered during program review.
- Student technology improvements are made with consideration of evolving trends, such as prioritizing mobile access.
- Cybersecurity efforts include multi-factor authentication.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Quality Faculty Plans

Iowa law establishes the process for community colleges to plan for the hiring and professional development of faculty. Institutional Quality Faculty Plans (QFP) are required to meet the standards of 281-IAC 24.5(5). The Department team reviewed IHCC's QFP and interviewed members of the QFP Committee to ensure compliance with this standard. The Department team also reviewed the QFP hours for the random sample of 25 faculty members for whom the college provided documentation.

The college's current QFP was approved by the Board of Trustees in August 2021 and is maintained by an 18-member QFP Committee consisting of eight full-time faculty members, two adjunct faculty members, two concurrent enrollment faculty members and six administrators that meet at least three times a year to review and revise the plan, as necessary. Since IHCC does not have a certified employee organization, faculty members are elected by the QFP committee with input from the Deans. The Department team met with the committee to discuss key components of their QFP plan to ascertain that it meets compliance requirements. IHCC is very clear about the purpose of the Quality Faculty Plan, which is to create and maintain a highly skilled, qualified and student-centered faculty, and not simply to satisfy state code requirements. Based on the minutes provided, it is clear that the QFP committee has substantive conversations about faculty and adjunct professional development. During meetings, the committee discussed current policies, necessary revisions, how they approve QFP hours and what type of evidence is appropriate for those hours. Any changes to the QFP are approved by the Board of Trustees. The committee recently developed a form that is used for professional development opportunities that do not provide a certificate. For faculty members that do not submit QFP hours when required, Human Resources sends an email to program directors, who then contact the individual faculty member.

While the college provides a number of professional development opportunities for faculty, the Department team was especially impressed with IHCC's New Faculty Academy. This comprehensive faculty onboarding and mentoring program has defined outcomes and involves the discussion of teaching procedures and methods, the reading and review of a teaching-related book and presentations over projects that new faculty members complete. In addition to Mandatory Reporter Certification, topics include adult learning, curriculum, instruction, assessment and technology. Faculty members can apply to be teaching and learning specialists that mentor faculty during the New Faculty Academy. For continuing faculty, who are evaluated on a yearly basis, the plan outlines a strong list of competencies to guide faculty in their professional development hours. Faculty are able to submit requests for professional development, and submit an appeal if their request is denied. Faculty have additional opportunities for professional development through IHCC's membership in the Iowa Faculty Development Consortium.

IHCC recently received a Title III Strengthening of Institutions Grant, which was used to fund a Teaching and Learning Center and an online hiring system, which will be used for the tracking of QFP professional development. Grant funds will also be used to hire an instructional coach. IHCC's QFP also specifically addresses concurrent enrollment faculty and their QFP requirements and documentation. IHCC onboards new adjunct faculty by providing access to online, Zoom and weekend training opportunities and by relying on program directors to work closely with these new faculty members. It is **recommended** that the college consider establishing a more formalized process for onboarding adjunct faculty, similar to the process used to orient concurrent enrollment instructors.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Senior Year Plus Programs

A variety of requirements exist for Senior Year Plus (SYP) programs offered to high school students jointly enrolled in Iowa's community colleges. These requirements are included in Iowa Code Chapter 261E. Currently, the Department utilizes the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accreditation process to ensure compliance with many statutory requirements (as required by the legislated Postsecondary

Course Audit Committee). The Department team reviewed IHCC's accreditation status with NACEP, interviewed selected staff and reviewed documentation to ensure compliance with this standard.

For IHCC's Concurrent Enrollment Program, titled *Connect 2 College*, staff provided evidence of NACEP accreditation, with the re-accreditation process occurring during the 2026-2027 academic year. The college's SYP program is overseen by the Director of High School Programs, under the college's chief academic officer. The *Connect 2 College* program involves partnerships with 19 school districts within a 10-county area, serving close to 1,600 students annually. Additionally, the college has on average 60-70 concurrent enrollment faculty annually teaching postsecondary courses to high school students. Through the program, high school students have opportunities to access college-level courses through various methods, including online, in the high schools and on the college campus through multiple career academies. The college was also the successful recipient of two Career Academy Incentive Fund (CAIF) grants totaling \$1.5 million dollars, both of which will support the development of the Hills West Regional Center located on the Centerville Campus.

Overall, the Department team saw evidence of a high quality, organized SYP program and was particularly impressed with the following practices related to IHCC's *Connect 2 College* program:

- Live Virtual Learning (LVL) zoom rooms have been established within each of the 19 area high schools. The Department team commends IHCC on this initiative and recognizes it as a best practice.
- IHCC uses the Dual Enroll system for student enrollment and registration management.
- The college has a well-developed new instructor onboarding and orientation process for concurrent enrollment faculty, including the continued availability of information through the institution's learning management system.
- Concurrent enrollment instructors are trained to use SPOL for their assessments.
- Marketing and recruitment materials for the institution's Discovery Career Academies are well developed. Information presented is clear, outlines course sequencing and identifies awards/credentials that may be earned by students upon successful completion.
- The educational services agreement/contractual agreement with area high schools outlines the postsecondary courses that will be contracted between the school district and community college.
- The \$1,000 *Connect 2 College* scholarship opportunity has been established for students who continue their education at IHCC.

Although the Department team commends the program for having a comprehensive site visit form, it is **recommended** that a section be added to the form to identify follow-up requirements for concerns identified by the faculty liaison during the site visit. Additionally, the Department team **recommends** that the program formalize the non-compliance policy and outline the decertification process for high school teachers who fail to comply with the college's requirements. The college should consider including this information in the educational services agreement/contractual agreement, as well as the concurrent enrollment instructor handbook.

It was identified within the Dual Enroll student application that the information outlined within the FERPA consent form is unclear as to whether students and/or parents are granted permission under FERPA once students are enrolled. Under FERPA, rights transfer from the parents to the eligible students once they turn 18 years old or enroll in a postsecondary institution at any age, including enrollment into college courses while in high school. The Department team **recommends** the college review the information presented in the consent form to ensure it is clear that FERPA applies to the eligible students only. The program may consider aligning the FERPA consent form for high school students with the institution's currently established FERPA policy. Due to the unique nature of the concurrent enrollment program, the institution may consider consulting legal counsel to ensure practices and policies related to student rights under FERPA are in line with federal requirements.

**Finding:** During the desk review and site visit, the Department team noted the following concern related to SYP:

Iowa Code 261E.3(3) states that institutions are not to place restrictions on participation in SYP programming beyond what is specified in statute or administrative rule. During the review, it was noted that the college implemented more restrictive admissions requirements into the Health Sciences Career Academy program than what is required for traditionally enrolled students by establishing a higher GPA requirement for concurrently

enrolled students. While the Department team understands the college's rationale of averaging the GPA requirement, the practice is non-compliant with state law since it sets a higher enrollment standard for concurrently enrolled students compared to the general student population. The Department team also noted that even though the college's career academy program flyers were quite impressive, certain courses and/or programs had grade-level restrictions in place (e.g., some optional courses were advertised "for seniors only").

Since the Department team's visit, IHCC staff have worked to align the Health Sciences Career Academy GPA requirements to the institution's currently established 2.0 GPA requirement for admission into Health Sciences programs. Similarly, IHCC staff have removed any reference to grade-level requirements from its concurrent enrollment materials.

The Department team is impressed at the level of responsiveness from IHCC staff to immediately address these concerns and is pleased to report they are now in compliance with this standard.

### **Compliance with Non-Accreditation State or Federal Requirements**

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

### **Evaluation Team Recommendations**

The Department's community college accreditation team recommends continued accreditation for IHCC. A state interim accreditation evaluation is scheduled for FY28 (i.e., Academic Year 2027-2028).