



The CLC Story: “We build futures“

Executive Summary
Higher Learning Commission
Accreditation 2023

Executive Summary

Chapter One: Mission

*The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly;
it guides the institution's operations.*

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Central Lakes College (CLC) has roots dating back to 1938 and was formed by the merger of Brainerd Community College and Brainerd Staples Technical College in 1995. Our mission, *We Build Futures*, along with the related vision and values statements, provides the foundation for, and direction to, the work of every department, division, and unit on our campuses.

To support our mission, we recognize that we serve multiple constituencies, including students, business and industry, and the community. Therefore, we engage all stakeholders routinely to understand and respond to their distinct needs. CLC partners with industry and local experts to develop academic programs and training opportunities that promote economic development, lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and engagement in civic service. The resulting portfolio of academic programs and training opportunities, along with our student support services, are consistent with our stated mission, and meet the needs of the students who choose CLC as their higher education resource.

At CLC we recognize that we live in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world. To this end, we strive to create curricular and co-curricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success. The HLC defines “*informed citizenship*” as “having sufficient and reliable information about issues of public concern and having the knowledge and skills to make reasonable judgments and decisions about them.” Our responsibility also includes ensuring that our students, faculty, and staff embrace a spirit of inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations and foster a climate of respect on campus.

CLC’s future-focused mission statement and companion documents are clearly stated and publicly posted with actionable institutional goals that call us to work each day and affirm that at Central Lakes College, we-

- Provide life-long learning opportunities in Liberal Arts, Technical Education, and Customized Training programs;
- Create opportunities for cultural enrichment, civic responsibility, and community engagement; and
- Nurture the development and success of a diverse student body through a respectful and supportive environment.

Examples of evidence that CLC meets this criterion:

- Our mission statement and related strategic plans were developed collaboratively, engaging internal and external stakeholders.
- Program advisory committees for career and technical programs engage business and industry to ensure students are workforce ready.
- Partnerships with the Small Business Development Center, local high school districts, the Mille Lac Band of Ojibwe, and the Minnesota Transportation Center of Excellence are examples of how we engage with the various “publics” that we serve.
- “Pizza to the Polls” and “Civic Challenges” incentivize students to vote.
- Academic opportunities to volunteer in the community such as Coats for Kids.
- Civic opportunities for engagement in diversity events such as Safe Spaces Training, Cultural Thursdays, CLC Pow Wow, and Implicit Bias training.
- Community programming such as Verse Like Water and presentations in the Rosenmeier Center engage our community in cultural enrichment and feature voices of civic responsibility.

Our college continues to grow and change with the communities we serve, but the mission, and our commitment to the mission, remains consistent and continues to guide the operations of the college.

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Chapter Two: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

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Chapter Two: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

CLC operates with high ethical standards and integrity across all areas of responsibility, including financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions. The Minnesota State system provides guidance across a broad range of legislative mandates, and policies to ensure integrity and guarantee compliance from the top down, with policies directed at the Board of Trustees, college and university presidents, employees, and students. The college's policies also provide both language and procedures for accountability across all units at CLC.

The college presents itself clearly, through a range of materials and in media, to students and external partners with full transparency in institutional publications, online information, and in all student-facing communication. We ensure that we are accurately representing information about our academic offerings, program requirements, our faculty and staff, costs of attendance, our governance structure and our accreditation relationships, including our relationships with the Higher Learning Commission and program-related accrediting bodies so that all constituents understand the quality of our mission-driven work in the region.

In its academic work, CLC expects faculty and students to work at the highest standards. Curriculum and assessment are overseen by individual departments, and our course construction process, guided by the Academic Affairs and Standards Council, has oversight that respects the academic freedom of faculty and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth.

Although research is not a primary function of the college, any basic or applied research that is conducted by our students, staff, or faculty adheres to professional standards and the college provides oversight to ensure regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability. The college provides professional development opportunities and tools for faculty and students as they become scholarly practitioners in a diverse society. The CLC Library is the primary resource for research and information sources for students, staff, and the community. We communicate our expectations to students with regard to academic honesty and integrity, and enforce policies to ensure that the learning environment is rigorous, ethical, and responsible.

Examples of evidence that CLC meets this criterion:

- Minnesota State Board of Trustees and CLC policies and procedures delineate ethical and responsible conduct for faculty, staff, and students.
- Balanced operating budgets evidence fiscal integrity and decision-making transparency.

- AASC meeting minutes and the yearly log of committee activities, topics, and decision making evidences faculty oversight of academic matters.
- AASC Handbook establishes faculty oversight of curriculum and assessment, and direct mentoring of new faculty helps to ensure alignment to CLC instructional goals.
- College website and the College catalog clearly communicate program offerings and requirements.
- Net price calculator provides transparency of costs of attendance for enrolling students.
- CLC organizational chart allows all members of the community to view leadership and reporting structures on both campuses.
- Program accreditation documents are clearly posted.
- MSCF contract, Article 8 (establishes the Shared Governance Council and the AASC), Article 20 (establishes the Joint Committee on Credential Fields), and Article 23 (ensures academic freedom) to allow faculty to serve as the guide for assessment activities.
- Student complaint process and form provide learners with access to an escalation path for concerns they encounter in class.
- Rosenmeier Center calendar of events provides a forum for open discourse and freedom of expression in dialogue with Minnesota thought leaders like Justice Alan Page (2022).
- CLC Library resources such as the Research and Writing Tools web page provide software that can empower students to break down complex assignments into manageable subcomponents with the help of technology.
- Course outlines for ENGL 1411 and ENGL 1410 which detail learning objectives in research-based writing and information literacy.
- CLC Student Code of Conduct procedure, which defines cheating and plagiarism, and faculty professional development resources to help faculty navigate interactions with students around the topic.
- Turnitin.com resource to empower students to check for close paraphrasing incidents to avoid integrity violations.
- Academic Catalog which communicates academic policies clearly and publicly for easy reference by students and faculty.

It is the intention of CLC administration, faculty, and staff to operate with the highest degree of integrity across all departments, divisions, and units of the college. Our actions are guided by a web of state, system, and local policies and procedures, which are further operationalized by the governance structure shared by administration and the faculty body. Our commitment to ethical and responsible behavior is shared with our students inside and outside the classroom to ensure graduates imbue this desired conduct throughout their personal and professional lives.

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Chapter Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

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Chapter Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

At CLC our mission inspires us to build and maintain relevant and rigorous course work, consistently delivered across all delivery modes and at all locations, including a robust general education offering. As a community and technical college, our students and community partners rely on us to deliver excellent educational offerings to meet the needs of all who are served by our college. To that end, each academic credential has clearly identified learning goals which are consistently applied whether on our college campuses or in the high schools as part of our College in the Schools offerings. During the global pandemic, course delivery shifted increasingly online. During the pivot to distance education, we have remained committed to delivering high quality academic and student service programs to all students regardless of modality.

Our general education program, generally defined as our liberal arts programming, including transfer pathways programs, the Associate of Arts and Science degrees, and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, is intended to impart broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students. In addition, our three college learning outcomes – Communicate Effectively, Solve Problems, and Demonstrate Personal and Social Responsibility – are skills and attitudes that we believe every CLC-educated individual should possess. These learning objectives have therefore been integrated into the curriculum across the campuses.

At CLC, we recognize the human and cultural diversity, and seek to instill in our students lifelong skills to thrive in a multicultural world. We do this in our formal curriculum with specific learning objectives, such as courses meeting Goal 6 Humanities and Fine Arts, Goal 7 Human Diversity, and Goal 8 Global Perspectives requirements, as well as in our co-curricular offerings such as the Verse Like Water and Cultural Thursday series. Study abroad travel opportunities and service-learning activities provide students with the chance to engage directly in a global society. Through offerings such as these, we encourage scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge for all students, faculty, and staff.

To properly support this rigorous and diverse learning environment, we strive to ensure that the composition of our faculty and staff reflects diversity as well. Our search committees are tasked with achieving greater diversity and equity to the extent possible given our candidate pools.

It is critical that we maintain a sufficient number of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and non-classroom roles assigned to faculty. This includes the oversight of curriculum

and student learning assessment, student advising, and establishing academic credentials for instructional staff. We are proud of our faculty-to-student ratio of 18:1 and believe this balanced staffing pattern leads to a rich learning experience for students, as well as a healthy work environment for faculty. CLC faculty are highly qualified subject matter experts, in accordance with our credentialing policies, including those teaching credit courses in the high schools. Faculty are strongly encouraged to seek professional development opportunities to stay abreast of developments in their field, as well as continue to hone their skills as adult educators.

Faculty make themselves accessible to students through office hours, and other opportunities for interaction. In addition to this, our students enjoy the competent services of support individuals in areas such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities. These individuals are qualified, trained, and fully supported in their professional development.

To support student learning and effective teaching, the leaders at CLC are committed to providing the resources necessary, including targeted resources to support special student populations to achieve equitable outcomes. This robust support process begins the moment an individual decides to become a CLC student. Our student services professionals identify the academic needs of a student and follow a clear and transparent process for directing new students to those programs and courses for which they are adequately prepared. Throughout the student experience at CLC, academic advisors guide learners through their journey, and students can depend upon our extensive infrastructure and resources, such as laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical sites, and museum collections, designed to empower students to complete their chosen degree.

Examples of evidence that CLC meets this criterion:

- Minnesota State policy 3.36 and procedure 3.36.1 outline the framework for academic programs.
- The AASC Handbook guides the curriculum development process.
- AASC minutes and yearly log evidence adherence to that process.
- Course outlines which articulate learning goals are available to students in their classrooms.
- Course syllabi, whether on-campus, online, or CIS, evidence consistency of learning outcomes across locations and learning modes.
- NACEP accreditation provides additional standards to the CIS program.
- Program advisory committee minutes evidence relevancy and currency of curriculum.
- Minnesota Transfer Curriculum sets clear general education standards within the overarching Minnesota state system.
- Planning forms for transfer degrees such as the AA Liberal Arts degree, the six AA Transfer Pathways, the AFA in Music, and the AFA Transfer Pathway in Art are available to students.
- Curriculum maps which evidence integration of the college-wide learning outcomes reveal the connection between assessment and learning objectives at the course level.

- Course outlines for Goal 6, Goal 7, and Goal 8 courses articulate learning outcomes recognizing the importance of human and cultural diversity.
- Honor's Program and National Collegiate Honors Council membership allows students to engage with the broader academic community.
- Study abroad trips to New York City, Puerto Rico, Europe, Costa Rica, Cuba, and London have scholarships available to expand access to global learning opportunities.
- Service-learning activities included in the Positive Psychology and Honors Leadership Development courses, the Dental Assistant program, and the Accounting program allows student experiential learning through hands-on engagement in the community.
- Creative works and scholarship activities such as the model irrigator developed in the Robotics/Automated Systems Technology program and the agricultural research projects conducted by the Agriculture and Energy Center reveal how innovation can be integrated into assignments.
- Affirmative Action Statement and Plan is in place to guide campus decision making.
- IPEDS faculty data reveal the breadth of faculty expertise available to CLC students as well as the sufficiency of the number of faculty to carry out work assignments.
- MSCF contract, Article 11 (which defines a faculty work assignment) ensures students receive high quality faculty support in all academic areas.
- CLC hiring process and position postings clearly state minimum and preferred qualifications for faculty and staff and credentials are verified by CLC to ensure that high quality candidates are identified and verified upon hiring.
- Minnesota State policy and CLC process for employee evaluations ensures that individual faculty have regularly scheduled classroom observations and feedback on their instructional work in the classroom.
- Completed employee evaluation forms and faculty observation notes are shared with faculty so that they can reflect on practice and implement improvements as needed.
- Professional development offerings and budget funding evidence support of trained and qualified faculty and staff.
- MSCF contract, Article 17 (Sabbatical Leaves) allows full time faculty to engage in scholarly research that enhances teaching.
- Posted office hours on faculty office doors and in syllabi evidence accessibility to students to engage with their instructors.
- Student support services offices such as admissions, financial aid, advising, TRIO, social work, accessibility, tutoring center, adult basic education, veteran's resource center and the Nest Multicultural Center all evidence support for student learning.
- The Pathways for Academic Student Success (PASS) program supports the success of liberal arts students.
- The Comprehensive Facilities Plan and the Technology Master Plan evidence careful planning of space and technology needs across both campuses.
- Laboratories, clinical site agreements, performance spaces, the Ag and Energy Center, and the Library are evidence of the infrastructure provided to ensure students have comprehensive and robust support.

In allegiance to our mission – “*We build futures*” – CLC takes its role as a regional educational leader seriously, with a strong focus on post-secondary academic excellence in both Liberal Arts and Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings; in our support for intellectual inquiry, practical application and integration; in our highly qualified faculty and staff; in our support structures to support learners across the many challenges of their higher education journey; and in the fulfillment of our mission.

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Chapter Four: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates its effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

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Chapter Four: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates its effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

CLC is an institution centered around teaching and learning. The college's mission, vision, and values emphasize CLC's commitment to excellence in education and service to our students.

We ensure the quality of our educational offerings through several key processes, including program analysis, curriculum development, credit transcription, specialized accreditation, and graduate follow-up surveys. Our 5-year program review cycle and the annual division analysis provides us with the information we need to make on-going program improvements.

Additionally, we evaluate every credit that we place on student records, whether those are earned through the college, transferred in from other institutions, or earned through credit for prior learning. We exercise authority over our curriculum, through the governance of the Academic Affairs and Standards Council, including prerequisites for courses and course learning outcomes, and we ensure that courses taught through the College in the Schools program are equivalent to those taught by CLC faculty.

Several academic programs, such as Nursing, Automobile Technology, Dental Assisting, Diesel and Heavy Equipment, and Medical Assisting, maintain specialized accreditation through external agencies. In addition, our College in the Schools program is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP).

We evaluate the success of our graduates through the graduate follow-up survey to ensure our programs are effective in preparing students to be successful in their chosen field. We gather data on specific metrics such as employment rate, related employment rate, continuing education, and salary to evidence this success. Additionally, Minnesota State provides us with data on student retention, transfer and completion to monitor the quality of our educational offerings.

We engage in ongoing assessment of student learning, guided by the faculty-led Student Learning Assessment Committee, for both curricular and co-curricular activities. Assessment occurs at many levels, including course-level, program-level, and assessment of the college-wide learning outcomes. The resulting data provides the necessary information we need to make continuous improvements to the teaching and learning process. The processes that we use for assessment reflect good practice, including established learning goals, curriculum mapping,

professional development opportunities, and the substantial participation by faculty and other relevant staff members in our assessment activities.

Over the next few years, we expect to further mature our assessment processes by:

- Enhancing systems for managing assessment data and reports (both career and technical program-level and Liberal Arts assessment data need information management support),
- Continuing to integrate assessment evidence organically into academic and administrative decision-making,
- Enhancing support for program-level assessment (improve consistency in gathering and using assessment evidence in more than 60 academic programs),
- Continuing to develop co-curricular assessment initiatives, and
- Integrating the entire CLC community into Assessment Day and the continuous improvement process.

At CLC we are committed to the success of our students and equitable student outcomes. We have defined goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence, and completion rates, articulated in the strategic plan, the CLC Performance Indicators report, and departmental master plans. We consider these goals, set by Minnesota State and the CLC administration, to be ambitious, yet attainable. We frequently monitor and report our progress towards these goals. We use the data to make improvements to our programs and services, continuously evaluating our effectiveness and our impact on student success.

Examples of evidence that CLC meets this criterion:

- Minnesota State Policy 3.36 requires regular evaluation of academic programs.
- Templates for program review, for both liberal arts programs and career and technical programs, evidence the type of data collected to ensure programs remain relevant.
- The division analysis report provides evidence of additional program analysis that occurs annually.
- Minnesota State policies and procedures govern credit transcription including 3.35 (credit for prior learning), 3.21 (transfer credit), and 3.40 (transfer appeal).
- AASC meeting minutes demonstrate faculty oversight of curriculum as well as programmatic changes made based on assessment results.
- NACEP accreditation ensures a quality CIS program.
- Various program accreditations are an additional assurance of the quality of those specialized programs.
- Graduate follow-up survey reports and student success data from the System Office evidence that we monitor the success of our graduates.
- Course outlines and course syllabi evidence the existence of defined learning outcomes.
- The CLC Curriculum Map shows the alignment of our college-wide learning outcomes with program curriculum.

- SLAC meeting minutes and submitted assessment data and reports provide evidence of faculty involvement in the student learning assessment process.
- The assessment reporting forms detail the type of data collected by the various academic programs and service departments.
- Agendas for Assessment Day and other professional development activities demonstrate support provided by the college for assessment activities.
- Survey results from the assessment feedback form provide evidence that we are continuously monitoring and improving the assessment process itself.
- The CLC Performance Indicator document, along with the strategic plan and various master plans, evidence the many initiatives underway and planned to enhance student persistence and completion, including the commitment to close success gaps for underrepresented student populations.
- Department Fact Sheets and the division analysis evidence the monitoring of enrollment and student success by program.
- Participation in the HLC Student Success Academy further demonstrates our commitment to improving student outcomes.

At CLC, we pride ourselves on the quality of our academic programs and support services, continuously evaluating student outcomes such as learning, persistence, and completion, to drive improvement across the college departments and units.

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Chapter Five: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

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Chapter Five: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Historically and currently, CLC has the resources, institutional structures, and processes necessary to fulfill its mission and continuously improve academic offerings. The college has the will and institutional flexibility to confront any future challenges, embrace opportunities, and respond to trends.

Our shared governance structures, such as the Shared Governance Council, Academic Affairs and Standards Council, and bargaining unit leadership ensure that the CLC administration engages our internal constituencies in planning and policy and procedure development. This includes the setting of academic requirements. Our leadership uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the college and inclusive of our various constituencies. This data spans a vast array of performance indicators including data regarding the effectiveness of teaching and learning, financial, human resource, facilities, and technology processes.

The college has the financial backing of a healthy state government and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, a mature state higher education system managed by a full-time, experientially qualified chancellor and directed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the state's governor and approved by the state legislature. Our budgeting process is collaborative and intentional, allocating resources to support our strategic initiatives in pursuit of our stated goals, not the least of which is to improve the student experience through enhanced student outcomes. We believe that these goals are realistic, given our resources, and support our stated mission.

The infrastructure used to support our operations, created through responsible resource allocation, includes our organizational structure, staffing levels, facilities, and technology. Through our highly qualified operational staff, state-of-the-art facilities, and robust technology infrastructure, we are able to support our operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

To maintain this high-quality level of operation, we engage in systematic and integrated planning and improvement. The college has a strong history of shared governance and engagement with the college community regarding college planning and resource allocation. The strategic plan, supporting master plans, and division planning documents are used to delineate our college priorities, given our current capacity, and anticipated fluctuations in our revenue sources. These

plans were developed collaboratively, engaging both internal and external constituencies. With this broad input, we believe that our plans are sufficient to anticipate evolving external factors such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy, and state financial support. Data gathered from the planning process, the assessment of student learning, and evaluation of departments and units are used to inform the budgeting and resource allocation process.

Examples of evidence that CLC meets this criterion:

- The President's Regional Advisory Committee, College in the Schools Committee, and the CLC Foundation Board of Directors are examples of how we engage external constituencies in planning and decision-making.
- The CLC Decision-Making Process highlights the various campus groups included in the shared governance model, and minutes from these meetings evidence how these internal constituencies are used to arrive at informed decisions.
- Informal meetings held by the president, such as Town Halls, community brainstorming sessions, and Employee Leader and Student Leadership meetings, support the claim that administration engages its internal constituencies.
- Meeting minutes from other campus committees such as Safety Committee, the Student Life Committee, the Technology Fee Committee, the Fiscal and Facilities Committee, and Student Senate further evidence our desire to broadly engage our faculty and staff in college operations.
- Division analysis reports, the Key Performance Indicator Report, the annual cost study report, and various survey results (such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, the IPEDs Feedback Report, and the Great Colleges to Work For) evidence the extensive amount of data used to reach informed decisions.
- AASC meeting minutes demonstrate faculty oversight of setting academic requirements.
- The Strategic Planning Framework and the Strategic Planning Linkage Matrix reflect the college's integrated planning process, linking the strategic plan with assessment results and master plans.
- Position descriptions with established minimum and preferred qualifications for faculty and staff, employee evaluations, faculty observation forms, and professional development activities such as funded training opportunities and in-services all provide evidence of a highly qualified and trained staff.
- The college student-to-faculty ratio of 18:1 supports our claim of adequate academic staffing to support our educational mission.
- The college composite financial index (CFI) of 5.34 supports our claim of adequate fiscal resources to support our educational mission.
- The college facilities condition index (FCI) of .13 supports our claim of adequate facilities to support our educational mission.
- The process by which key performance indicators are established, that being through comparison to other Minnesota State colleges, supports the claim that these goals are both realistic and achievable.

- The budget request process and resulting budget requests evidence alignment with our strategic priorities.
- The Enrollment Projection report evidences our attention to possible changes in enrollment trends, demographic shifts, and programmatic changes as we allocate resources.
- The 77% budget allocation to instruction, academic support, and student services demonstrates alignment of fiscal support to our educational mission.
- The Institutional Effectiveness Framework evidences the linkage between CLC planning documents and Minnesota State strategic priorities.

The college has the fiscal means, the community support, and the professional faculty, staff, and administration to continue its long-standing role as the educator of choice for the Central Minnesota Region. The college is attentive to the fiscal, human, physical, and technology capabilities, and we allocate our resources accordingly to support a quality educational experience for students.

The college has tried and tested systems in place for evaluating curriculum and programs, assessing student learning, budgeting, and planning, and strives to integrate these various processes to systematically improve our operations. Integrated planning such as the CLC Strategic Plan 2018-2025 and related master plans bring focus and alignment as we work to achieve our mission: "We Build Futures" and to advance the Minnesota State Strategic Framework. The college embraces and fulfills its mission and is well positioned to do so far into the future.