Assessment of Aurora College

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Table of Contents

ASSESSMENT OF AURORA COLLEGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared as a result of a project terms of reference issued by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) in December 2012. Based on the terms of reference, this report is focused on a number of topics including:

1. The College's purpose;
2. Territorial legislation guiding College activities;
3. The roles and responsibilities associated with Aurora College – those of the Minister, the College Board of Governors, the College President and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment;
4. The College's new organizational structure and current operations; and
5. Recommendations focused on strengthening the College and its successes.

The project began with a review of documentation provided by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), Aurora College as well as, interviews with departmental and College staff and with knowledgeable individuals that have worked with the College over the years. In addition to the interviews and research activities, surveys were sent to all College staff and to ECE's Regional Superintendents of Education soliciting comments regarding the College's operation.

Support for the completion of this report was excellent. Departmental and College staff members that were interviewed, or provided information, were candid and direct in their comments and very helpful in tracking down useful information. There was a clear commitment by those participating, to the establishment of a path for a strong, effective and accountable College.

The report begins with a broad review of the circumstances leading to the preparation of the report and the history of the College's development. The report notes that there are a number of questions and issues with respect to effective College and departmental operations that remain unsettled. These include:

- Authorities, duties and responsibilities;
- Corporate flexibility;
- College financing;
- Reporting relationships;
- "Arms length status" and academic freedom; and
- Defined accountability.

Aurora College is established under territorial legislation and is directed by a Board of Governors appointed by the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The College operates three campuses and over 20 community learning centres. In addition, the College operates three scientific and research offices that form the Aurora Research Centre. The College is operated on revenues of about $48 million per year of which about $36 million is received from the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) as "base contributions". The remainder is obtained from project funding as well as student fees and charges. Annually, the College enrolls about 1200 "Full Time Equivalent" students. In the 2011/2012 academic year the College graduated 140 students - 57 with certificates, 63 with diplomas and 16 with bachelor degrees and 4 with masters degrees.

The College faces a number of "operational pressures" that significantly impact on College activities. Some of these pressures are unique to the College and differ significantly from any other organization supported by the GNWT. The pressures identified include:

- Changing demand for programs;
- Credibility as a post secondary institution;
- Competition for students;
- Availability of suitable infrastructure;
- Changing levels of funding support;
- Changing mechanisms and access to funding; and
- Limited human resources availability.

It is suggested that unless these pressures are understood by both the College and ECE and are effectively addressed, the College's overall performance will be impaired and the full value of the institution's operation will not be achieved.

The College's purpose and the framework for College operations are defined by legislation. Two primary legislative acts govern the College (the *Aurora College Act* and the *Scientists Act*). In addition, a further framework for College activities is provided by the *Financial Administration Act* and by various GNWT policies.

Following the presentation of background and contextual information, the report discusses relevant College related matters and provides a number of recommendations.

College Purpose

The College's broad purpose, the report suggests, can be defined by answering a number of key questions including:

- How can the College best serve the learning needs of NWT residents?
- Should the College become more focused and place a greater emphasis on college-level programming (e.g. industrial and trades certification, certificate, diploma and degree programming) and limit its involvement in developmental studies activities?
- Should the College expand its general arts and sciences programming to encourage greater enrolment in university level programming?
- Can the College expand its community-based programs?
- Should the College strengthen its linkages with universities in Canada and across the circumpolar north as suggested by the development of the University of the Arctic?

During the project leading to the completion of the report, it became clear that there are currently a number of differing views with respect to the College's purpose. Clarification of the College's purpose is seen as fundamental to the College's future success. The report recommends that the Minister and the Board of Governors of the College take action to clarify the College's purpose and, by doing this, better define performance expectations for the institution.

Roles and Responsibilities

The existing Territorial legislation defines the roles and responsibilities of the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, the College's Board of Governors and the College President. The report suggests that in some cases there is limited understanding of these roles. For example, in some cases, the relationship between the Board of Governors and the Minister is not well understood or is ignored by those dealing with College matters. This lack of understanding leads to confusion and frustration and, on occasion limits the College's effectiveness.

To improve the understanding of roles and responsibilities the report recommends twelve (12) actions including: formalizing and increasing meetings between the Minister and the Board of Governors, increasing Board of Governors contact with legislators, streamlining the Board of Governors appointment process, establishing Board standards for the performance review of the President and increasing College President's contact with senior departmental staff and with other GNWT Deputy Ministers in the GNWT.

College Operations and Organization

Organizations such as the College need to adapt their organization structure as the purpose, goals and operational environment change. The College's decision to, over the last two years, make changes to its structure, reflect a goal of matching the College's structure more closely to that of other postsecondary institutions across Canada.

However, the organizational change that was undertaken by the College was poorly planned, was not supported by effective documentation or analysis and has resulted in both planned and unplanned results that have significantly changed College operations.

This being said, it is noted that there is wide support for the basic concept of the establishment of academic schools within the College and that the implementation of the organizational change is well advanced – to the point where it would be unreasonable to reverse the changes that have been made.

Notwithstanding support for the new College organizational model, it is noted that the new structure has weakened the College and thirteen (13) recommendations are made to make further organizational adjustments to ensure that both college and campus activities can be effectively coordinated and managed. These recommendations include: recommendations that College staff be provided with an opportunity to identify and recommend further organizational changes necessary to improve College operations, a senior position of authority be established at every campus, all academic schools and functional units be required to develop multi-year plans and internal communications efforts be maintained and, if possible expanded.

Included in the discussion and recommendations related to College operations and organization the report describes a number of service issues that currently existing within the institution. Specific issues related to student services and finances are noted. Immediate action to improve student services, the procurement of a new student records system and streamlining administrative processes are recommended as key areas for immediate attention.

Departmental Operations

The report discusses the roles and responsibilities of staff of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. It notes the relatively small number of departmental staff members are dedicated to work on College matters on a full-time and ongoing basis. This situation is seen as problematic in that as staff members change there is a loss of corporate knowledge and effective communications between the Department and the College. Further, departmental staff need understand and respect the differences between working within a Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) department and working within a corporation that has been created to be at arms-length from the government.

The report also makes two (2) recommendations regarding actions that the Department could take to strengthen its support for the College

Planning, Monitoring and Accountability
The importance of planning, monitoring and accountability are discussed. Nine (9) recommendations are presented for consideration.

Several recommendations relate to improving program and service planning. Specifically changes to the timing and organization of planning activities are noted as being necessary. Current planning processes do not reflect the operational climate within which the College operates and new ways need to be found to better support effective planning of programs and services. In addition, effective needs assessment related to the post secondary and labour market needs of the NWT population are required in order to guide decisions related to program priorities. As well, GNWT's expectations of the College can be made clearer, with re-establishment of a program and service planning process through which the College and Department agree, on a multi-year basis, what programs and services are to be provided and where they are to be delivered.

Departmental understanding of the financial requirements to operate College activities is limited and it is suggested that a College funding framework be developed to support increased financial clarity and a more effective budgeting process.

Monitoring of College activities and College accountability are already well guided by legislation. Specifically, legislation currently requires the College to submit its plans, budgets and reports for the review and in some cases the approval, of the Minister. This said, there are weaknesses with respect to accountability that need to be corrected by the Department and the College. These include: establishing College performance measurement standards, increasing the collection of follow-up information on College graduates, analyzing and reporting on residents receiving Student Financial Assistance and regularly publishing post secondary student information so that it can be used to measure performance and guide planning.

Legislation
As part of the project, the existing legislation and government policies related to College activities were reviewed. The legislation guiding the College is old and requires renewal. Specifically, it is recommended that the *Aurora College Act* and the *Scientists Act* both be reviewed.

Changes to the existing legislation that are recommended include reshaping the description of the Minister's role to reflect those activities in which s/he has

appropriate oversight; increasing the Board of Governors authority to establish bylaws governing institutional activities; authorizing College staff participation in research activities, clarifying the President's role as chief executive officer of the College and modernizing the *Scientists Act.*

It is also important to note that the College is strongly influenced by a number of the GNWT's policies. Some of these policies reduce the College's ability to provide programs and services to students and reduce the institutions overall efficiency and competitiveness. The Department and the College should undertake a review of these policies and identify and or address those that are harmful to the College's ongoing operations and growth.

Closing Comments

Aurora College has made a significant contribution to northern growth and development over the past 40 years. Nurses, business people, teachers, tradespersons and many others have graduated from the College and gone on to work in all of the communities of the NWT. It is important that the College be supported in "telling its story" so that the institution can be understood and supported.

Over the past few years, the College has faced a number of challenges. Some of these have been difficult to address, while others have opened new doors and opportunities for the College and its students. Building and maintaining an NWT post secondary institution that offers relevant, high quality programming is a large task - one that requires continuing attention and commitment.

This report simply speaks to one "point in time". It notes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and successes. There is still considerable work that must be completed, by the College itself, by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and by many others in order for College system to reach its full potential.

Assessment of Aurora College

1. Introduction

This report has been prepared as a result of terms of reference issued by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) in December 2012. The terms of reference for the report are included as Attachment One to this report. Based on the terms of reference this report is focused on a number of topics including:

1. The College's purpose;
2. Territorial legislation guiding College activities;
3. The roles and responsibilities associated with Aurora College – those of the Minister, the College Board of Governors, the College President and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment;
4. The College's new organizational structure and current operations; and
5. Recommendations focused on strengthening the College and its successes.

The report has been prepared following a review of documentation provided by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), Aurora College, interviews with Departmental and College staff and with individuals outside these organizations. A listing of those interviewed can be found in Attachment Two of this report.

Further, survey questionnaires were distributed to all College staff and to the Regional Superintendents of ECE. Nearly 30 responses to survey questionnaires were received.

Support for the completion of this report has been excellent. Departmental and College staff members that were interviewed, or provided information, were candid and direct in their comments and very helpful in tracking down useful information that could assist in the report's preparation. There was a clear commitment by those participating, to the establishment of a path for a strong, effective and accountable College.

2. Circumstances Resulting in this Assessment

Over the past two years, concerns have been raised regarding the activities and decisions made by Aurora College. Issues and concerns that arose during the time period included those related to College effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, Departmental and College authority, Board of Governors decisions, the direction of the College and its overall responsiveness. During the time period, College Board members and staff also had a number of concerns including limited ECE responsiveness to College requests, the role(s) of the Department in College matters and what were perceived to be inappropriate intrusions into areas that were viewed as College responsibilities.

Possibly the greatest barrier that arose during the time period was that of poor communications. Unfortunately, as a number of the concerns expressed by both the College and the Department were not resolved, the resulting frustration led to the creation of barriers to effective cooperation. The level of frustration with the relationship between the two organizations reached a peak during the spring/summer of 2012.

It is important to note that during this period efforts were made by both the Department and the College to address a number of the matters noted above. As an example, the Department and the College developed and implemented a letter of understanding that was intended to clarify duties and responsibilities as well as improving communications. Even after several positive actions were taken, issues and challenges continued to develop particularly at the senior levels of the organizations.

One area at issue was the College's adoption of a new organizational structure. The new structure moved the College away from a "regionally based model" and emphasized the creation of academic schools with college-wide responsibilities. The revised organization model was implemented following the agreement of the Board of Governors and with the knowledge of the Department. It is important to note that it is unclear as to how well the implications of the reorganization were understood by all parties prior to implementation.

Since the summer of 2012 there have been significant changes in the relationship between the College and the Department. Specifically, these include the selection of a new College Board of Governor's Chairperson, there is a new College President, a new ECE Deputy Minister has been appointed and a new ECE Assistant Deputy Minister and Associate Deputy Minister have been named. As a result of these changes, a number of "new players" will be involved in the discussion of this report.

Both Departmental and College personnel involved in supporting this report have expressed strong commitments to examining and addressing issues and challenges that have existed over the past few years. This collective attitude establishes a solid and objective foundation for the discussion of this report and its recommendations.

Acknowledging the immediate history of the relationship of ECE and the College is important. However, it is equally important to understand that many of the issues, questions and challenges that have been raised in the recent past are not "new". Indeed the many of the fundamentals of the Departmental / College relationship have remained "unresolved" since the legislated establishment of Arctic College and the subsequent amalgamation of Arctic College and the Science Institute in the mid-1990's.

Since that time, a number of questions and issues have been discussed including:

- Authorities, duties and responsibilities;
- Corporate flexibility;
- College financing;
- Reporting relationships;
- "Arms length status" and academic freedom; and
- Defined accountability.

Some of these matters have remained unresolved – others have been addressed, only to have an accepted solution fade from the collective "corporate memories".

Because so many matters have been unresolved, the level of tension related to College activities has increased and decreased in a cyclical manner. Further and it has been difficult for each of the parties to "move on" in a way that will benefit the long-term development of post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and meet the needs of post-secondary students wishing to attend Aurora College.

3.   Aurora College History

The history of adult and post-secondary education in the NWT is important context to the purpose, structure and functions of Aurora College. The history is helpful in describing the actions that have been taken over the years to build the College system and to adjust and improve post-secondary program offerings. While this report is not intended to include a full history, a brief general summary of College's development may be helpful.

Adult education programming, organized for delivery of programming at the community level began in the 1950's. By 1958, 49 Northwest Territories communities had some form of adult programming (see Auroracollege.nt.ca). By the late 1960's programming for adults was expanded with the addition of pre-employment training, beginning with heavy equipment operation in a location just outside of Fort Smith and teacher training located in Yellowknife.

At the time, community adult education programs were delivered under the direction of regional education offices that were also responsible for the delivery of schooling. Primarily, community adult education programming was focused on basic (English) literacy and numeracy. During the 1960's and 1970's programming in what are now called community learning centres also included the delivery of home management education, evening ("non-credit") and other locally developed programs. In addition, some pre-employment training was also offered through these facilities.

The initial organization of the Adult Vocational Training Centre (AVTC) in Fort Smith began shortly after the first heavy equipment training was delivered. Throughout the 1970's, programming at AVTC expanded to include programs such as academic studies (now Developmental Studies), pre-employment trades, apprenticeship trades, short to medium term skills-based training, teacher education, social work training and renewable resource technology. At the time, students enrolling in training traveled from across the NWT to attend programs at AVTC. In addition, AVTC staff delivered some programming "at a distance" from the campus – primarily through community learning centres or under contract with industry or other organizations. The Adult Vocational Training Centre operated as an agency of the GNWT with programming activities being solely directed by policy decisions of the GNWT. In 1981, AVTC was renamed "Thebacha College".

In the early 1980's the Legislative Assembly initiated an extensive review of the NWT's education system. The review included consideration of the structure, content and future directions for programming ranging from early childhood education to schooling to adult and post-secondary education. The result of the

review was the 1982 publication of the document *Learning: Tradition and Change in the Northwest Territories*. The GNWT and the Legislative Assembly of the day accepted the report and the report's recommendations subsequently shaped the structure and direction for education since the time of its publication.

Learning: Tradition and Change in the NWT called for a College system to be established under legislation. It also recommended that the College system be expanded to include an additional campus (now Nunatta Campus of Nunavut Arctic College located in Iqaluit).

As a result of the direction established by the report, the second campus of the College system was created in 1984 and this was followed later in the decade by a GNWT decision to add regional campuses in Inuvik (Aurora Campus) and Yellowknife (North Slave Campus) as well as in Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay (both campuses are now part of Nunavut Arctic College. It was expected that the campuses would collectively offer a wide range of programming. Further, it was understood that programming at the campuses would vary depending on regional as well as territorial needs.

The *Arctic College Act* was passed in 1986 setting the stage for the formal "transformation" into a multi-campus institution, directed by a Board of Governors and operating under territorial legislation, specifically designed to guide its operation as a post-secondary community college.

In 1987 a decision was made to transfer responsibility for community adult basic education from regional education authorities (responsible for schooling) to the college system. There were two primary reasons behind the transfer. First, the transfer was intended to consolidate all adult and post-secondary programming into one organization so as to increase linkages and enhance coordinated planning and program delivery. Second, the transfer was intended to ensure that the College maintained a community-based programming focus in addition to its campus-based operations.

In 1992, the GNWT made a further decision to consolidate the NWT Science Institute into the College. This decision was based on the view that as the College expanded its post-secondary offerings there would be a natural linkage between programming offerings and research activities. Further, it was felt that the combined organization would increase the link between College students, staff and researchers with a goal of creating and acting upon a northern research agenda. The amalgamation of the two organizations initially occurred under the authority of an Executive Council decision, a Ministerial directive, and then later through changes in legislation.

In 1992/93 the decision was made to separate the operations of Arctic College into two colleges, one serving what is now the Nunavut Territory (Nunavut Arctic College) and a second, serving the NWT (Aurora College). This "split" was formalized with the passage of the *Public Colleges Act* in 1994 and the subsequent coming into force of the *Act* in 1995. The approval of the *Public Colleges Act* also resulted in the legislated consolidation of the NWT Science Institute into the two Colleges (note: within Aurora College, the NWT Science Institute then became known as the "Aurora Research Institute")

Throughout the 1980's, 1990's and 2000's the College worked actively to develop formal arrangements with other post-secondary institutions, both colleges and universities, to strengthen program recognition and academic credibility as well as to provide students with additional options to further their studies. Agreements related to teacher education, social work, business management and nursing are just a few examples of areas of study in which the College was able to establish agreements. The approval of these agreements created expectations on the College that it would operate in a manner consistent with other post-secondary institutions across Canada. Such operation included operating under the direction of an "independent" board of governors and at "arms-length" from the College's primary funder, the GNWT.

Since the changes made in the *Public Colleges Act* (1994), there were relatively few structural changes made to the College until the recent reorganization. However, during the period from the late 1990's until 2010 there were a number of programming and funding changes. Probably the most notable programming changes related to the addition of the delivery of degree and postgraduate degree programming in nursing and teacher education.

4.   The Historical Aurora College Organizational Model

The College provides residents of the NWT with the opportunity to attend adult and post-secondary programming in their own community or at a campus location within the NWT. The operation of a single public college, rather than multiple institutions provides a level of economy of scale and operational flexibility that can respond well to emerging education and training needs. Over the past twenty-five years, the College's operations have been organized to deliver programs and services through a network of community learning centres (CLC's) and campuses. The College refers to the structure as a "distributed campus model".

The College operates three campuses – Thebacha Campus (Fort Smith), North Slave Campus (Yellowknife) and the Aurora Campus (Inuvik) and 23 community learning centres. The College is directed by a Board of Governors, established under the *Aurora College Act*, and managed by the College President.

The overall College structure was developed based upon a commitment to maximize community-based programming. This being said, the network structure recognizes that in some cases, campus-based settings for program delivery are necessary. Some of the reasons that program delivery might be best placed at a campus include: economies of scale, the requirement for student accommodations (for out of town students), specialized infrastructure requirements, the location and availability of instructional personnel or the requirement for access to other resources needed to ensure program success (e.g. large hospital facilities for practicum placements for nursing studies).

In the past, the structure has supported strong links between the College and Aboriginal governments, regional bodies as well as businesses and industry. As campuses are located in what could be termed three primary "areas" of the NWT ("south of the lake", "north of the lake" and "in the north"), College campus staff supported by the staff of the President's Office have been easily accessible to employers and others wishing to sponsor training. This has led to a very large number of "partnerships" and resulting additional training opportunities for northerners.

As a final point, it is also important to note that the College structure was also designed to link with the offerings of other colleges and universities so as to enable NWT residents to begin their studies "at home", experience post-secondary education and training success and then transfer the credits they have earned to another institution, without having the requirement to repeat the studies that they have already completed.

5. College Activities and Operations

This section of the report examines the current activities and operations of the College. It begins with an examination of the College's purpose and then looks at enrolments, financing and pressures on the College.

College Purpose

The purpose of Aurora College as described, in legislation and practice, is very broad. The *Aurora College Act* states that:

> *The purpose of Aurora College is to deliver adult and post secondary education, including the delivery of university level programs and the granting of prescribed university degrees and applied bachelor degrees,* (*Aurora College Act, Section 3*).

While not reflected in the purpose outlined in the *Act*, the College is also responsible under the *Scientists Act* for the management of science licensing in the NWT. In addition to licensing responsibilities, the College, through the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) provides logistical support to scientists through its laboratories and links scientists and research activities to communities and some of the College's programs.

Most community colleges, much like Aurora College, have broad mandates and purposes. In the broadest sense, Canadian community colleges have served as the "education and training" institutions in support of labour market development and, increasingly, other post-secondary programming. Governments have used, and continue to use, community colleges and technical institutes to deliver programming as "close to home" as possible, that prepares their residents for employment and successful participation in society. The GNWT has followed a similar path with its direction to Aurora College.

The breadth of responsibility described by the College's purpose in the legislation places considerable strain on the College. This is because the institution must have the instructional (academic), support and administrative capacity to address the needs of students who possess widely varying skills, knowledge, experience and abilities.

The scope of the College's purpose is illustrated by the listing of programs and courses offered in the College's calendar and the enrolment information contained in the College's annual reports.

Enrolments and Results

An illustration of the breadth of the College's program offerings can be found in the description of enrollments. At the present time, the College delivers programs that can be categorized as including:

Developmental Studies *(352 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) - 2012 Aurora College Annual Report):* Course and programs in this area include adult literacy and basic education programs required by adults in order to meet their academic or personal goals. In most cases, developmental studies students have interrupted educational careers, having left the school system prior to the completion of high school. The period of attendance in developmental studies programming is variable depending upon the student's requirements and goals. Many of those enrolled in these programs will enroll in further College programming upon completion of their studies.

School of Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training *(280 FTEs):* Students enrolled in programs offered by this school are involved in apprenticeship studies as well as programming designed specifically to meet the needs of industry. Course and program length is variable ranging from eight weeks (apprenticeship theory courses) to a number of months. The courses and programs offer various types of certification depending upon the program. These include completion of theory programming necessary for apprentices to qualify for NWT journeyperson status or "Red Seal" (inter-provincial) status awarded by the NWT Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Board.

School of Education *(95 FTEs):* The School of Education offers teacher training for school teachers as well as programming in support of early childhood educators, Aboriginal language and culture educators and College instructional staff members. Program length varies from one to four years (or more) in length. The programs offered by the School offer certification that ranges from certificates and diplomas to degrees. In some offerings, credit transfer arrangements with other, partnered, post-secondary institutions are provided.

School of Health and Human Services *(150 FTEs):* The School of Health and Human Services offers courses and programs related to social work, nursing and other aspect of human care. Programs range from those that are several months in length to others that require four or more years of study. Certification ranges from certificates to degrees and post-graduate certification. Credit transfer arrangements are in place with partnered post-secondary institutions.

School of Business and Leadership *(127 FTEs):* The School of Business and Leadership offers management, office procedures and accounting programs for students interested in work in both the private and public sectors. Course length varies from several months to two years in length. The School offers certification including certificates and diplomas. Credit transfer arrangements are in place with professional studies certification programs offered through accounting associations and with other post-secondary institutions.

School of Arts and Sciences *(30 FTEs):* The School of Arts and Science is primarily involved in the delivery of environmentally related programs. Program length ranges from a number of months to two years. Certification is dependent upon the program and includes diplomas.

Career Development *(141 FTEs):* Career development programs are generally relatively short and provide students with specific skills that will benefit them in the workplace. Frequently, these offerings occur on a short-term or part-time basis. Certification provided to graduates of these career development programs recognizes participation and achievement.

As suggested in the listing above, and in support of its purpose, the College has established agreements and undertakings with other colleges and universities to recognize its program offerings for transfer credit. At the present time the College has transfer agreements with a number of universities, with the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers, the NWT Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupational Certification Board and the NWT Association of Certified General Accounts. These agreements confirm the appropriateness and rigor of the College's programming and assist in supporting the College's credibility as a post-secondary institution.

College program graduation information is reported in the College's annual report. During 2011/2012 the College graduated 140 students - 57 with certificates, 63 with diplomas and 16 with bachelor degrees and 4 with masters degrees.

While it is relatively easy to identify the numbers of graduates from the College's trades, certificate, diploma and degree programs information related to developmental studies is more difficult to determine. Graduation information is a key performance indicator for most colleges and information from all programs is necessary in order to assess the effectiveness of College programming.

The College also collects information on student satisfaction. Historically, student satisfaction data related to academic matters suggests that those who attend the institution give the College "high marks". Satisfactions surveys are carried out

annually and students are asked to rate the quality of program content, the quality of instruction and whether they would recommend the program to others. As well, the students are asked whether they would recommend the College to others. Historically, student satisfaction has been in the 90% to 100% range. Students cite small class sizes, individual attention, the quality of instruction and access to programs as being highly favorable aspects of the College experience.

In the past the College has also surveyed student outcomes by contacting graduates of the College's programs two years after the completion of their studies. The intention of this survey has been to determine what student's do following graduation and how they reflect on their College experience at that point. This survey process does not appear to have occurred over the past few years and is a gap in the College's performance data.

College Finances

Financing of the College's activities follows a pattern found in many post-secondary institutions across the country. The College depends upon a number of funding sources to support the programs and services it provides. The largest contribution to College activities is that provided through the allocation of funds made by the NWT Legislative Assembly. However, about 25% of the revenues that the College receives are dependent on other funding sources and other funding mechanisms. Using the information published in the College's 2011/2012 *Annual Report*, College revenues during the past College fiscal year were about $48.4 million.

Table 1
Aurora College Revenues 2011/2012

Types of Revenues		Actual Revenues ($000's)
GNWT Contributions ("Base" Funds)		$35,929
Project Income		$8,662
▪ GNWT	$4,099	
▪ Government of Canada	$1,359	
▪ Other Third Party	$3,204	
Tuition Fees		$2,149
Room and Board		$853
Recoveries and Other		$706
Interest Income		$103
Total		**$48,402**

(*Aurora College 2011/2012 Annual Report,* pg. 45)

Note: *The GNWT Contributions include value of services received by the College from the GNWT, such as cost for leases, maintenance and repair of facilities, payroll processing, risk management, legal counsel, etc.). These contributions are valued at just over $5.9 million.*

The percentage of the College's revenues that result from the "base contribution" have varied over the years depending upon the GNWT's commitment and funding levels provided by the Government of Canada either directly to College, or through other organizations (including the GNWT). Generally, the "base" has covered over 75% to 80% of the College's operating costs. The annual amount received from "third parties" and from GNWT departments, for contracted activities, is difficult to predict at the beginning of any College fiscal year. As a result, the College cannot accurately budget for these amounts. As indicated in the table above, a significant portion of the "contract funding" is received from the GNWT – these funds are provided on a "one-time" basis and do not make up part of the College's base operations.

College expenditures during the 2011/2012 year were about $48.9 million.

Table 2
Aurora College Expenditures 2011/2012

Types of Expenditures	Actual Expenditures ($000's)
Education and Training	$21,929
Community and Extensions	$8,552
Aurora Research Institute	$2,061
Student Services	$8,294
Financial and Accounting	$1,694
Pooled Services	$6,361
Total	**$48,891**

(*Aurora College 2011/2012 Annual Report,* pg. 45)

The College ended the year with a small deficit that it was able to address through application of its previously retained surplus.

Over the past five years the College has faced a financial challenge in it has had to reduce some aspects of its operations to address base funding reductions. The table below describes the changes in funding the have occurred.

Table 3
College Base Funding Adjustments 2007/2008 through 2011/2012

GNWT Fiscal Year	Reductions to Base Contrib. ($000's)	Enhancements to Programs and Services ($000's)	Operationally Neutral Enhancements (Forced Growth) ($000's)
2007/2008	($90)	$431 ($431 is one time)	$1,906 ($868 is one time)
2008/2009	($757)	$921 ($721 is one time)	$1,371 ($100 is one time)
2009/2010	($2,433)	$785	$1,799 ($100 is one time)
2010/2011	$0	$455	$1,243 ($435 is one time)
2011/2012	$0	$200	$1,277 ($240 is one time)
Totals	**$3,280**	**$2,792 ($1,152 is one time)**	**$7,596 ($1,743 is one time)**

(Source: ECE Contribution Detail, 2013)

Notes:
1). *This listing does not include monies transferred from the College to the GNWT Department of Public Works and Services when financial responsibilities for facility repair and maintenance were changed.*
2). *Operationally neutral enhancements include monies associated with lease cost increases, collective agreement increases, utility cost increases and other forced growth contributions. These funds are assumed to not increase or decrease the College's ability to offer programs and services.*
3). *Enhancements shown include $1,028,000 in one time monies contributed to the College based on Federal monies (the Post Secondary Infrastructure Trust)*

Reductions in funding do occur, from time to time, and all government-supported organizations must be prepared to address such changes. The College did make adjustments as a result of the changes noted above.

With respect to capital expenditures and infrastructure development there have been some advances over the past ten years. Table Four notes the facilities that have come into service during this time period.

Table 4
College Facilities Brought into Service 2003 - 2013

| Year	Description	Value ($000's)
Community Facilities		
2009	Community Learning Centre – Fort Simpson	(Est.) $2,000
2011	Community Learning Centre – Hay River Reserve	$1,400
2011	Community Learning Centre – Lutselk'e	$1,200
2011	Community Learning Centre - Tsiigehtchic	$1,400
Campus Facilities		
2004	Main Campus Bldg. – Aurora Campus, Inuvik	$12,000
2007	Single Student Residence – Aurora Campus, Inuvik	$4,700
2011	Western Arctic Research Centre – Aurora Campus	$11,100
2006	Thebacha Kue Townhouses – Thebacha Campus, Fort Smith	$3,600
Total		**$26,600**

(Source: ECE Aurora College Asset Listing, 2013)

Note: *Of the amounts listed above approximately $13 million was provided to the GNWT by the Government of Canada to specifically support College activities.*

During the 10-year period, there have been several additional leases entered into for accommodation of students in Inuvik and Yellowknife. As well, some additional lease funding has been provided by ECE for classroom space (2012/2013 for the Learning on Franklin Facility) has in Yellowknife.

Operational Pressures Experienced by Aurora College

Given its unique structure and operations the College faces a number of significant challenges. All of the challenges discussed below have a direct impact on College operations. Some are relatively new, while other pressures have been in existence for many years and remain unresolved.

Figure 1
Aurora College – Operational Pressures
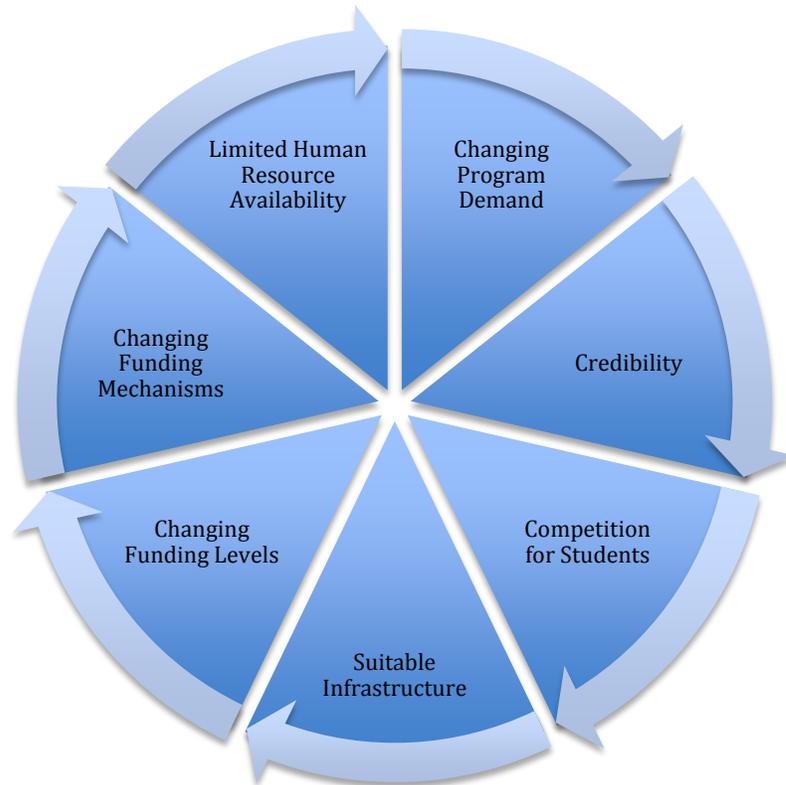
Changing Demand for Programs

Over the years, the demand for programming offered by the College has changed. The demands for different types of programs have been driven by a number of factors including, "new" employment opportunities for northerners, changing skill requirements in existing jobs and increasing education levels of northerners resulting in northerners having an expanded range of educational goals.

During the last twenty-five years a wide range of jobs have become available to northerners. Recognizing that there were weaknesses in the northern labour

force governments invested by providing support for labour force development activities such as pre-employment programming, industry-based training (e.g. mining, oil and gas), as well as specialized training associated with particular jobs (e.g. apprenticeships). As a result of government policy and economics, northerners now fill a number of these "new" jobs.

The funding for support of education and training associated with these "new" jobs may be ongoing, as is the case with some programs associated with management or administrative work, but frequently the funding provided by governments to support these types of training are relatively short term. To effectively deliver programming to meet these needs, the College must be flexible and responsive and it must ensure that its programming reflects the immediate needs of the labour market.

The College also faces pressures to alter its programs as the skill and knowledge requirements for existing positions change. For example, over the past ten to fifteen years, the GNWT hiring practices have begun requiring degrees (four years of study) from applicants wishing to apply for nursing, social work and teaching professions. Previously, the GNWT would accept applicants who possessed diplomas (two years of study). This trend of "increasing the credential requirements" is one that is happening across Canada and is one that all college and universities have had to respond.

In response to this, the College has adjusted its programming to reflect these new requirements. Such change is not as simple as adding a few courses. Extending programming from diploma to degree status has required the College to designing new courses, negotiate the transfer of these courses with their university partners, change the requirements for staff qualifications, alter College housing and classroom arrangements to recognize that an additional two years of students will be studying at a given time and adjust their administrative requirements related to registration, marking and the like.

A third area of pressure on College programming, results from public demand for new and/or additional program offerings. As education levels of the population have increased, the College has been asked to deliver more diploma and degree programming. While the College has not always been able to respond, this pressure can be expected to continue as those with increased education and skill levels look to further increase their marketability through local studies at the NWT's post-secondary institution.

Credibility As a Post-Secondary Learning Institution

The College faces continuing challenges to its credibility as a post-secondary education institution. These challenges occur even though students in a number of the College's programs receive certification from nationally and internationally recognized post-secondary institutions and accrediting agencies. In some respects the College may receive greater "respect" and "acknowledgement" for its work from others, outside the NWT than it does from individuals and organizations within the NWT. Because this continues to be the case, the College is continually "battling" the perception that it is "not good enough". If students are to be attracted to the College then finding ways to address the perception that the College "isn't really a college" must occur. This pressure is quite frustrating for College staff members and the Board of Governors, but has been a continuing concern for a number of years.

Competition For Students

The GNWT supports very few programs or services where it must compete for clients. But Aurora College does just that! It operates in a post-secondary environment where it must compete for students and clients.

When the Aurora College model was developed, the College could be assured of attracting a large percentage of the NWT's post-secondary education students. At the time, the number of students traveling south for post-secondary education was relatively limited and most of these students were from larger regional centres. In addition, there were a large number of adult students with limited academic credentials who struggled to meet the entry qualifications established by southern colleges and universities. As a result, the college had a "captive pool" of potential students. Further, a number of those interested in post-secondary education were adults with families who were reticent to move far from their home community.

Since the College model was established, the nature of the student base, those interested and able to attend the College, has changed somewhat and the willingness and interest of students to travel away from their home communities to institutions outside the NWT has increased dramatically. Anecdotally, College staff members indicate that many of the potential students that they are now trying to attract are younger, have improved educational backgrounds and have less dependents. For these individuals there is a range of post-secondary choices available. While this increase in choice may be positive for the student, it places the College in the difficult position of competing, to a much greater extent, with southern educational post-secondary institutions. To successfully compete with the these available "options" the College must be able to "measure up" in terms of program quality, infrastructure, student supports and cost when it is compared with other post-secondary options.

Availability of Suitable Infrastructure

To effectively deliver programs and services, the College has a number of basic infrastructure requirements. The nature of College programming and the College model must, if there is to be adequate support for students, include suitable learning space in communities (community learning centres) and at campuses.

Space requirements, based on the College "distributed campus" model include the provision of space including:

- Community Learning Centres - Sufficient instructional and ancillary spaces;
- Campuses – Sufficient instructional, instructional support (instructor offices, library space, etc.) student support, accommodation (single and family), laboratories (and shops where appropriate) as well as general use and ancillary space.
- Research laboratory facilities (either as stand alone, or within existing College's campus structures).

The costs for the construction, operations and maintenance of College facilities are substantial. Spending on the construction and/or renovation of College facilities has not kept up with the demonstrated demand for space. As an alternative the College has, with the support of ECE, leased space, frequently in facilities that are older and many of which are not designed specifically for College and student use.

The infrastructure deficit is a key limiting factor in College stability and growth in that without sufficient space, program delivery and student accommodation become problematic. This limitation adds complexity to the management of College's activities and can negatively influence students' view of the College. It may also reduce the College's credibility with the general public.

Senior College staff members indicate that infrastructure requirements are, at present, being met in most community learning centres and at the Thebacha and Inuvik Campuses. They also note that program delivery is not being significantly limited in these locations as a result of infrastructure shortages. College personnel also note that infrastructure pressures currently do exist in Yellowknife (instructional, housing and ancillary spaces) and indicate that programming is being limited as a result of this situation.

Addressing College infrastructure needs is a significant challenge. Recognizing this, ECE undertook a study of projected College space needs in 2006 titled, Aurora *College 10 Year Facility Plan 2007 – 2016.* This study predicted some shortages in space could be expected during the planning period.

As a final point, it is useful to note that much of the College's student accommodation facilities, particularly at the Thebacha Campus, are aging and that expenditures for renovation or replacement will be needed at some point in the near future.

Changing Levels of Funding Support
During the past seven years the College has experienced a significantly reduced funding level – as it relates to College operations and program delivery. As noted earlier base funding reductions have reduced the College's net operational flexibility by just less than $1.7 million. This represents a reduction of over 5% of the College's base funding. During this period the College did receive some program enhancements $2.8 million, but about $1.2 million of this was "one time" program enhancement funding received by the College. Of the one time monies a total of $1,028,000 or just less than 90% came from federal monies that were "flowed through" the GNWT.

The result of the reductions that have occurred has been to limit some program delivery, reduce the College's responsiveness and/or resulted in the requirement for the College to seek out other funding sources – an effort that requires considerable time and effort.

This being said, funding levels demonstrates commitment to College activities and programs. Increases or stability in funding suggest commitment while reductions indicate a reduced priority or displeasure with operations and results. Changing funding levels impacts program and service levels and influences staff member morale.

Changing Mechanisms and Access to Funding Sources
One of the advantages of the College's corporate structure is that the structure permits a more immediate response to changes in its financial environment than can be expected by a government department. This marked advantage also has its risks particularly when the "rules" for accessing project and one-time funding change.

Of an estimated total of $45 to $48 million in revenues received by the College annually the College receives about $12 million in one time or project funding (about $4 - $5 million of this is from various GNWT Departments). To access project funding or contract funding, the College must prepare unique proposals and, if the project proceeds the necessary contract documents – followed by undertaking program development, the organization and staffing necessary to support program delivery. Project funding and one-time funding is a critical element of the College's activity and accounts for a high percentage of the

industry and community based labour market related programming that the College offers.

As the structure or funding mechanisms associated with project and one-time funding change the College must change its approach to seeking the funding and associated partnerships. For example, the Government of Canada has, during the last few years, altered its approach to funding Aboriginal governments and organizations for capacity development activities. The changes have resulted in Aboriginal governments and associated organizations having to shift from the purchase of the College's programs to only purchasing "seats" in programs. This change sharply increases risks for the College in program design, organization and delivery.

Such changes, particularly given the importance of these monies to community programming and some campus activities (e.g. at the Aurora Campus) can place considerable pressures on the College to adapt and change – requiring significantly increased time and effort to secure funding to support programming.

Limited Human Resource Availability
The College is the only post-secondary education institution in the NWT. As an organization there are a number of positions (e.g. many of the instructional positions) that require skill sets and experience for which there is a very limited NWT labour pool. Obtaining staff that meet the requirements for these positions can be difficult. The current extended efforts to find skilled and experienced people to fill the positions of Chair of Business (Inuvik), Chair of Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training (Fort Smith) and a Vice President, Education and Training (Fort Smith) provide examples of some of the staffing challenges that the College is currently facing. If suitable, skilled and experienced staff cannot be hired, the quality of programming, responsiveness of the institution and overall success of the College is jeopardized.

In discussing this matter with College staff, the availability of human resources is seen as becoming an increasingly significant issue and one for which some solutions need to be identified and discussed.

As noted above, all of these pressures have a significant impact on College activities and performance. Unless these pressures are understood by both the College and ECE and are effectively addressed, the College's activity level and overall performance will be more limited than would otherwise be the case.

Aurora Research Institute

The Aurora Research Institute (ARI) is an operational unit of Aurora College. Guided the *Scientists Act* as well as the *Aurora College Act*, the Research Institute is responsible for the issuance of scientific licenses, the facilitation of relationships between researchers and communities, providing logistical support for researchers and linking research activities to the College, College programs, faculty and students. A Director manages ARI from the Western Arctic Research Centre, which located in Inuvik.

The Western Arctic Research Centre was recently constructed. The construction was funded by a contribution from the Government of Canada and is now maintained by the GNWT on behalf of the College. The ARI Director directs the operation of the Centre under the guidance of a research council and is supported by staff located in the Research Centre and at the North Slave and Thebacha Campuses of the College.

Over the past few years, and with the opening of the new Research Centre, the Institute has been increasing its collaboration with various universities and agencies involved in research activities. Since the opening of the new Centre in 2011, a total of 1,400 accommodation days have been provided to researchers, in excess of 100 days of laboratory time has been provided and 70 days of community use have been recorded. This includes work done with local schools to provide youngsters with scientific experiences and to promote careers in the sciences.

An was envisaged by the GNWT when the Aurora Research Institute became part of the College, there have been increasing linkages between researchers and College faculty and students. At the present time the College has two staff that are "cross appointed" between academic schools and the Institute. These staff members are working with students to secure funds to conduct research in selected areas. As well, ARI was a key proponent in the development of a Northern Research Agenda supported by the GNWT.

The Institute's operation causes some challenges for the College. The greatest of these relate to external requirements related to accessing science and research funding. In order to access a number of national funds available to support research activities the College must be able to demonstrate: it's "independence" from government and that its staff members' enjoy "academic independence. While discussions are advancing in this regard, meeting the criteria established by these national research funds remains an outstanding matter for the College.

6.   Departmental Activities and Operations

The Minister and his Department face a tremendous challenge. The scope of responsibility of ECE is very large. Responsibilities include programming and services associated with NWT languages and cultures, support for early child development, the operations of schools, the provision of adult and post-secondary programs and services, labour market development, income support programs and regulation of labour matters.

In addition to this very broad range of responsibilities, the functions that the Minister and Departmental staff members are required to complete is equally expansive. The Minister and his Departmental staff have, for example, direct roles in preparing the broad policy and legislative basis for government activities, planning, program design and the development of accountability mechanisms. In addition, the Minister and Department must respond to and support government processes including reporting to Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly. Finally, ECE several roles related to programs and services delivery.

With respect to this last set of functions – those related to program and service delivery, the Department directly delivers some programs (e.g. income support programs) using its own staff members, while it supports the delivery of other programs (e.g. early childhood development, schooling, literacy and adult basic education as well as College programs) through arms-length organizations over which it has only indirect control). The Departmental roles associated with these two approaches to program and service delivery are quite different and it is important that Departmental staff recognize and respect the differences when carrying out their duties.

A review of Departmental activities, using the *Government of the Northwest Territories Main Estimates (2012/2013),* illustrates the breadth of responsibilities of the Department. Some key points are noted below:

- A total Departmental budget for the year was $289 million - $192 million of which is spent on the Education and Culture Branch (early childhood, schools, language and culture programming); $47 million spent on Advanced Education (adult basic education and literacy, apprenticeships, labour market development and College contributions); $40 million on income support programs and $10 million related to Departmental directorate activities;
- ECE is responsible for 25 different grants and contributions funds valued at $210 million;

- ECE supports and has oversight responsibilities related to the operation of 10 "arms-length" authorities - 9 education authorities (schools) and 1 College; and
- There are more than 1300 staff members involved in the system supported by ECE's Main Estimates, of which just over 200 work for the Department and the rest are employed within educational authorities.

The Department operates a small unit that directly supports organizations delivering adult related programming. The unit consists of four positions, one of which has full time responsibilities for post-secondary matters (post-secondary education coordinator). Other staff members in the unit, and as well as some staff members in the Advanced Education Division have part time responsibilities that relate to College activities (e.g. apprenticeship staff, industrial project staff, etc.). While it was not the case in the past, at present, the Department has no senior managers with work experience in the Aurora College system.

In addition to dedicated staff and those in the Advanced Education Division that contribute to addressing College matter, ECE uses subject specialists (e.g. legal, finance, policy, executive management, etc.) to provide further support on College matters on an "as and when" basis. Many of these staff members are very experienced and have a long history of working with College personnel.

The College and the Department have an established communications protocol (letter of understanding that was approved in 2011). This document describes the ways in which communications and problem solving will occur.

7.   Legislation and Government Policies

At the present time, the College's operations are directly influenced by three primary pieces of legislation. These are:

- *The Aurora College Act;*
- *The Scientists Act;* and
- *The Financial Administration Act (*particularly Part IX and Appendix A).

The College operations are also strongly influenced by a wide range of other GNWT legislation and policies including: *The Public Services Act; Access to Information and Privacy Act, GNWT* human resource management policies, risk management policies and policies related to asset operations and management. In addition, Departmental policies such as the *Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive,* the *Private Vocational Training Directive* and the *Surplus Retention Policy* and those related to the provision of schooling for apprentices all influence the College's activities and behaviour.

The legislation used to guide the College was developed more than 15 years ago. The *Aurora College Act* has had some minor adjustments since it was initially enacted, but has not been thoroughly reviewed since its passage by the Legislative Assembly. The same is true for the much older *Scientists Act* that assigns authority to the Aurora Research Institute.

One important aspect of the current legislation is that it defines the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, the College Board of Governors and, to a lesser extent the roles of the President of Aurora College.   Reviewing and understanding these roles is critical to understanding accountabilities and measuring the "performance" of the "parties" most involved in College matters.

The *Aurora College Act* indicates that the Minister:

- Shall (duties – S. 7 *Aurora College Act*):
    - Determine the policy respecting the operations, programs and priorities of Aurora College; and
    - Appoint an auditor for Aurora College.

- May (powers – S. 4 and 7):
    - Open and close campuses;
    - Give direction to the Board respecting the exercise of its powers and the performance of its duties;
    - Establish programs and courses of Aurora College;

o   Accept and hold as a trustee a gift, grant, device or bequest of real property made to or for the purpose of Aurora College and act as a trustee of that property;

In addition, the Minister has the authority to approve some specific actions of the Board of Governors, such as bylaws related to students and tuition fees. Further the Minister, in consultation with the Board of Governors, appoints the College President (S. 19).

The Board of Governors reports to the Minister with respect to College operations and "The Board in exercising its powers and performing its duties under this *Act [the Aurora College Act]*, shall act in accordance with the direction of the Minister (S. 8 (2))." The Board has a list of duties and powers that includes:

- Shall (duties – S. 15):
    o   Determine the policies respecting the administration of Aurora College;
    o   Recommend priorities to the Minister for programs and courses that may be established by the Minister;
    o   Ensure that for each fiscal year an estimate of the revenues and expenditures of Aurora College is prepared that does not result in a deficit;
    o   Present budgets to the Minister in accordance with Part IX of the *Financial Administration Act*;
    o   Maintain in the name of Aurora College accounts with a bank; and
    o   Ensure that all money appropriated, given or bequeathed to or for the purpose of Aurora College and all revenues received under this Act are deposited in a bank to the credit of the College.

- May (powers – S. 16):
    o   Recommend to the Minister the establishment or closure of a campus;
    o   Enter into such agreements on behalf of Aurora College as it considers necessary with any person, association, District Education Authority, Divisional Education Council, council of a municipality or government to carry out the purpose and provisions of this Act and the regulations;
    o   With the approval of the Minister, establish the admission requirements for students of Aurora College;
    o   With the approval of the Minister, determine the tuition fees to be paid by students enrolled in full-time day programs;

- Fix the fees to be paid by students for accommodation in student residences or through boarding programs;
- Determine the other fees to be paid by students and fix the fees;
- Establish committees and assign tasks to them;
- Provide resources for recreational, athletic or sports programs of Aurora College;
- On behalf of Aurora College, join and pay fees to educational associations;
- Permit, on such terms and conditions as it considers proper and for such fees as it may determine, education facilities to be used for community purposes;
- With the approval of the Minister, make bylaws governing the conduct of students, the academic standards to be maintained by students, the loss of privileges by a student, and the expulsion of a student from Aurora College;
- Establish scholarships and any other educational incentive program that the Board considers appropriate;
- Assess the scientific, engineering and technological resources, requirements and potential of the Territories in relation to the need for scientific, engineering and technological advice to help solve social and economic problems in the Territories and promote the social and economic goals of the people of the Territories;
- Initiate such investigations as are necessary to perform the function set out above;
- Recommend research and development programmes to help find the solutions for social and economic problems and to aid in achieving social and economic goals; advise the Minister on any matter referred to in paragraphs (l.1) to (l.3) and, subject to such confidentiality restrictions as may be placed on the Board by the Minister, publish the results of these assessments, investigations and recommendations;
- Establish a research institute within Aurora College;
- Establish a Research Advisory Council and appoint members to it in the prescribed manner; and
- Subject to any terms and conditions imposed by the Minister, do any other thing that may be required for the purpose of Aurora College.

The President of the College is a non-voting member of the Board of Governors by virtue of the office (S. 9), "shall act in accordance with the direction of the Board," (S. 20 (2)) and is a "Deputy Head" for matters related to the staff members of the College (S 20 (3)). The duties of the President include:

- Shall (S. 20):
  - Supervise, administer and direct the operation of Aurora College;
  - Monitor and evaluate the implementation of programs and courses;
  - Ensure the effective and efficient management of the programs and courses of Aurora College;
  - Keep a full and accurate record of the proceedings, transactions and financial affairs of Aurora College;
  - Prepare or cause to be prepared such reports and returns concerning statistical data, budgetary information and reports respecting the operation of the programs and courses of Aurora College as may be requested by the Minister;
  - As requested by the Board, prepare or cause to be prepared proposals with respect to the future needs of Aurora College and submit the proposals to the Board;
  - Provide for student counseling services; and
  - Manage student residences and boarding programs for students.

The duties and responsibilities of the President are complicated to some extent by the fact that while being required to act in accordance with the direction of the Board of Governors, s/he remains a public servant and, as a result, the President is limited in her/his actions by policies and associated requirements placed on senior public servants by the GNWT. On occasion, these two requirements result in the President being placed in positions where s/he must balance conflicting positions of the Board of Governors and the GNWT.

Based upon the legislation, the role of the Department is limited to supporting the Minister with respect to the duties and powers ascribed to the office by the *Act*. The *Act* does not describe any direct reporting relationship between the President and the Minister, or the President and the Department.

The College is subject to Part IX of the *Financial Administration Act* and is a corporate entity listed as a "territorial corporation" in Appendix One of the *Act*. As a result, the College is required to fulfill a number of actions – many of which are also described in the *Aurora College Act* including:

- Preparing and submitting an annual corporate plan (Section 91 (1));
- Submitting an operating annual budget (Section 92 (1));
- Submitting an annual capital budget (Section 93 (1));
- Preparing and submit and annual report to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (Sections 96 and 100) within 90 days of the end of the College's fiscal year that includes:
  - A statement of activities;
  - Financial statements;

- o A report of the auditors; and
  - o Any other information required by the Ministers responsible for the *Financial Administration Act* or the *Aurora College Act*.
- Having its accounts audited on an annual basis by the Auditor General for Canada (Section 98 and 99 (1) (a)).

It should also be noted that the *Financial Administration Act* also requires the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment "lay a copy of the annual report…before the Legislative Assembly at the first opportunity following receipt of the report" (Section 100 (2), *Financial Administration Act*) thus establishing an additional "accountability linkage".

Since the passage of both *Acts*, the Department (and the GNWT as a whole) has put in place a number of policies that provide further guidance with respect to College operations and accountability. In general, these policies have restricted College activities to a greater extent than is suggested by the original legislation.

For example, the College is required by the GNWT to follow its human resource policies and practices. These practices, which are designed to meet the needs of the GNWT as a whole, provide little flexibility for an organization that has some specific requirements that may not be effectively met by government policies and practices. Over the years, the College can point to a number of examples, such as the assignment of position classifications for College instructional positions that have proved highly problematic in the College's efforts to establish an appropriate post-secondary operating environment.

8.   Observations and Recommendations

This section of the report includes a discussion of observations made during the Project and recommendations intended to address some of the gaps and issues that currently exist with respect to College activities. The sections below include observations related to the College and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and are intended to suggest ways in which College and departmental performance might be improved.

Figure 2

Report Observations and Recommendations by Category
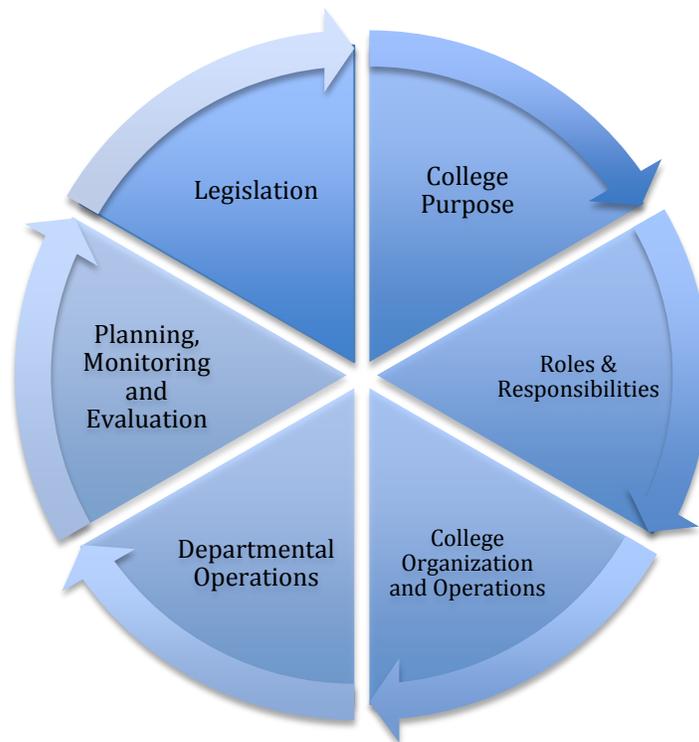
College Purpose

Possibly the greatest challenge facing the College is that of rationalizing its purpose against the resources that are available. The mandate of the College, established through legislation and government policy, is very broad. As it was described by several Project informants, "The College is expected to do something nice for everybody and do all of it very well – regardless of the challenges". In addition, because of the nature of its business, public expectations related to the College's mandate are quite high.

In talking with staff of the Department, Aurora College and those linked to the College, there is a strong sense that the purpose assigned to the College is, particularly given the fact that it is unlikely that the College's resources will be significantly increased, very difficult to achieve.

It is also true that the College's purpose is addressed by a logical grouping of program and service responsibilities. It is logical that community and campus-based developmental studies programming leads to employment related training - including apprenticeship, certificate, diploma and degree programming. It is also logical that diploma programs are linked to degree programs. It is logical that degree and postgraduate programming (in selected fields) is linked to research activities.

At the core, the debate is about the future direction for the College and the level of support that the GNWT is prepared to commit to this direction. Some questions that need to be addressed include:

- How can the College best serve the learning needs of NWT residents?
- Should the College become more focused and place a greater emphasis on college-level programming (e.g. industrial and trades certification, certificate, diploma and degree programming) and limit its involvement in developmental studies activities?
- Should the College expand its general arts and sciences programming to encourage greater enrolment in university level programming?
- Can the College expand its community-based programs?
- What level of financial support will be available to the College to support its activities and will this support be stable and ongoing?
- Should the College strengthen its linkages with universities in Canada and across the circumpolar north as suggested by the development of the University of the Arctic?

These are not easy questions to answer? But without clarity the College and the Department can expect to continue to struggle in setting priorities and making decisions. As well, without broad, public understanding of the purpose and expectations for the College, the organization can expect to face criticism about its program and service delivery and credibility as a post-secondary education institution.

Recommendations:

1. *The Minister, in cooperation with the College Board of Governors, examine the College's purpose with the intention of confirming a long-term direction for the institution.*

2. Input on the College's direction be sought from the public, governments, students, College clients and legislators.

3. The College's upcoming strategic plan should describe the long-term direction for the institution and outline actions to be taken to support this direction.

Roles and Responsibilities

Following a discussion of purpose, the focus of attention can quickly be shifted to that of roles and responsibilities. Over the years, the issue of roles and responsibilities has been a point of some confusion and frustration. With the continuing development of Aurora College, and with the institution's increasing involvement in degree programming and research, this challenge is likely to remain, unless greater clarity can be brought to the matter.

Generally, the roles and responsibilities described in the *Aurora College Act* are reasonable and appropriately assigned. Some changes are recommended, but overall the framing of roles and responsibilities establishes a good basis for discussion. Many of the issues and problems that arise with respect to roles and responsibilities arise as a result of behaviours of Departmental staff members as they try to support the Minister in his role while meeting government expectations related to internal government systems and processes. The intentions in these individuals are usually fine, but the execution of actions often results in inappropriate expectations and miscommunication. The same can be said for College staff as they attempt to meet the goals and objectives described for College.

Effective College operations and the College's long-term success are dependent upon a close and collaborative relationships between the Minister and the Board, the Board and President, the President and the Department. To this end, the sections below review the recent experiences with respect to these relationships.

Relationship: The Minister and the Board of Governors

Historically the relationship between the Minister and Board of Governors has been one of periodic communication and discussion of issues. The nature of the relationship has continued in a similar manner over the past few years.

Members of the Board of Governors suggest that regular meetings with the Minister are important, so that the Minister can understand both the successes and challenges the Board faces in directing the operation of the College. The Board members point to the unique nature of College operations, the changing

financial and operational environment faced by the College, as well as the critical need for Ministerial support in building the College's credibility. As well, the College's accountability is enhanced by regular and consistent communications.

The Board formally communicates with the Minister by providing a number of critical documents for the Minister's review and approval, in accordance with the *Aurora College* and the *Financial Administration Acts*. These include, an annual budget submission, an annual report and, until recently an annual program and services proposal. In addition, the College has tabled a long-term strategic plan, a multi-year business plan and the required bylaws with the Minister for his approval. Taken together, these documents provide extensive information related to College planning and operations, College successes and challenges – they form the basis for College accountability.

There are however, some aspects of the relationship between the Minister and the Board that should be considered. Probably the most notable, is that of Board member appointment. The *Aurora College Act* describes how membership of the Board is distributed.   In broad terms, Board's membership includes representatives from each of the regions of the NWT, plus a College staff and a College student representative. The President, as noted previously, is a member of the Board by virtue of the office.   The difficulty is that the appointment process for Board members continues to be an extended process; frequently taking a number of months – the result is that the Board of Governors frequently has member vacancies for relatively long periods of time.

A second challenge for both the Minister and the Board is to ensure that the "right" issues are being considered and that there is a continuing focus on strategic matters as opposed to simply addressing operational issues as they arise. This is a common challenge for Ministers and Boards of Governors, found in all jurisdictions. The challenge of maintaining a relationship based on broad oversight and a strategic vision can be particularly difficult in the NWT where "personal matters" or individual issues can, at times, become "larger" and seem "more urgent" than they might in a jurisdiction with a larger population. While such matters require attention and resolution, they cannot be permitted to define the relationship between the Minister and the Board. If they do, then the effectiveness of the Minister in her/his role and the role of the Board of Governors may become compromised.

Relationship: The Board of Governors – President
The Board of Governors has a number of defined responsibilities under the relevant acts. Foremost amongst these is establishing the operational direction and broad operational goals for the institution. In addition, the Board sets the objectives to be achieved during a specified period of time. The President is the

person charged with ensuring that the duties and responsibilities are carried out in an appropriate, an effective and an efficient manner. Because of this linkage in roles, the relationship between the Board and the President is critical and the College's success is dependent upon the relationship.

As with any relationship, there are risks and challenges. With a properly structured relationship, the risks and challenges associated with the relationship can be minimized. In this case, as the President reports directly to the Board, there should be a level of clarity with respect to authority and responsibilities. Board members, as a collective, need to be aware of their role in directing and supervising the President and make certain that they act on these responsibilities. They must be prepared to question the President on all matters related to the Board's duties and responsibilities.

Over the past few year's the relationship between the Board and President may have lacked the role of "critical analysis" that is so important to Board success. In hindsight, it is evident that Board members likely should have asked more questions with respect to, for example, the College reorganization. In addition, the Board members likely should have sought some additional external advice on the matter – something that they could have done, but likely would have strained their relationship with the President.

The Board has the responsibility to effectively define the relationship with the President, within the context of legislation.   This suggests the need for established processes that can ensure that the Board is well informed of the President's plans as well as monitoring the President's activities on a periodic basis. Finally, the Board requires an effective mechanism to regularly, and in a formal manner, evaluate the President's performance.

Relationship: College President and the Department
The relationship between the President (and the College staff members) and the Department is complex. Over the years this relationship has been the most difficult to maintain and nurture. There are a number of reasons why the relationship has proved challenging.

First, there needs to be a clear understanding of the purpose and goals of the Department and the College.   Confusion as to purpose, coupled with misunderstood demands by one party or the other can quickly result in frustration and communications breakdown. This has occurred many, many times over the years. The result has been that staff members of both the College and the Department who are interacting with each other, become frustrated or disinterested in the relationship because they do not understand what the other party is trying to achieve. All involved in supporting the relationship, need to

have a broad understanding of the overall goals and intent, as well as the operating environment within which both organizations are operated.

Second, the College is a unique organization in the NWT. Its structure, like almost all college structures across Canada, is at "arms length" from the GNWT. College activities are dependent on residents choosing to attend the institution, unlike the circumstances that define mandatory enrolment at the primary and secondary education levels. As a result, the College must focus on attracting students by providing access, offering high quality programming and services that meet the needs of those enrolling in its programs. The organization is dependent upon a number of funding sources including, most critically, the monies that are appropriated to the College by the Legislative Assembly through the Department's Main Estimates.

The Department has a defined role in support of the Minister and to do this, must fulfill a number of administrative and bureaucratic activities associated with GNWT processes and supporting the College. These include developing options for the Minister's consideration related to broad directions in support of adult and post-secondary education. In addition, the Departmental staff members involved with College matters have a number of administrative responsibilities related to ensuring that appropriate information and data is collected, summarized and submitted in support of College activities.

It is also important to note that in some cases, Departmental staff members hold decision-making authority over funds that may or may not be allocated to the College in support of program delivery. In many cases, decisions regarding allocation occur on a "project" basis and do not occur until shortly before (or during) the College's academic year. This approach requires additional administrative effort by both College and Departmental staff that could be eliminated with more effective and comprehensive program and service planning.

Because of the multiplicity of roles held by the Department and the unique nature of the College's activities, it becomes relatively simple for there to be confusion in roles. For example, Departmental staff may expect that the College personnel should be completing administrative tasks that, in fact, should be those of Departmental personnel (e.g. asking College staff to complete internal GNWT documentation) or College staff may think that the Departmental personnel are interfering with College operations when questions are asked related to the College's operational responsibilities (e.g. questioning college decision-making related to student accommodations). This confusion can be profound and unless all of those involved in the interaction are clear about the differences in the responsibilities of the organizations, small issues can quickly escalate and become barriers to an effective relationship.

A third influence on the relationship relates to respect for the position of the President and the Deputy Minister and their organizations. The incumbents of these positions run two separate and related organizations. Neither can be fully successful without the success of the other. Staff members of the two organizations need to respect this fact and the protocols associated with dealing with each organization. Clarity, careful advance planning and internal direction is required to reduce conflicts of this nature.

A fourth influence on the relationship relates to trust. If a level of trust is built and maintained, then the relationship can flexibly adjust to pressures of day-to-day activity. If trust is limited there is a very limited willingness by either party to adjust or "go out on a limb" for the other. Given the differing roles of the Department and the College, it is fairly easy for trust to be broken and for communications to break down. This doesn't benefit either party, but will occur if trust is not developed and maintained.

While recent efforts by senior management in Department and the College have had a tremendously positive impact, it is clear that the relationship between the Department and the College suffered through a period of weakness between 2010 and 2012. Much of the weakness can be attributed to the factors outlined above and the failure to effectively address these matters in the past.

Recommendations:

4. *Establish a formalized practice that results in the Minister meeting with the full Board of Governors at least once per year (possibly, on the occasion of program and services approval or budget approval).*

5. *The Board Chair meet with the Minister a minimum of three times per year, in addition to the Minister's full meeting with the Board that is described in the above recommendation.*

6. *Under the Minister's leadership, seek opportunities for the Board of Governors to directly brief legislators regarding the College's plans and activities on a regular basis.*

7. *Establish a Board of Governors member appointment process that will result in new (or reappointed) members being appointed within 30 calendar days of a vacancy occurring.*

8. *Maintain the letter of understanding on communications between the College and the Department. Review the existing document within the year and make any appropriate adjustments.*

9. *The Board of Governors approve a policy to guide the annual review of the President. The policy should ensure that comment and advice on the President's performance is sought from the Minister, College personnel and others that the Board of Governors may feel are important to the review process.*

10. *As part of the policy guiding the annual review of the President, the President be required to present the Board of Governors with a work plan, describing specific goals and objectives for the Board's approval.*

11. *In addition to regular reports at meetings, the President provide the Board with a written progress summary related to the annual work plan on a semi-annual basis.*

12. *The Board of Governors' Chairperson discuss the President's appraisal with the Minister once it has been completed.*

13. *Convene, on a periodic basis, selected Departmental and College staff to discuss how communications between the two organizations could be made more effective and how to eliminate unnecessary contacts.*

14. *Invite the College President to make a presentation on College activities to the Departmental Senior Management Team at least twice per year.*

15. *Request that the College President be invited to make a presentation to the Deputy Ministers Group at least twice per year.*

College Organization and Operations

Organizational structures generally work best if they reflect the organization's purpose, goals and operational environment. Indeed these three factors have strongly influenced the College's structure over the years. This being said, at times the purpose, goals or operational environment of an organization change. As and when this occurs, it is important to review and assess an organization's structure to ensure that it remains effective and efficient in what can be a "changed world".

An organization's structure can also be strongly influenced by assumptions and expectations, both those created inside an organization and those placed upon the organization by others.

As discussed earlier in this report, the College's organizational model has developed and changed over time. The College, during the past forty (40) years, has been organized as a centralized, single campus, location with limited outreach; then it was decentralized with the establishment of multiple campuses and a network of community learning centres. Over the past three years the College has undergone a further change by first planning, then implementing a revised organization structure based around the concept of "academic schools".

The goal of the revised structure was to establish an organization design that more closely matches that found in other post-secondary institutions. The past President of Aurora College led the development and initial implementation of a revised organization structure.

It is important to note the College had been grappling with the organizational issues addressed in the recent College reorganization for a number of years. College files and former College staff, describe a number of discussions and workshops held over the past twenty years, during which potential organization changes were reviewed and issues such as program consistency, building academic credibility, ensuring College responsiveness were discussed.

Planning the Organization Design Change

Before discussing the College's current organizational design it is important to consider the planning that occurred prior to the implementation of the revised design. Much of the frustration and confusion that exist within the College and the Department at the present time have their "roots" in the way in which the new organization design was developed and then implemented.

The revised structure was developed over a period of about twelve to eighteen months – this period is marked at its beginning by senior management discussions late in the summer of 2010 and implementation that began early in

2012. During the development of the revised organization structure, senior College staff members had some limited involvement in identification of organizational issues and challenges. As well, some senior managers had an opportunity to provide limited comment on organizational options. The opportunities provided were few and comments made were not necessarily reflected in the revised organization design. The Minister, the Department, Aboriginal organizations, the Legislative Standing Committee all were briefed, at a general level, about the College's intention to make changes. It appears that these briefings did not extend to detailed discussions of the implications of the planned changes. The Board of Governors was briefed throughout the development of the revised organization design.

There was no formal "change mandate" approved for the organizational change by the Board of Governors. General comments related to the informal "mandate" included:

- Changes were intended to increase the similarity between Aurora College's organization structure and that of other colleges across Canada;
- The changes could not result in additional costs; and
- A senior management presence was to be located at each campus, even though the incumbents would not have authority over campus staff.

There was no organizational change implementation plan that described, in detail, the planned changes, the impacts (positive and negative) of the changes, the timeframe for change, the risks associated with the planned change and the expected results that would occur once the organizational change was complete. One would have expected that the Board of Governors would have received, carefully considered and then passed judgment on a plan, before its implementation.

In addition, there was no formal communications plan describing how College staff, the Department and key interested parties would develop an understanding of the substantial changes that were to occur. As a result of this oversight some key issues were not addressed and a positive consensus about the change was not developed.

As a final note, it is clear that the organization redesign planning process was, for the most part, a "top down" exercise. Staff within the College did not feel engaged or involved in the process and these feelings are still very "real" within the organization. Many of the staff responding to survey questions indicated that they still don't fully understand why change was necessary. In addition, the failure to develop consensus regarding the planned changes (and the resulting

impact of the planned change on specific individuals) directly resulted in the loss of a number of key staff members. These losses have subsequently proved quite damaging to the College's ongoing operations.

The Revised Organizational Design

Commenting upon the organization design becomes, to some extent, a question of determining which aspects of the College's operations and which organizational attributes have the greatest importance. For example, it one believes that the adult and post-secondary education needs of NWT regions vary widely, that the College needs to be immediately responsive to regional and local needs and that these organizational attributes are of greater importance than consistent program quality, then the regional campus organization design that was in place for the past twenty years, would probably be a preferable structure. However, if academic credibility, consistency of programming and higher academic standards are of the greatest priority, then the "academic schools" concept that is currently in place is likely to provide the best option. Of course, the answer to these questions will, for many people be "both"! This is the organizational problem that the College faces.

Creation of Academic Schools

As described earlier in this report the College's new academic structure is organized around six "schools". Each school is responsible for all programs within its mandate regardless of where the program is delivered. It is expected that each school will understand and identify training needs related to their mandate and develop all programming within an academic planning framework established by the College (e.g. established entrance criteria, program and course outlines, consistent evaluation criteria, etc.). The Chairs of the schools are located at various campuses and all report to a Vice President. Five of the Chairs report to the Vice President, Education and Training (Fort Smith) with the sixth, the Chair of Developmental Studies (Fort Smith) reporting to the Vice President Community and Extensions (Yellowknife). In addition, the Vice President Community and Extensions also supervises regional program heads who are responsible for the community adult education program and supervise community adult educators in their respective regions.

All instructional staff members, regardless of their location, report through to the chair of the school responsible for their program. This means that the instructional staff for, for example the Teacher Education Program in Fort Smith report through to the Chair of the School of Education as do those delivering the Teacher Education Program at the Aurora Campus in Inuvik.

In the longer term, the organization design is intended to include the creation of an "Academic Council" to guide the development of new programming and the

maintenance of academic standards. Academic Councils can be found, in one form or another at many other community colleges and at all universities. This forum has not been established at this point and the details of its mandate have not been described.

In addition to the academic structure, the College also has two functional units, Student Services and Finance. The Directors of each of functional units are located in Fort Smith. Campus staff members in each of these units report to local campus managers who in turn report to the respective unit Directors. The new structure also includes one position titled a "Campus Director", but this position only has direct authority over the student services activities at the Aurora Campus.

The previous structure included Campus Directors at each campus. These individuals oversaw all campus operations, and all staff at the campus had a reporting relationship through to the Campus Director. As a result, the direct supervision for almost all College campus-based employees occurred at the local level. In the previous structure, distant supervision was generally limited to those most senior of College personnel (the Campus Directors). The new structure requires a much large number of staff members, in both the academic schools and functional units to be supervised at a distance.

Based upon all of the contacts with individuals that occurred during this project, the vast majority of those interviewed believe that the creation of schools within the College was a good idea. There is broad agreement that schools should result in a strengthening of the quality and consistency of the College's programming. As well, many also believe that the new organizational structure is preferred in that it more closely reflects structures found in post-secondary institutions elsewhere in Canada. It would also be fair to say, that many believe the establishment of schools is one step in a longer-term effort to build the strength and recognition of the College as a postsecondary institution serving the residents of the NWT.

Community and Extensions Programming
A Vice President leads the new Community and Extensions Division of the College. Reporting to the Vice President is the Chair of the School of Developmental Studies as well as five Program Heads (each supervising community adult educators in one of five regions). Responses to this new structure, received during the Project, were limited and were generally positive. Comments from informants suggested that the new structure creates a comprehensive, territory-wide structure of College staff members who are generally involved in similar activities.

The roles of the staff members of Community and Extensions is particularly important to the College, if it is going to continue to maintain as one of its priorities the delivery of community based education and training programs. Staff members of the division have first hand knowledge of community needs, potential students and the infrastructure and other supports that are available to support education and training program delivery at the community level.

The new community and extensions structure is separate from the academic schools. To some extent the Community and Extensions Division staff members, may become "clients" of the College's schools, particularly in cases where programming needs other than Developmental Studies, are indentified as being required for communities.

Indeed, if the College is to fulfill its responsibilities related to community-based programming, the community adult educators will likely need to play an increased role in such activities as community training assessments, liaison with local industry and groups as well as program coordination and support. These duties would be in addition to their duties instructing Developmental Studies programs.

With a commitment to community level programming and an expanding role for community adult educators and the regional Community and Extensions Program Heads, the College will need to determine how priorities for program funding are determined and how the resources currently held by the academic schools are allocated to support community program requests.

Aurora Research Institute
The Aurora Research Institute remains a separate organizational unit. While it links to other College units to conduct some of its work, it functions with considerable success in its current form. The unit was not directly affected by the College's redesign and operation in its current manner will ensure that its mandate and responsibilities continue to be met. This said, activities such as cross-appointments of staff between academic schools and ARI as well as leading an increase in staff and student involvement in research activities can be expected in the immediate future.

Status of College Redesign Implementation
Implementation of the current College organization structure has been underway for over a year. Reporting relationships have been changed, position descriptions rewritten and some vacant positions have been filled under the new position descriptions. A number of position descriptions are yet to be evaluated by the Department of Human Services (GNWT).

The College reports that they are experiencing a number of challenges related to position evaluation. It appears that the time required for position description development and subsequent evaluation is much longer than the College had initially anticipated.

The College's budget has been reorganized to recognize the revised structure and financial reporting based on the structure began in 2011/2012.

In summary, the implementation of the revised structure is advanced and it would be very difficult to return to the old structure without considerable investment of time and effort. At this point the stabilization of the structure and strengthening programs and student services are the highest priority.

The Risks and Implications of the Redesign
Notwithstanding the positive views that have resulted from the establishment of schools there are a number of matters that still need to be considered and possibly addressed by the College with respect to the new organization design. The College Board of Governors and administration of the College are generally aware of these matters – but solutions may be complex given the commitment to the schools concept.

Campus Operations
One of the strengths of the College, in the past, has been the campus structure. The structure permitted those on the campus to operate as a team, solve problems as a team and enjoy the results of their efforts with the involvement of students and clients that they serve in the region. This was in addition to the collective efforts of the staff as members of the College as a whole. The new structure has, to a great degree eliminated the potential for this to occur in that:

- There is no senior person with leadership and oversight responsibilities with respect to the Campus operations;
- No person at the campus serves as the primary contact for those outside the institution wishing to contact a local/regional senior College representative;
- A number of instructional leaders now report to someone who is at a distance from the campus causing a level of disengagement with others in other academic and/or functional areas;
- Problem solving frequently requires the involvement of College staff who are not at the campus and do not have sufficient understanding or background related to the issues and challenges being experienced at the campus;

- Problem solving now frequently requires competition for the time and attention of decision-makers responsible for College-wide interests;
- Financial controls for programming are held within programs and there is limited flexibility to address financial shortfalls without having to compete for funding at the College level; and
- Signing authorities are frequently at a distance from the program activity.

This situation has had a serious impact and in some cases directly affected the quality of the campus experience, for both students and College staff members. Some of the issues that have occurred may be resolved as the situation becomes more stable, but the inherent implications of the revised structure will weaken each campuses ability to function as a single unit. This should be seen as a serious concern for the College and actions should be taken to address these concerns.

Program Planning, Innovation and Responsiveness
The revised structure places responsibility for program planning, innovation and responsiveness to requests for contracts and action, primarily upon the Chairs of the Schools and the Vice Presidents. This should permit the College to develop detailed (multi-year) plans for delivery of programming in each of the areas for which the Schools are responsible. As well, from an academic perspective, the new structure can be expected to encourage program consistency between campuses. However, as one informant indicated during discussion of the operation of schools, "Each NWT region is a bit different and programming needs vary. The College will need to understand that not everything is or can be the same."

The challenge of the new structure will be that in many cases the Chairs will not be immediately available to identify needs, meet with clients regarding potential contracting agreements or have direct participation in the local planning and delivery of programming. Further, they may value the delivery of existing programs rather than risking time and effort on programming ideas that may or may not result in College programming.

A significant risk to the College is that, over time, the Vice Presidents and Chairs will become increasingly focused on the delivery of programming at the campus at which they are located - even after there are demonstrated needs in other campuses or communities. This behaviour would result in the majority of time and effort being dedicated to campus based activities and could result in a slow "centralization" of program delivery to the exclusion of other interests and needs. Quite frankly, it is easier to deal with what you know and what you see on a daily basis, than it is to look for additional work elsewhere. This was a major issue for

the College in the past and there is no reason to believe that the risk of this behaviour has diminished with the new structure.

One of the College's strengths over the past few decades has been that has had people in place to work closely with third party interests - employers, Aboriginal governments, regional interest groups and others to identify programming needs and respond quickly to such requests. Unless mechanisms are put in place to continue to promote such linkages there is a strong risk that the new structure will lead to a reduction in College responsiveness to local and regional needs. Should this occur the College's credibility, as the post-secondary education institution serving the needs of northerners will be threatened. The College cannot afford to permit this to occur.

Internal Reporting Relationships

The College's current organization structure results in a "web" of reporting relationships, all of which are consistent within the context of the organization design, but when taken together create a level of complexity and confusion that is challenging to navigate, both for those inside and those outside the institution.

As indicated earlier, within the academic schools, authority flows from Vice President to the Chair and then down to instructional staff, wherever they are located. The same is true for staff in the functional units – Director, down to the staff at the various campuses. What this means for the institution, in practical terms, is that three instructors, sitting next to each other at say, Aurora Campus, could be reporting to Chairs located at three different campuses (Business and Leadership – Inuvik, Health and Human Services – Yellowknife and Trades, Apprenticeship and Industrial Training – Thebacha) even if they are all trying to solve the same problem. Problem solving in such a scenario becomes very complex. To work, the organization structure will require constant and continually effective communications (at a distance) by all involved. Even in the best of circumstances this is likely to become problematic.

The situation can be even more difficult for a student who wishes to appeal an academic matter in that s/he may well need to deal with a Program Chair who the student does not know, has never seen and may only meet at graduation.

For an individual outside the College, finding the right contact is equally problematic. Informants for the Project from governments and agencies commonly indicated that they did not know whom to contact for various matters and, possibly more importantly, they indicated that they wanted to talk to someone locally who could answer their questions and take any actions required without having to wait for guidance from elsewhere.

The current confusion will likely improve with time. But, it can be argued that the current College structure creates significant risk for inconsistency in the treatment of staff, students and partners. These are high value risks for the College.

Service to Students
In addition to instruction, the College provides other student support services including, student registration, accommodation, maintenance of academic records and limited counseling and wellness activities. All student services are provided at College's campus locations. A position responsible for student services is found at each campus (the position is titled "campus manager" at the Thebacha and the North Slave campuses and is titled "campus director" at the Aurora Campus). These individuals manage the student service functions available locally and report to the Director of Student (the two "campus managers") or the President (the campus director) located at the Thebacha Campus.

The College surveys students regarding their satisfaction with student services. The students' survey responses at the end of the 2011/2012 year were reported in the College's annual report and were generally positive. While there was some room for improvement, students were very positive about the Student Success Centres, computer labs, academic counseling and library services, majority ranking the services as "Extremely good" or "very good". Students were slightly less positive about personal counseling and admissions/registration but the vast majority of students ranked these services as "good" or better.

Since the reorganization, student services have proven somewhat problematic in the view of many of the informants (staff members) to the Project. Reports from campuses indicate that the loss of experienced staff, difficulties in locating and employing replacement staff and limited coordination and support for student services staff have weakened student services over the past 18 months. Some of these issues may be related to poor transition planning during the organizational change process, while other aspects are likely related to the challenges created as a result of removing campus-based problem-solving authority. Regardless of the cause of these concerns, addressing weaknesses in student services needs to be a high priority for the institution.

It was made clear during the Project that the College's Student Records System is at the end of its life. The system is old, outdated and difficult to manipulate and maintain. All those interacting with the system can describe its limitations and describe the need for a better system that has considerably enhanced capabilities. An improved system would likely address some of the issues

currently being faced by instructional staff and would lead to increased simplicity and more effective information gathering and College accountability.

As well, the centralization of decision-making related to the registration function - at a distance from many of the College's students - appears to be resulting in considerable backlog and delays in student registration, student academic record (recording of marks) and related activities. College faculty and students are reporting a good deal of frustration in these areas. This impacts on staff morale and unresolved student related issues could be expected to reduce student satisfaction and, ultimately the College's attractiveness to students.

Creation of Process at the Expense of Program Related Activity
It is clear, based on comments from College staff, that there were some inconsistencies in some campus processes in the past. Each campus did some things a bit differently. Generally, these differences were relatively small and were the result of years of experience and guidance from, for example auditors or partnered post-secondary institutions. To address the inconsistencies the College has centralized decision-making related to its administrative activities. This action has resulted in greater consistency, but it has raised concerns amongst many of the College's staff members.

Throughout the Project informants raised a number of complaints regarding the College's revised administrative structures. Specific concerns related to onerous administrative processes, slow response times for approvals and limited access to technical support were all raised as irritants. Others suggested further training is needed to equip staff to navigate the processes that have been put in place. As one informant put it, "After a while, you just stop waiting for a response and you jump the queue by going straight to the top. This doesn't help anyone in the long term – but it gets the job done". Given the frequency with which these concerns were raised during the project, the College administration may wish to examine approaches that could increase the speed of decision-making and ensure that appropriate supports are quickly available for staff members who have questions or operational challenges to be solved.

The authority for many administrative decisions is now at a distance from many instructional staff members. As well, it appears that the number of administrative personnel supporting instructional staff members appear to have been reduced. At the same time instructional staff report that the College has increased the administrative requirements for many program and instructional staff.

These changes have resulted in considerable concern and frustration. The College should ask itself whether the current processes are resulting in the best use of its instructional staff and senior managers' time and whether there is room

to adjust some of the processes to relieve at least some of the administrative pressures now placed on instruction personnel.

Evaluation of the Organizational Design Changes
Effective organization redesign projects generally include a phase related to evaluation of the change and documentation of the impacts of the change on organizational goals and activities. Because there was no formal implementation plan for the College's reorganization, there is nothing to measure the impact of the changes against.

However, given the concerns expressed during this Project, it might be useful for the College to undertake an assessment of the redesign and confirm any actions that it wishes to take to address identified weaknesses. The information in this report could serve as a useful starting point for such a review.

Recommendations:

16. *The College's reorganization is well advanced. Returning to the previous organization design is not a reasonable course of action. However, additional adjustments to the structure are required in order for the College to effectively and efficiently serve its students and meet the needs of its clients.*

17. *The Board of Governors direct the establishment of a process to seek out and document the concerns of College staff members regarding the new structure. Through the process identify any changes that may be required to improve the organization structure over the next 12 to 18 months. Use this process as a mechanism to assess the impact of the redesign.*

18. *Continue efforts to immediately staff all vacant or temporarily filled senior management positions.*

19. *The Board of Governors with the assistance of the President should consider some changes including:*

    a. *Identifying a campus lead to serve as the "face" of the campus. This individual be given oversight responsibilities for all activities operating on the campus and in the region(s) being supported by the campus. As well, the individual should serve as a primary, initial contact with governments, industry and other organizations interested in partnering with the College.*

b. *Establishing a funding mechanism to support the person with campus lead responsibilities.*

20. *Training in "supervision techniques at a distance" be provided to all staff with duties that require supervising staff members who reside in communities other than that of the supervisor.*

21. *The College create an internal program planning processes that requires all schools and functional units to prepare multi-year plans. The planning processes include direction that all plans must capture program and service delivery needs, costs, etc. for all NWT regions. Once consolidated and approved, the plans should be used as one tool in the measurement of the Vice Presidents and Chairs performance.*

22. *The College confirm the community adult educator roles related to the conduct of community needs assessments; collaboration with community level governments, businesses, the school system and the College's academic schools; as well as extension program identification and facilitation.*

23. *The College place an immediate priority on resolving service level issues in student services.*

24. *The College consider enhancing support in key student service areas either through resource allocation, changes in reporting relationships, administrative simplification or other means.*

25. *Training and support be provided to student services staff, and where necessary instructional personnel, to ensure that all aspects of the student services functions can operate without disruption (from the student's perspective).*

26. *A new student records system capable of responding to the College and Department's information needs to secured and put into service as soon as possible.*

27. *The College set service response time standards be established for all key internal processes and these standards be used to measure the performance of those responsible for responding to requests;*

28. *The College undertake a review to identify ways to reduce administrative requirements in a manner that does not threaten accountability, and streamlines decision-making.*

29. *The College maintain and, if possible, expand its internal efforts to communicate consistent information about College activities to staff members.*

Departmental Operations

The staff members of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment provide support for the Minister so that he may effectively carry out his role(s) related to Aurora College. The activities associated with supporting the Minister's role(s) include:

- Developing, for the Minister's consideration, a broad framework of goals and objectives related to post-secondary education and training that can be used to communicate the GNWT's intentions and guide decision-making;
- Drafting legislation, describing the authorities and limitations associated with College activities;
- In accordance with the legislation and GNWT policies, carrying out the tasks associated with contributing funding to the College;
- Collecting information regarding adult learning needs and communicating this to the College;
- Developing and maintaining a curriculum for adult basic education and literacy programming;
- Supervising apprenticeship training in accordance with the requirements of the *Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupational Certification Act;*
- Administering contribution and grant programs to which the College may be an applicant;
- Developing, for the Minister's consideration, accountability frameworks in accordance with the requirements of various legislation and GNWT policies;
- Analyzing information and documentation provided by the College; and
- Providing general advice to the Minister regarding College operations.

By their nature, these activities are reflective of the roles played by Ministers and Departments with responsibilities for colleges across Canada.

In completing these tasks the Department has a number of challenges – several of which are discussed in the following sub-sections.

The View of College Staff Members

From a generalized perspective, a number of those with the College view the Department's current style of engagement as attempting to "control" the College through administrative processes and paperwork as opposed to providing strategic oversight and leadership. This perspective should be of concern to the Department because it appears to be inconsistent with the spirit and intent of the legislation and it is likely creating a climate in which risk aversion rather than innovation and creativity are predominant characteristics of College behaviour.

This view is not new and to some extent it is the result of the failures to resolve a number of the relationship questions discussed in this report. The Department must fulfill its obligations in support of the Minister and the structures and processes of government. However, there is no reason that the College must operate in exactly the same manner as government – assuming the Department and GNWT are prepared to understand, respect and accept the flexibility permitted by legislation and requirements of the College operations. Indeed, variance from government processes may be most appropriate when the demands of the Department are limiting the College's abilities to carry out its primary duties related to the delivery of programming to students or other clients.

Finally, there is likely some "inadvertent truth" to the points raised by College staff members with respect to Departmental behaviours and there is likely some "fiction" as well. As a result, it is important to recognize that this view is, at least, an element of the foundation of the relationship between the Department and the College and must be addressed if the situation is to be improved and the Department is to be in a position to better achieve its strategic goals.

GNWT Choices – Balancing Other Priorities with College Activities

The GNWT, through the Cabinet, sets broad direction for all departments. The nature of this direction is that it frequently results in a "balancing" of priorities. Sometimes the balancing is directly described – other times is it assumed and remains unstated. To use a non-education example, in approving a wilderness area, the Cabinet makes a choice to favor wilderness protection over non-renewable resources interests. This is one of the jobs of a government.

The same is true with respect to College matters. The GNWT limits College activities in some cases so that it may further promote other priorities. For example, the GNWT requires the College to use GNWT service department services to promote overall economies of scale for the government – even

though some of these services (or the resulting service levels) may limit or hinder the College's ability to achieve its defined and approved goals.

The concern that arises is whether these "balancing" efforts become part of the "fabric" of general activities, sometimes lose their "identity" and do not get analyzed even when they may have a significant negative impact on effective operations.

For the College, there are a number of these matters – for example, GNWT limitations on College program delivery locations, limited infrastructure support, unresolved issues related to College involvement in research activities and specifications related to the placement of staff positions, all limit the College's effectiveness in carrying out its mandate. The Department needs to identify and consider these matters, in cooperation with the College, to determine whether it would be appropriate to propose changes in the "balances" that currently exist. These would not be easy discussions, but if the College is to be successful over the longer term, some of the current limitations are likely to have to be changed.

Limited Resources Supporting the Department – College Relationship
The Department has limited resources dedicated to supporting the Department – College relationship. Most of the Departmental staff involved in College matters spends the majority of their time dealing with other departmental matters and a relatively small portion of their time working on College related activities. For these individuals the College is another "file" and the priority of dealing with the file is largely dependent on a range of other influences. Many of these individuals do excellent work, but their commitment and dedication to College matters is compromised as a result of competing work requirements. As a result, the attention brought to College matters is at times overly limited.

The single Departmental staff member whose time is dedicated to College matters and maintains a solid and productive working relationship with College personnel. Notwithstanding the solid nature of this relationship, it is important to note that this relationship is primarily an administrative relationship – rather than one of strategic oversight, direction and support.

The limited resource allocation might not be a problem if the College was given broad flexibility in its operations, but at least in the recent past, this has clearly not been the case. The College is being required to "check back" with the Department before it acts on a variety of matters ranging from the mundane to the urgent – from press releases to legal matters. These requirements simply

compound the problem of maintaining a strategic focus, by "cluttering" the relationship with what are, for the most part, relatively low priority matters.

The presence of limited staff resources with direct responsibility or experience in College matters results in several challenges for the Department. First, when issues or problems arise, marshalling the human resources with the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to address the issues can become problematic. As well, it takes time to do this – and frequently the associated delays result in matters becoming more "urgent" as they remain unresolved.

A second concern related to limited staff resources, is that the "corporate experience and knowledge" of the Department remains limited and the absence or departure of the single "expert", for any reason, can cause a gap in the Department's capacity to understand the full substance of issues and act effectively. This, in turn, can result in a failure to advance key issues, processes that are essential to College success.

The limited resources dedicated to College matters can be read two ways. One way, is that the College does well on its own, so there is no need for the Department to dedicate additional resources to support College matters. The contrasting view however, is that the Department views College activities as a lower priority and, as a result, primarily addresses College matters through the use of generalists, at least as it relates to broad strategic matters. The Department has been struggling with these choices for a number of years. Given the very broad mandate of the Department and the necessity to support a wide range of somewhat divergent activities it may not be particularly surprising that the dedication of additional resources in support of College matters remains an outstanding concern.

Departmental Staff Perspectives
Departmental staff members interviewed were generally supportive of the College. In many cases, the staff members understanding of the complexities and challenges of College operations is, not surprisingly, limited. However, there certainly seems to be a genuine interest in finding ways to better support the College, College activities and strengthening communications and collaboration. This being said, there is an element of frustration with some aspects of the relationship with the College. Most of the concerns raised appear to be communications issues or the lack of a shared understanding of the issues and priorities of the two organizations.

In discussing roles and responsibilities related to the College, there appeared to be some confusion as to which operating units within the Department are responsible for various activities (e.g. program planning, needs assessment work

and variance reporting). These are internal matters that have been discussed many times over the years and relate primarily to assignment of leadership for College matters as well as determining the level and scope of responsibility assigned to program divisions.

As a final point, it appears that there is not a clear understanding of the Minister's expectations for the College or the College's priorities and challenges. Given the diversity of departmental staff responsibilities this might be expected, but a better understanding might assist in improved collaboration and communications between Departmental and College staff members.

The Department Role in Supporting the College
As the College is, unlike the Department, engaged in a competitive business, the credibility of the institution is a critical issue. As noted earlier in this report, issues of credibility have been a concern for the College over the years. Given the Minister's role(s) and the Department's responsibilities with respect to the College this should be of concern to the Minister / Department as well. What it comes down to is whether the Minister and Department are prepared to actively assist the College in this matter – and if so, how can it be done.

Of course, this matter would be best addressed when the future direction for the College is clearly described. However, actions can be taken now simply by the Department looking for opportunities to advance the College's role and actively celebrate its successes. In this regard the Minister and the Department likely have an advocacy role. If this is not to be the case, then there needs to be a decision to allow the College to fulfill this role itself.

Several examples of ways that the College could be supported include:

- The GNWT has created a number of training and research related functions, in various departments, rather than consolidating these activities within the College (and ARI). The result of these actions has been a reduction in the efficient use of College infrastructure, a distancing of GNWT departments from College activities and a diminishment of College credibility with other GNWT staff members. The Department has a role in addressing this trend and supporting the effective and efficient use of the College for GNWT training and research related activities.

- The Department should have a clear idea of the adult and post-secondary education and training needs of the public, as identified by other GNWT departments. It could be communicating these needs to the College and working with the College to ensure that College services are used, wherever possible, to deliver the need education and training.

- The Department should be fully aware of the impact of various funding mechanisms used to support College operations – both those within the Department and those available for third parties. For those internal to the Department, ways could be sought to simplify and streamline funding allocation to the College. For those funding "avenues" available through third parties, the Department could consider whether, and if so, how, the funding it provides to the College either supports or limits the College's ability to access these monies. In cases where Departmental funding structures limit or do not actively support the College's access to such funding, consideration could be given to adjusting the Department's funding approaches to provide greater support to the College's efforts to access third party funds.

The Minister and Department's active support for College activities, within the scope of the legislation would be of considerable assistance to the College's success over the long-term. A planned approach, and continuing activity to achieve this goal would be appropriate and important.

Recommendations:

30. *The Department undertake actions to support the establishment of service level standards for government departments providing services to the College.*

31. *The Department, in cooperation with the College, identify key aspects of GNWT policies that are proving problematic to the College's achievement of its purpose. Further that once this listing has been prepared the development of a plan to address the identified issues related to GNWT policies.*

32. *The Department create alternatives work processes that reduce contacts and administrative requirements being placed on the College as a result of GNWT internal processes.*

Planning, Monitoring and Accountability

Accountability is a fundamental element of the legislation that guides Aurora College activities. Clauses of the *Aurora College Act* coupled with those of the *Financial Administration Act* provide a fairly comprehensive framework for reporting by the College to the Minister (and through the annual report to the Legislative Assembly).

It is also important that the Department recognizes that the College's operation is logically based on an academic year, and College activities must work to a somewhat different cycle than the GNWT's fiscal year. Generally, the College must begin its planning and program development activities up to 12 months in advance of the following academic year. This period of time allows for the confirmation and/or development of curriculum, allocation of space (classroom and student accommodation), confirmation of funding support as well as advertising for students. Student advertising should occur on a similar cycle to that of competing colleges and universities (beginning in late fall and continuing until student selection in the spring). The GNWT's present practice of providing notification to the College of funding levels for the next academic year in February of March, just a few months before the beginning of the College's academic year, negatively impacts on effective planning and support of programming.

To support improved planning, monitoring and accountability there are several processes that bear consideration. These are described briefly below.

Defining Program and Service Needs

The first area that could bear some further consideration is the conduct and maintenance of an effective "needs assessment" for adult and post-secondary education and training needs of NWT residents. An effective assessment would help determine labour market needs, other educational needs and interests of adult residents, the location of the needs and the feasibility of the College meeting these needs and interests. At the present time, it appears that needs assessments are carried out with respect to specific industries and non-renewable resource development projects, but not in a more comprehensive manner. Both the College and Department would likely have roles in this activity.

Program and Service Proposals

A second process for attention relates to the submission of program plans of the College. Historically, a process was in place and was referred to a "program and service planning". This process included the College packaging its program and service plans and submitting them to the Department for discussion. There was a subsequent review and "negotiation" (sic) followed by Ministerial approval of the plan - a process consistent with the requirements of the legislation. This

process appears to be in "suspension" at this point and has evidently not occurred for a couple of years. The process as it has been in place over the years was certainly flawed – for example, the Department was unable to advise the College of expected funding levels until some six months after the College submitted its proposal. Nevertheless having an established process and looking for ways to improve the fit between the process and operating requirements of the College would be helpful in ensuring that both the College and the Minister / Department are aware of the College's program and service delivery plans.

Program Development and Evaluation

The College develops post-secondary programming in accordance with the requirements of industry, employers and accrediting agencies. Program development can be complex, challenging and costly depending upon the nature, length and expected credentialing of the course or program.

When the College is being asked to respond to a third party's request, the College may not have personnel with the necessary experience or expertise to undertake particular program development in a timely manner. In such cases, those with the necessary skills, but without the content knowledge must undertake program development activities. Alternatively, the College may elect to "source" a program or course from another institution. In cases where this is done some alterations to the course or program is likely required in order for the program's content and structure to meet the needs of the College's students.

As part of all program development there is the need to ensure that the program content will meet the needs described by employers and students. As well, in many cases the program development must reflect the academic requirements necessary for certification. To do this, some form of linkage between the College and external advisors is necessary. This could be in the form of advisory groups, employer groups or members of a certifying body.

The College's ability to respond quickly – to be nimble and flexible in developing responses to such requests for new programming – is essential if the College is going to effectively meet its purpose. At the present time, the College has limited internal resources (staff members and funding) dedicated to respond to such requests. A number of Project informants, when talking about ways in which the College could improve its practices and success, suggested that the institution adopt a more proactive approach to responding to third party requests and dedicate additional resources in this area.

In addition to the matter of program development, it is also necessary for the College, like all post-secondary institutions, to evaluate it's programming on a regular basis. Evaluation can take several forms – including periodic internal

review processes and larger reviews conducted by accreditation authorities. The College conducts some internal reviews and benefits from the review of some certificate, diploma and degree programming by external parties – but there does not appear to be an established plan and schedule for the regular evaluation of all College programming. This is a weakness for the organization.

Effective evaluation has a number of benefits including: providing the opportunity for the College to hear from students and those employing students regarding the skills and knowledge that were gained from a program; increasing the College's credibility with respect to academic rigor; ensuring the content and structure of the program provide the best possible learning environment; providing a forum for discussing the cost/benefit of programs and the long-term need for the program; and a mechanism for staff to increase their knowledge and skills with respect to their area of expertise.

Formalizing evaluation schedules, financial support and expected processes would be beneficial for the College and for the Department.

College Reporting
College reporting is a fundamental element of accountability. At present, the College prepares and submits a number of formal reports (the College's annual report, submission of financial statements, etc.). In addition, the College also "reports" to the Minister in less formal ways, such as through the submission of approved Board of Governor meeting minutes. While the reports submitted are extensive, it would be useful to confirm that the reports and their contents reflect the requirements of the legislation and meet the Minister's expectations. Assuming that the legislative requirements are being met, every effort should be made to profile this fact and acknowledge the College's adherence to these requirements.

The report, *Education in the Northwest Territories* (2010) by the Auditor General of Canada, included recommendations that work needs to be done to improve the reporting of post-secondary indicators. Clearly, the reporting of indicators is necessary to support accountability, and to permit the GNWT to assess the cost/benefit of both adult and post-secondary program and service delivery. Both the Department and the College have views as to what indicators might be used in this regard, and the confirmation of these indicators, the public acknowledgement of the indicators and the regular reporting of these indicators is necessary.

College Financing
As a final point with respect to planning, monitoring and accountability – while the Department has undertaken extensive analysis and the development on a standardized funding mechanism for the school system, it has not done the same for the College system. As a result, funding of College activities is not based upon any agreed upon funding standards, but rather on "one-off" decisions related to individual circumstances surrounding programs and services. As a result, there is considerable inconsistency in funding levels between various College programs and services. While funding differences may be reasonable, the Department has no way to appropriately determine this – resulting in assessments of some College activities being made based on opinion rather than measurement.

Work was done on a funding structure in the 1990's, but was never fully implemented. A Departmental staff recommendation in 2005 suggested that the establishment of a funding allocation system be revisited, but no action has occurred in this regard. A resolution to this matter might reduce some of the "mystery" surrounding the College and would be very helpful in explaining the requirements for financing the College system.

Recommendations:

33. *The Department, in cooperation with the College, establish and maintain a listing of college performance measures that reflect the operational environment of the institution.*

34. *The Department publish post-secondary education results information at least once every three years. Performance indicators that are reported should reflect College activities and Departmental activities associated with the post-secondary activities (e.g. apprenticeship information, Student Financial Assistance data, etc.).*

35. *The College and the Department collaborate on reporting on the outcomes of post-secondary education related programming. Outcomes addressed should include graduate follow-up studies by the College.*

36. *The Department, in consultation with the College undertake the development of a funding framework for the College that establishes funding standards for various types of College activities (e.g. programs, services, administration, etc.).*

37. The Department, in cooperation with the College, review and renew the most recent study of College infrastructure needs and identify long term approaches to addressing the College's infrastructure requirements.

38. The Department, in cooperation with the College re-establish a process by which the College formally submits its program and service delivery plans to the Minister. Efforts should be focused on the development of multi-year as well as annual plans. Mechanisms also be designed to more closely match the planning cycle with the College's academic year.

39. The Department simplify program and service proposal processes, to the extent possible, by consolidating all ECE funds that are transferred to the College into a single contribution (supported by appropriate accountability requirements).

40. The Department establish a process to carry out and maintain a compilation of adult education and training needs for the NWT, including those identified by other GNWT departments and actively promote the College's organization and delivery of these activities.

41. The Minister consider having the Board of Governors brief the appropriate Legislative Standing Committee on College's annual report during the same Session during which the report is tabled.

Legislation

As noted earlier, the legislation that provides the framework for College activities, including both the delivery of education and training and the support for research is old and outdated. Both of the primary pieces of legislation need to be reviewed and updated. A review would be best accomplished once there is a clear understanding of the long-term direction and purpose of the College. This being said, there are elements of the current legislation that could be adjusted to more specifically reflect those duties and responsibilities that are carried out by the Minister, the Board of Governors and the College President. These changes would assist in clarifying duties and responsibilities and they would also increase the clarity as to the accountability of the various parties. Finally, revisions would provide the College with the flexibility it needs to effectively "do its job".

Recommendations:

42. *Amend the legislation to clarify role definitions based upon the following framework:*

    i. *Retaining broad Ministerial responsibility for describing the overall goals and direction of the College;*

    ii. *Eliminating Ministerial roles and responsibilities for those matters for which the Minister has no realistic active role (e.g. approval of bylaws related to academic standards, student behaviour, etc);*

    iii. *Clarifying the Minister's role related to "approval" of programs and services – in most cases the role is one of approving College's plan for such activities, not the programs themselves;*

    iv. *Expand the Board of Governors authority to make bylaws to govern College administrative and academic matters, set academic standards and direct the activities of the Aurora Research Institute's Advisory Council, supervise the President;*

    v. *Specifically, authorize the College's active involvement and the active involvement of College's staff in research activities;*

    vi. *Specify that the President is the Chief Executive Officer of the College and make it possible for the Board to directly employ the President.*

    vii. *Review and update the Act to permit the Minister to delegate increasing responsibilities to the Board of Governors over time.*

43. *Review and update the Scientists Act to reflect the College's role(s) and to modernize the Act. Consideration should be given to consolidating various GNWT science licensing processes into the process provided by the Aurora Research Institute.*

44. *Through legislation define the "science advisory" role of the College with respect to the Legislative Assembly and the GNWT.*

9. Another Approach

Over the past decade, the College has had a difficult time "telling its story". Decision-makers and members of the public simply don't seem to have heard about many of the College's successes or additional investments that the GNWT has made in support of the College's operations. The question that is raised is how to achieve ensure a better understanding of the College, the College's results and its role as the NWT post-secondary institution. An argument can be made that it is the nature of the relationship between the College and the Department that has, at least in part, limited the College's ability to be recognized and respected for its successes.

The Department operates as it is expected to act as a Government department. And while it is challenged at times to fulfill its very broad responsibilities, it is to be congratulated for the overall success that it has achieved. However, the Department's activities while important are, for the most part, bureaucratic in nature and include delivering programs and services to the public as well as providing oversight with respect to school divisions. A number of these activities receive priority attention and to some degree, "dwarf" the College activities.

It can be argued that at the present time it is fairly easy for the College to "get lost in the shuffle". The result has been that, when addressing College matters, the Department has required the College to behave, in many respects, as if it were simply a division of the department as opposed to a "stand alone", "arms length" post-secondary institution. These actions have, inadvertently, limited the College's potential, reduced the College's focus on students and programs, decreased the College's visibility and likely weakened the College's credibility.

The Colleges in the Yukon and Nunavut have experienced similar problems to those faced by Aurora College. After considerable discussion, the accountability of both institutions has been altered so that the Colleges are directly responsible to a Minister in the Territorial Government, rather than reporting through a Department.

This alternate approach is no panacea for the Colleges or for the Government. Under such arrangements, the Colleges have had to take on activities that were formerly carried out by government departments and the Departments of Education have been "distanced" from the College - hindering some aspects of planning and collaboration. But in both cases, the arrangement has permitted the Colleges to grow and develop. They have been able to "tell their story" in a manner that has increased the respect, credibility and success of the institutions.

This report has not been "built around" the concept of altering Aurora College's reporting relationship. There are a number of strengths that can result from the current arrangements.   However, given the experiences of the last decade and the challenges faced by both the Department and College going forward, it is an idea that should bear some consideration as leaders are examining a long-term approach to strengthening the Aurora College.

10. Closing Comments

Aurora College provides a key tool in supporting the education and training of NWT residents. Over the past 40 years, many, many northerners have graduated from the College's programs and, using the skills and knowledge that they have gained during their studies, become successful and productive members of our northern society. Nurses, teachers, tradespersons, social workers, miners, diamond polishers and many others have attended the College, graduated and gone on to provide support for their families and excellent services to the people and businesses of the north. But, like all post-secondary institutions, the College must change as the environment within which the College operates changes.

During the past two years, the College has initiated significant organizational change that is intended to strengthen the College's academic consistency and, hopefully its institutional credibility. The planning for the organizational change was limited and the result of the change has led to frustration both within and outside the College. Additional attention is required to address some aspects of the organizational change. In addition, the College needs to address some current weakness in student services and administrative processes in order to ensure that the College experience remains attractive to those wishing to attend the institution.

There are also other actions that are necessary to strengthen support for the College's efforts. Changes to legislation and a refocusing of Departmental activities related to the College would assist.

Over the longer term, it will be important to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the long-term directions and goals for Aurora College. Northern leaders will need to consider how the College can best serve all northerners and then equip the institution to do its job in the most effective manner possible.

Attachment 1

Project Terms of Reference
Assessment of Aurora College

1. **PROJECT IDENTIFICATION**

    Title: Assessment of Aurora College
    Location: Yellowknife, NT
    Program Department: Education, Culture and Employment (ECE)

2. **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

    Assessment of Aurora College
    A contract authority will be identified to review the progress at regular intervals and to arrange for consultation with other groups and staff members as required. The contract authority will be the main point of contact for the project.

3. **BACKGROUND**

    - Aurora College has recently begun a reorganization of its operational structure. Concerns have been brought forward to the Minister in regard to the implementation of the reorganization and its impacts on Aurora College staff and programming.
    - There has also been confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Aurora College President, Board of Governors, Minister and ECE in regard to the processes for the operation and decision making of Aurora College.
    - The Board of Governors requires appropriate training, policies and processes in place to plan, manage and monitor the performance of the President. Clear communications protocols do not appear to be in place with respect to ensuring that the Minister is kept apprised of emerging issues and concerns, as appropriate. The role of the ECE in monitoring the operations of the College, and supporting the Minister in his oversight role, is also unclear.
    - Under Section 29 of the Aurora College Act, the Minister may, in writing, appoint a person to examine and inspect the financial or administrative situation, or any other matter connected with the management, administration or operation of Aurora College.
    - The person appointed under subsection 29 (1) may examine, inspect and take copies of all books of record and account, all bankbooks, all electronically stored information, and any other papers, documents or things in the possession of Aurora College excluding any records of students.
    - The person shall report, in writing, to the Minister on his or her examination and inspection.

Assessment of Aurora College
Project Terms of Reference

4. OBJECTIVES

- The objective of this assessment is to examine, inspect and report on the current operations of Aurora College and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the President, Board of Governors, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (Minister) and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) in regard to the operations of Aurora College as outlined in the Aurora College Act.

5. SCOPE OF WORK

- The consultant will examine Aurora College documentation, including the Aurora College Act and regulations, and make inquiries with the Minister, Aurora College Board of Governors, and Aurora College and ECE staff in order to conduct an assessment of the current Aurora College operations and compile a report that makes recommendations to the Minister.
- The consultant will work directly with the Aurora College President and the Associate Deputy Minister of ECE while examining the information and compiling the report.
- The scope of the evaluation will include reviewing the entire operations of Aurora College, including the three Campuses – Aurora Campus, Yellowknife Campus and Thebacha Campus and Head Office of Aurora College and the Aurora Research Institute.
- The evaluation will also review the roles and responsibilities of the President, Aurora College Board of Governors, Minister and ECE in regard to the operation of Aurora College.
- The assessment will cover the past 3 years, from 2009-2012.
- The evaluation will focus on the following aspects:
  - Aurora College reorganization
  - Review new organizational model
  - Identify current stage of implementation
  - Provide an assessment of what has occurred to date
    - What is working?
    - Where are the challenges?
    - How can this process be improved?
  - Make recommendations on next steps regarding the reorganization
    - What needs to be dealt with in the future?
  - Aurora College Act and regulations

  - Roles and responsibilities
    - Identify existing working relationships and identify where clarification is required to improve working relationships, based on Aurora College Act
  - Effectiveness
  - Recommendations with respect to modernizing the Act

- o Recommendations with respect to the roles and responsibilities of the President, the Board of Governors, the Minister and ECE
  - Recommend additional policy changes as may be indicated by the findings of the review

6. BUDGET

- The available project budget identified for this project is a range of $40,000-60,000.

7. CONSTRAINTS

- The consultant will provide regular updates to the Associate Deputy Minister of ECE throughout the project.
- The report will be submitted on or before March 15, 2013 in order to provide time for discussion and feedback prior to finalizing the report.
- A final report will be submitted to the Associate Deputy Minister of ECE on or before March 31, 2013.
- All travel and accommodation costs associated with this work will be the responsibility of the consultant.

8. GNWT's RESOURCES

- The consultant will work directly with the Aurora College President and the Associate Deputy Minister of ECE while examining the information and compiling the report.
- Including but not limited to:
  - o Aurora College organizational charts – before and after the recent reorganization
  - o Aurora College financial documents, including all books of record and account, all bank books, all electronically stored information, as required

  - o Aurora College staffing information, as required
  - o Aurora College policy documents, including documentation or processes, training and policies for the Board of Governors
  - o Aurora College Board of Governors' meeting minutes
  - o Any documentation identified as necessary to fulfill the intent of the Assessment of Aurora College, as deemed appropriate by ECE and/or the Minister

9. DELIVERABLES

- Working in consultation with the Contract Authority, and the Aurora College President as well as other ECE staff, as identified by the Associate Deputy

Minister, the consultant will:
- o   Submit a project plan, schedule, and proposed expenditures for approval;
- o   Develop an initial list of objectives/outcomes/measures to be assessed for consideration and approval;
- o   Provide regular updates to both the Associate Deputy on the progress of the assessment;
- o   Provide a draft report with an executive summary for review and incorporate feedback from the Contract Authority when preparing and submitting the final report.
- o   Provide the final report to ECE in both electronic and hardcopy format (10 bound copies). ☐
- o   The report must cover the full scope of the Assessment of Aurora College, as outlined in this Request for Proposals.
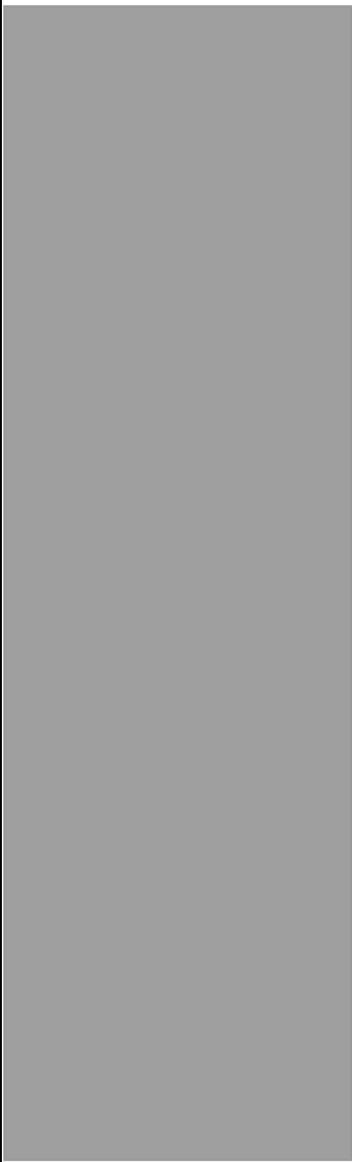
10.   SCHEDULE

- The contractor will complete the work by March 31, 2013. ☐
- A comprehensive draft report of the Assessment of Aurora College is due on or before March 15, 2013 and the final report is due on or before March 30, 2013.
- Document review and/or data collection will be done in January and February 2013.
- An initial list of objectives/outcomes/measures to be assessed will be presented for consideration in January 2013.
- The consultant will submit a draft report on or before March 15, 2013 and incorporate feedback/input into the final report.
- The consultant will submit the final report on or before March 31, 2013.

END OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

Attachment 2

PROJECT INFORMANTS AND INTERVIEW LISTING

Name	Title and Organization
	President (Aurora College)
	Director, Strategic and Business Services (ECE)
	Director, Advanced Education (ECE)
	Chairperson, Board of Governors, (Aurora College)
	Assistant Deputy Minister, Advanced Education and Income Security (ECE)
	A/Manager Adult and Post Secondary Education (ECE)
	Deputy Minister (ECE)
	Manager, Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification (ECE)
	Strategic Analyst, Department of the Executive (former Director, Advanced Education Division, ECE)
	Former Associate Deputy Minister (ECE)
	Former Manager, Post Secondary Education (ECE)
	Coordinator, Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ECE)
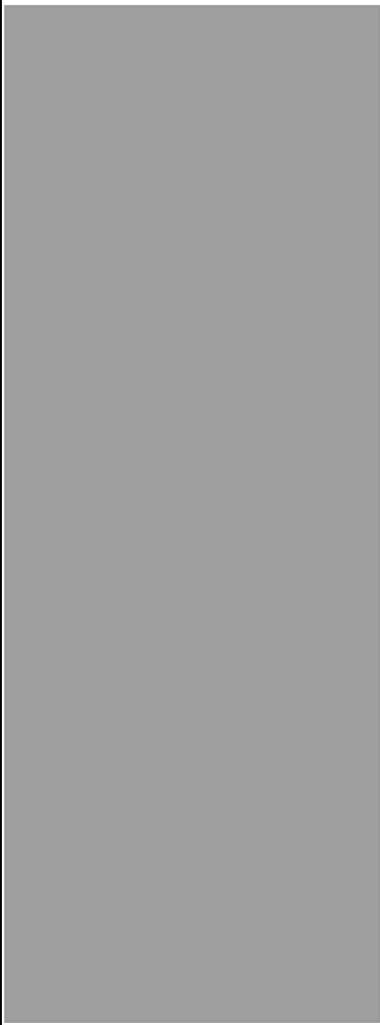
	Director, Aurora Research Institute (Aurora College)
	Manager, Policy and Institutional Research (Aurora College)
	Finance (ECE)
	Manager, Program Development and Evaluation (Aurora College)
	Chair, School of Health and Human Services (Aurora College)
	Acting Vice President Education and Training (Aurora College)
	Minister - Education, Culture and Employment
	Executive Assistant to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
	Acting Vice President Community and Extensions Education (Aurora College)
	Campus Director (Aurora College)
Aurora College Board of Governors	
	Director Student Services (Aurora College)
	CFO / Director of Finance (Aurora College)

	Acting Director Aurora Research Institute (Aurora College)
	Legal Counsel, Department of Justice, GNWT
	Former President (Aurora College)
	Former Campus Director (Aurora College)
	Industrial Oil and Gas Training Coordinator (Aurora College)
	Program Head, Community and Extension Services (Aurora College)
	Director, Gwich'in Services, Gwich'in Tribal Council
	Gwich'in Tribal Council
	Mayor, Town of Inuvik
	Regional Superintendent (ECE)
	Former Chair, Board of Governors (Aurora College)
	Regional Director, GNWT
	Manager, Finance and Administration (Aurora College)
	Executive Director, NWT Mine Training Society
	Executive Director, NWT Literacy Council
	Registrar (Aurora College)
	Associate Registrar (Aurora College)

	Regional Superintendent (ECE)
	NWT Metis Nation
	Manager, Commu8nications and College Relations (Aurora College)
	Program Head, Business Administration (Aurora College)
	Marketing and Communications Officer (Aurora College)
	Instructor, Teacher Education Program (Aurora College)
	Counselor, Thebacha Campus
	Chair, School of Developmental Studies (Aurora College)
	Former Manager, Post Secondary Education (ECE)

Attachment 3

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Note: This is a selected bibliography and does not generally include correspondence and other "day to day" information and materials that were reviewed during the Project and were produced either by the Minister and staff members of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment or the Board of Governors and staff members of Aurora College.

Attachment 4

SUMMARY OF REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

This Attachment includes a listing of all Project recommendations.

College Purpose

1. *The Minister, in cooperation with the College Board of Governors, examine the College's purpose with the intention of confirming a long-term direction for the institution.*

2. *Input on the College's direction be sought from the public, governments, students, College clients and legislators.*

3. *The College's upcoming strategic plan should describe the long-term direction for the institution and outline actions to be taken to support this direction.*

Roles and Responsibilities

4. *Establish a formalized practice that results in the Minister meeting with the full Board of Governors at least once per year (possibly, on the occasion of program and services approval or budget approval).*

5. *The Board Chair meet with the Minister a minimum of three times per year, in addition to the Minister's full meeting with the Board that is described in the above recommendation.*

6. *Under the Minister's leadership, seek opportunities for the Board of Governors to directly brief legislators regarding the College's plans and activities on a regular basis.*

7. *Establish a Board of Governors member appointment process that will result in new (or reappointed) members being appointed within 30 calendar days of a vacancy occurring.*

8. *Maintain the memorandum of understanding on communications between the College and the Department. Review the existing document within the year and make any appropriate adjustments.*

9. The Board of Governors approve a policy to guide the annual review of the President. The policy should ensure that comment and advice on the President's performance is sought from the Minister, College personnel and others that the Board of Governors may feel are important to the review process.

10. As part of the policy guiding the annual review of the President, the President be required to present the Board of Governors with a work plan, describing specific goals and objectives for the Board's approval.

11. In addition to regular reports at meetings, the President provide the Board with a written progress summary related to the annual work plan on a semi-annual basis.

12. The Board of Governors' Chairperson discuss the President's appraisal with the Minister once it has been completed.

13. Convene, on a periodic basis, selected Departmental and College staff to discuss how communications between the two organizations could be made more effective and how to eliminate unnecessary contacts.

14. Invite the College President to make a presentation on College activities to the Departmental Senior Management Team at least twice per year.

15. Request that the College President be invited to make a presentation to the Deputy Ministers Group at least twice per year.

College Organization and Operations

16. The College's reorganization is well advanced. Returning to the previous organization design is not a reasonable course of action. However, additional adjustments to the structure are required in order for the College to effectively and efficiently serve its students and meet the needs of its clients.

17. The Board of Governors direct the establishment of a process to seek out and document the concerns of College staff members regarding the new structure. Through the process identify any changes that may be required to improve the organization structure over the next 12 to 18 months. Use this process as a mechanism to assess the impact of the redesign.

18. Continue efforts to immediately staff all vacant or temporarily filled senior management positions.

19. The Board of Governors with the assistance of the President should consider some changes including:

   a. Identifying a campus lead to serve as the "face" of the campus. This individual be given oversight responsibilities for all activities operating on the campus and in the region(s) being supported by the campus. As well, the individual should serve as a primary, initial contact with governments, industry and other organizations interested in partnering with the College.

   b. Establishing a funding mechanism to support the person with campus lead responsibilities.

20. Training in "supervision techniques at a distance" be provided to all staff with duties that require supervising staff members who reside in communities other than that of the supervisor.

21. The College create an internal program planning processes that requires all schools and functional units to prepare multi-year plans. The planning processes include direction that all plans must capture program and service delivery needs, costs, etc. for all NWT regions. Once consolidated and approved, the plans should be used as one tool in the measurement of the Vice Presidents and Chairs performance.

22. The College confirm the community adult educator roles related to the conduct of community needs assessments; collaboration with community level governments, businesses, the school system and the College's academic schools; as well as extension program identification and facilitation.

23. The College place an immediate priority on resolving service level issues in student services.

24. The College consider enhancing support in key student service areas either through resource allocation, changes in reporting relationships, administrative simplification or other means.

25. Training and support be provided to student services staff, and where necessary instructional personnel, to ensure that all aspects of the student services functions can operate without disruption (from the student's perspective).

26. A new student records system capable of responding to the College and Department's information needs to secured and put into service as soon as possible.

27. The College set service response time standards be established for all key internal processes and these standards be used to measure the performance of those responsible for responding to requests;

28. The College undertake a review to identify ways to reduce administrative requirements in a manner that does not threaten accountability, and streamlines decision-making.

29. The College maintain and, if possible, expand its internal efforts to communicate consistent information about College activities to staff members.

Departmental Operations

30. The Department undertake actions to support the establishment of service level standards for government departments providing services to the College.

31. The Department, in cooperation with the College, identify key aspects of GNWT policies that are proving problematic to the College's achievement of its purpose. Further that once this listing has been prepared the development of a plan to address the identified issues related to GNWT policies.

32. The Department create alternatives work processes that reduce contacts and administrative requirements being placed on the College as a result of GNWT internal processes.

Planning, Monitoring and Accountability

33. The Department, in cooperation with the College, establish and maintain a listing of college performance measures that reflect the operational environment of the institution.

34. The Department publish post secondary education results information at least once every three years. Performance indicators that are reported should reflect College activities and Departmental activities associated

with the post secondary activities (e.g. apprenticeship information, Student Financial Assistance data, etc.).

35. *The College and the Department collaborate on reporting on the outcomes of post secondary education related programming. Outcomes addressed should include graduate follow-up studies by the College.*

36. *The Department, in consultation with the College undertake the development of a funding framework for the College that establishes funding standards for various types of College activities (e.g. programs, services, administration, etc.).*

37. *The Department, in cooperation with the College, review and renew the most recent study of College infrastructure needs and identify long term approaches to addressing the College's infrastructure needs.*

38. *The Department, in cooperation with the College re-establish a process by which the College formally submits its program and service delivery plans to the Minister. Efforts should be focused on the development of multi-year as well as annual plans. Mechanisms also be designed to more closely match the planning cycle with the College's academic year.*

39. *The Department simplify program and service proposal processes, to the extent possible, by consolidating all ECE funds that are transferred to the College into a single contribution (supported by appropriate accountability requirements).*

40. *The Department establish a process to carry out and maintain a compilation of adult education and training needs for the NWT, including those identified by other GNWT departments and actively promote the College's organization and delivery of these activities.*

41. *The Minister consider having the Board of Governors brief the appropriate Legislative Standing Committee on College's annual report during the same Session during which the report is tabled.*

Legislation

42. Amend the legislation to clarify role definitions based upon the following framework:

    i. Retaining broad Ministerial responsibility for describing the overall goals and direction of the College;

    ii. Eliminating Ministerial roles and responsibilities for those matters for which the Minister has no realistic active role (e.g. approval of bylaws related to academic standards, student behaviour, etc);

    iii. Clarifying the Minister's role related to "approval" of programs and services – in most cases the role is one of approving College's plan for such activities, not the programs themselves;

    iv. Expand the Board of Governors authority to make bylaws to govern College administrative and academic matters, set academic standards and direct the activities of the Aurora Research Institute's Advisory Council, supervise the President;

    v. Specifically, authorize the College's active involvement and the active involvement of College's staff in research activities;

    vi. Specify that the President is the Chief Executive Officer of the College and make it possible for the Board to directly employ the President.

    vii. Review and update the Act to permit the Minister to delegate increasing responsibilities to the Board of Governors over time.

43. Review and update the *Scientists Act* to reflect the College's role(s) and to modernize the *Act.* Consideration should be given to consolidating various GNWT science licensing processes into the process provided by the Aurora Research Institute.

44. Through legislation define the "science advisory" role of the College with respect to the Legislative Assembly and the GNWT.