

A Plan for North Idaho College

Approved by the NWCCU Board of Commissioners, February 2, 2024

Current Situation:

The Evaluation Team's Report from the Fall 2023 Special Visit stated that North Idaho College (NIC), particularly the NIC Board of Trustees, has not made demonstrable progress in several key areas to address Recommendations from the April 2023 Show Cause visit.

NIC was issued a Sanction of Warning by the NWCCU Board of Commissioners on April 1, 2022 and subsequently issued a Sanction of Show Cause in February 2023. Federal regulations require that the issues underlying the initial Sanction must be resolved no later than April 1, 2025, i.e., within three years of the issuance of the first sanction for this two-year college.

April 1, 2025 is only approximately two evaluation visit cycles away, and the NWCCU Board of Commissioners will be required to take Adverse Action (Denial, Withdrawal, Suspension, Revocation, or Termination of Accreditation) unless NIC demonstrates significant progress towards resolving the issues underlying the Sanctions well before April 1, 2025.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Plan for NIC is to reschedule and reframe the next special visit for NIC. Instead of the currently scheduled April 2024 special visit and Fall 2024 visit, there will be a single Show Cause visit in October 2024.

By rescheduling, we give the institution and its Board of Trustees, in particular, sufficient time to make progress on these Recommendations, instead of having to continually submit reports and wait for responses from NWCCU.

By reframing the non-compliant Recommendations, we provide greater clarity and specific guidance to focus the institution's work, making it clear that the Board of Trustees MUST take explicit action to resolve these non-compliant Recommendations.

The Show Cause visit in October 2024 will be highly focused, seeking to identify progress on the non-compliant Recommendations. The team's report will be reviewed by the NWCCU Board of Commissioners during the January 2025 Commission Meeting, to determine if NIC and its Board of Trustees have resolved the outstanding issues.

If the issues behind the non-compliant Recommendations remain unresolved, the NWCCU Board of Commissioners must take an Adverse Action.

However, if NIC and its Board of Trustees make significant progress towards resolving the outstanding non-compliant Recommendations the institution will be required to provide a plan and timeline to address all outstanding Recommendations (both non-compliant and those identified as significantly in compliance but in need of improvement) prior to April 1, 2026.

Action Required at this Time:

NWCCU recognizes the good work of the faculty, staff, and administrators throughout this process, but we are approaching the end of the three-year time period for the deficiencies that led to the initial Sanction of Warning to be corrected. Because of the lack of demonstrated progress on outstanding Recommendations, per federal regulations and NWCCU policy, NIC must develop Teach-Out Agreements with other institutions for all of its academic programs. These are to be completed and submitted to NWCCU for approval no later than August 31, 2024.

Outstanding Non-Compliant Recommendations:

A review of the outstanding non-compliant Recommendations shows that the NIC Board of Trustees can make progress in a few areas, including:

- Functioning as a Professional Governing Board
 - Understand and adhere to policies and expectations related to civility, professional conduct, governance, conflict of interest, and ethics.
 - Create an environment of respectful discourse
 - With each other
 - With the President
 - With others with a right to be heard
- Strengthening Board of Trustees' Relationship with the President
 - Make it clear to all stakeholders that there is one president at NIC
 - Evaluate the president based upon jointly developed goals
 - Work to establish and maintain an environment of respect and meaningful discourse
 - Work together to create an inclusive approach to develop a strategic plan for the institution
- Building Inclusivity into Board Processes
 - Respond to the issues behind the votes of no confidence
 - Develop processes that provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to provide input on matters where each has a "direct and reasonable interest" (Standard 2.A.4)
- Reducing Risks to the Institution
 - Implement good Board Governance policies and processes
 - Take steps to reduce the exodus of faculty, staff, and senior administrators
 - Take action to resolve on-going litigation

To focus the efforts of NIC and its Board of Trustees on the work required at this time, we provide the following list of non-compliant Recommendations updated for clarity, and guidance to the Institution to indicate NWCCU expectations. The institution and its Board of Trustees are reminded that guidance represents a suggested path forward, but not a mandated path. While the institution has options in

determining how to move forward, the issues underlying these non-compliant Recommendations must be resolved. The red highlight in the following table indicates Recommendations identified as non-compliant.

Table 1: Reframed Non-Compliant Recommendations

Updated Recommendation	Guidance to Institution
Part 1: Functioning as a Governing Board	
<p><i>Note: Rec. 8 from Spring 2023 was broken into two parts, now identified as Recommendation 1 Fall 2023, and Recommendation 2 Fall 2023. The section on creating a strong on-boarding program for new Trustees (Recommendation 1 Fall 2023) will be addressed after the Show Cause visit.</i></p> <p>Fall 2023 Special Rec. 2: The Board of Trustees, should provide evidence of ongoing development related to board governance, roles and responsibilities, effective participation, conflict of interest identification and ethics that is sustainable. (Standards 2.A.1, 2.D.3)</p>	<p>Document Board of Trustees participation in on-going training in these areas, and the impact of training on Board actions and processes.</p> <p>Document Board approval of policies and statements in these areas.</p> <p>Review meetings and document Board adherence and application of these policies at meetings and in discussions.</p>
<p>Spring 2023 Special Rec. 1: The Board and President should continue training and development activities to improve governance, ensure that policies on ethics and general conduct are followed, and demonstrate a sustained commitment to the requirements and standards of NWCCU member institutions manifested through concrete actions over time. (ERs 2, 8, 22)</p>	<p>Document Board decisions where appropriate Board roles and responsibilities have been considered.</p> <p>Provide evidence that policies do not allow for Board overreach into daily operations of the institution, such as continuing requests for the opportunity to have a role in personnel decisions beyond the role of president.</p> <p>Provide evidence that the Board is following its policies.</p>
<p>Spring 2022 Special Rec. 2: The Board of Trustees adheres to institutional and Board policies, particularly those pertaining to appropriate roles and responsibilities, expectations, professional conduct and ethics, and grievance procedures. (ER 9, Standards 2.A.1, 2.D.2)</p>	<p>Incivility among Board members is demonstrated at Board meetings and exemplifies unprofessional conduct and makes the Board ineffective. Document efforts and accomplishments at reining in unprofessional conduct.</p>

<p>Spring 2023 Special Rec. 7: The Board and College President should ensure that they adhere to the inclusivity articulated in the college's planning and decision-making processes. The Board and College President should demonstrate a commitment to an environment respectful of meaningful discourse, in their official capacities and when interacting with each other. (Standard 2 Preamble)</p>	<p>Document accomplishments made working with the President to accomplish Board and institutional goals.</p>
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Part 2: Relationship with the President	
<p>Spring 2023 Special Rec. 10: The Board of Trustees must act to unequivocally identify one CEO/President for the institution, with a valid contract and a clear understanding of conditions of employment, rights, responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, and termination. (ER 10, Standards 2.A.3, 2.F.1)</p>	<p>Take the steps necessary to have one president under contract at North Idaho College. (See Note at end of Table)</p> <p>Provide evidence that the extra contract for a president has been rescinded, or a specific date on which the extra contract will be null and void.</p>
<p>Spring 2023 Special Rec. 6: The Board of Trustees works in partnership with college president, leadership, and stakeholders to identify, create, and execute internal and external strategic initiatives with clear goals, metrics, and milestones for achievement of the same. (Standard 1.B.4)</p>	<p>Work together with the President to develop a plan and timeline to create a strategic plan that demonstrates engagement of stakeholders. We recognize that it will take time to complete a new strategic plan.</p>
Part 3: Building Inclusivity	
<p>Spring 2023 Special Rec. 2: The Board of Trustees must resolve the issues underpinning all "No Confidence" resolutions and provide evidence of a willingness to work with and support faculty, staff, and students when their concerns are communicated. (ER 7, Standard 2.D.2)</p>	<p>Not responding to repeated expressions of concern from faculty, staff, and students illustrates the Board's inattention to grievance procedures. Document actions taken to address concerns of faculty, staff, and students.</p>
<p>Spring 2023 Special Rec. 6: <i>Applies here as well.</i></p>	<p>Document how the input of students, faculty, staff, and community members will be incorporated into the strategic plan.</p>

Part 4: Reduce Risks	
Spring 2023 Special Rec. 5: The Board must advance specific policies, procedures, and take timely and definitive action to mitigate or eliminate the risks identified in the NWCCU Show Cause letter. (ER 9)	<p>Implement the policy changes that the subcommittee of the Board has developed.</p> <p>Document actions taken to reduce the exodus of faculty, staff, and senior administrators.</p>
Spring 2023 Special Rec. 3: The college and its Board must take action to resolve the uncertainties regarding both the leadership and accreditation status of the institution in order to improve retention of existing employees and fill current vacancies. (Standard 2.F.3)	Document steps taken and progress made to resolve these issues.
Spring 2023 Special Rec. 11: The Board of Trustees in partnership with the college president and leadership should resolve current litigation, governance, and accreditation issues that have had a current and immediate impact on actual, current, and budgeted expenditures to ensure long-term financial stability of the institution. (Standards 2.E.2; ER 19)	

Note: NIC has provided evidence that the College will allow the contract for the interim president to expire in June 2024. This Table was created prior to the submission of that evidence, and has been left unchanged. After June 2024, NIC can document that the contract has expired as evidence of progress on Recommendation 10 from the Spring 2023 Special visit.

Conclusion

This plan will hopefully create a clear path for North Idaho College and its Board of Trustees to demonstrate their willingness and ability to do the work required to get back into compliance with NWCCU Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation.