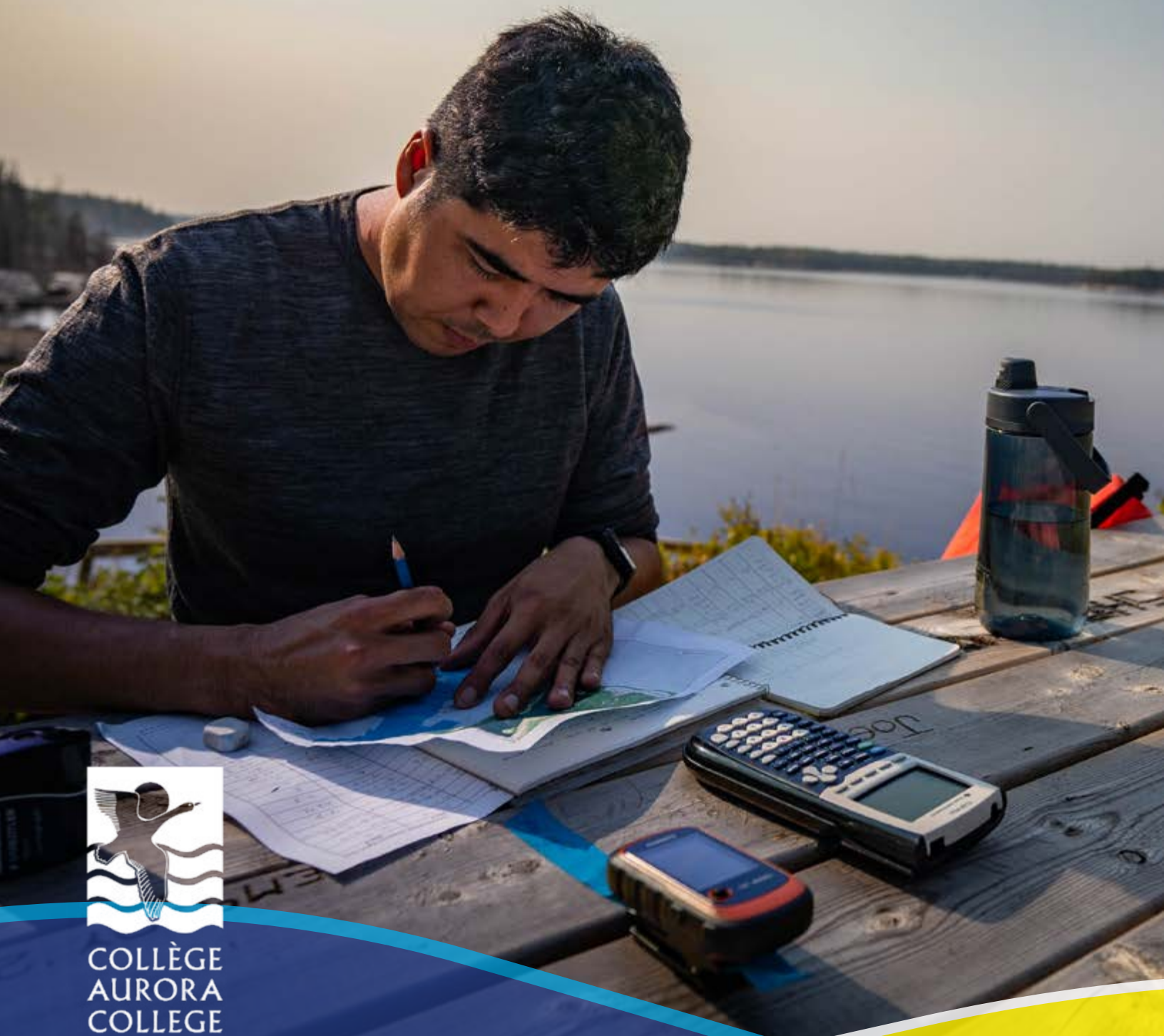


# Aurora College Strategic Plan **2024-2027**

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# Vision

Through the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university, we will establish a university in the North and for the North that creates equitable learning, research, and career opportunities for residents across the Northwest Territories and beyond.

# Mission

Demonstrate leadership in the delivery of relevant and meaningful education, research, and reconciliation actions rooted in strong connections to Northern land, tradition, community, and people.

# Values

## **HONOURING NORTHERN LAND, PEOPLE, AND CULTURE**

We value the uniqueness of this land and the people who live here. We respect the land, water, air, and animals. We work with community leaders, organizations, and individuals to strengthen collaboration and build relationships with the communities we call home.

## **EXCELLENCE AND INTEGRITY**

We are dedicated to supporting our students, faculty, and staff in their pursuit of academic excellence. We hold ourselves to the highest standards in our teaching, research, and ethical behaviour. We always strive to incorporate emerging practices and approaches to ensure continuous improvement.

## **INCLUSIVENESS AND DIVERSITY**

We welcome the richness that comes from different perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. We foster a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that celebrates different ways of being, knowing, seeing, and doing. We recognize the unique needs of individuals and work to support their success in their journey at Aurora College.

## **INNOVATION**

We foster a culture of innovation, curiosity, and constant exploration. We inspire and nurture these qualities, striving to find new and exciting ways to meet the unique needs of the North.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

We believe that accountability is key to building trust and creating meaningful impact in our communities. We hold ourselves accountable to the people we serve – our students, staff, and community members – and ensure that our actions, processes, and programs reflect this commitment.

# Background

**Aurora College** is a public college in the Northwest Territories (NWT) with a mandate to deliver a broad spectrum of adult and post-secondary education programs to meet the needs of individuals, communities, and the labour market.

Aurora College has three campuses and 19 community learning centres, serving both large and rural communities. Programming includes the delivery of academic upgrading, skill and professional development, certificate, diploma, trades and apprenticeship credentialing, industrial training, and university degrees through partner educational institutions.

Aurora Research Institute (ARI), Aurora College's research division, has the mandate to improve the quality of life for NWT residents by applying scientific, technological, and Indigenous knowledge to solve Northern problems and advance social and economic goals. ARI has research centres in Inuvik, Yellowknife, and Fort Smith.

Aurora College began its transformation into a polytechnic university in 2019. It is anticipated that this major investment in post-secondary education opportunities for the NWT will create a destination university in the North and for the North, allowing more residents to develop the skills needed for the Northern jobs of the future. With recent amendments to the *Aurora College Act*, as well as the implementation of the *Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Act*, Aurora College is poised to continue transformational change as an institution operating at arm's length from the territorial government. These changes are paving the way for the launch of the polytechnic

university in 2025. The last three years have seen many milestones completed as Aurora College continues to grow and evolve in anticipation of becoming a polytechnic university. These include:

- Development of the College's first Academic Plan;
- Creation of the first Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) Plan;
- And, the re-establishment of the Board of Governors.

The coming years will see the revitalization of the Bachelor of Education and the introduction of Bachelor of Social Work and General Studies programs at Aurora College. Decisions will also be made around the first "Made in the North" degree offered at the College.

This strategic plan continues to reflect the role of Aurora College in implementing the overall vision presented in the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) *Post-Secondary Education Strategic Framework 2019-2029*, namely that every resident of the NWT has an equitable opportunity to reach their full potential by obtaining a post-secondary education from institutions that are student-centred, accessible, high quality, relevant and accountable. It will highlight Aurora College's pathways towards meaningful reconciliation actions, strategic planning processes, and the strategic pillars which guide this plan's three-year mandate.



# Reconciliation

As an institution, Aurora College will follow the guidance of Northern Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Holders in enacting reconciliation.

Aurora College believes that the pathway to reconciliation lies in responding to and answering the Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), to meeting our responsibilities as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and to honouring our commitments as signatories to the Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) Indigenous Education Protocol for Colleges and Institutes; and that these actions need to be guided by consultation from the Indigenous Peoples of the North.

Recent amendments to the Aurora College Act include creating a unique tricameral governance model designed to ensure effective and efficient governance that is reflective of the people of the Northwest Territories. The tricameral governance model will include three governing bodies: the Board of Governors, the Academic Council, and the Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council.

The Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council will play a central role in guiding Aurora College on its pathway toward reconciliation. The Council will make recommendations to support the success of Indigenous students, staff, and of the College overall.

Establishment of the Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council will require consultation with the seven separate Indigenous governments in the territory,

as well as Indigenous organizations and partners, to establish criteria for selecting members to the Council. The Council should also reflect the diversity of the Indigenous peoples of the NWT and their unique values and histories. The establishment of the Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council in the tricameral governance model is essential for our continued work in enacting reconciliation.

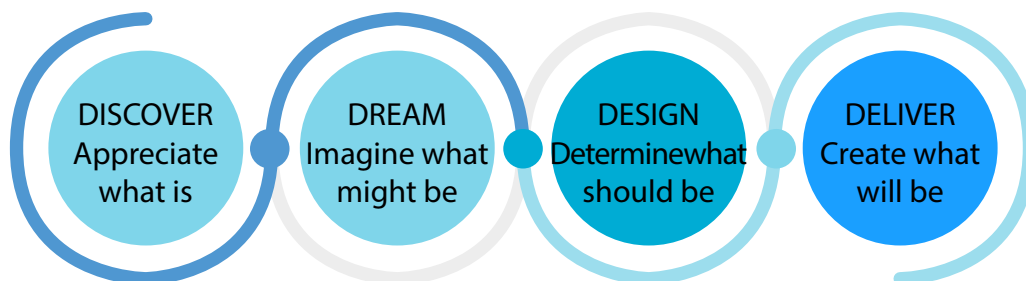


# Strategic Planning

Transforming to a polytechnic university is a complex, multi-year project. The 2020-23 strategic plan guided the early stages of the transformation. This strategic plan will guide Aurora College to the launch date of the polytechnic university.

Through an online survey and 21 in-person consultations, students, staff, stakeholders, and the general public shared their experiences and aspirations for Aurora College. Stakeholders included Indigenous groups, GNWT, non-governmental organizations, businesses, industries, and affiliated academic institutions. Participants played a central role in shaping the strategic plan.

During the strategic planning engagements, participants were asked to:

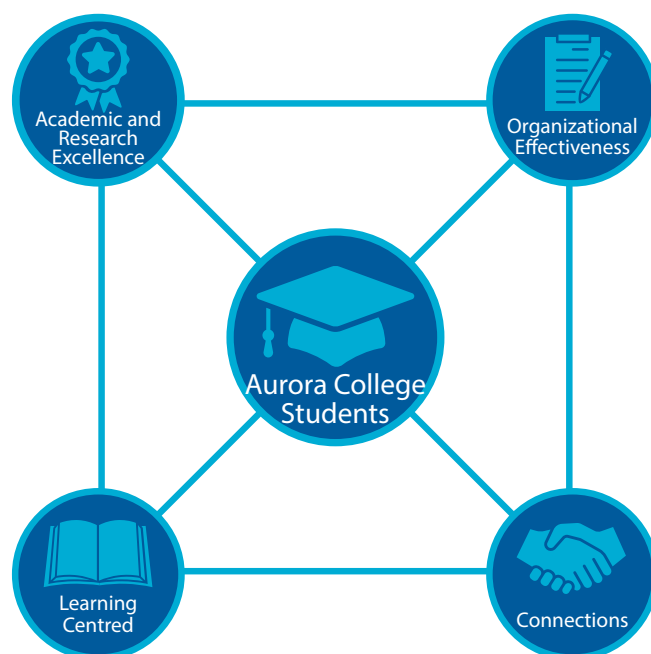


It is important to acknowledge earlier phases of transforming Aurora College into a polytechnic university were built on years of prior engagement and the essential preparation work guided by the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. This work is an essential part of strengthening the post-secondary education system in the NWT.

## Strategic Pillars

Given the short duration of the previous strategic plan, the four strategic pillars remain unchanged. Consultations in developing the current strategic plan highlighted Aurora College's success in creating an environment that is caring and committed to supporting student success across our campuses, community learning centres, and facilities.

These pillars are interconnected with work in one area mutually supporting others. Together, they establish a broad frame for strategic priorities. The core values of Aurora College are woven throughout the pillars and associated priorities. The pillars and associated priorities will define the path toward a strong foundation for transformational change to a polytechnic university.



Four strategic pillars set the direction for Aurora College and represent the primary areas of activity for the next three years.





# Academic and Research Excellence

**We will enrich our student experience by creating a dynamic learning, teaching, and research environment that will mutually benefit members of the Aurora College community and the people of the NWT.**

We will strive to incorporate Indigenous Studies content in all aspects of our institution, permeating all post-secondary programming and courses. We will create a culture of curiosity and intellectual rigour, encouraging an exploration of diverse perspectives, engaging in critical thinking, and pursuing innovative ideas.

We support research initiatives connected to and benefitting the communities, cultures, and environments of the NWT. We will further develop partnerships with research organizations and stakeholders to explore new and exciting research opportunities. We will support the continuous development of a modern and innovative research division through collaboration and integration of research priorities into our academic programming.

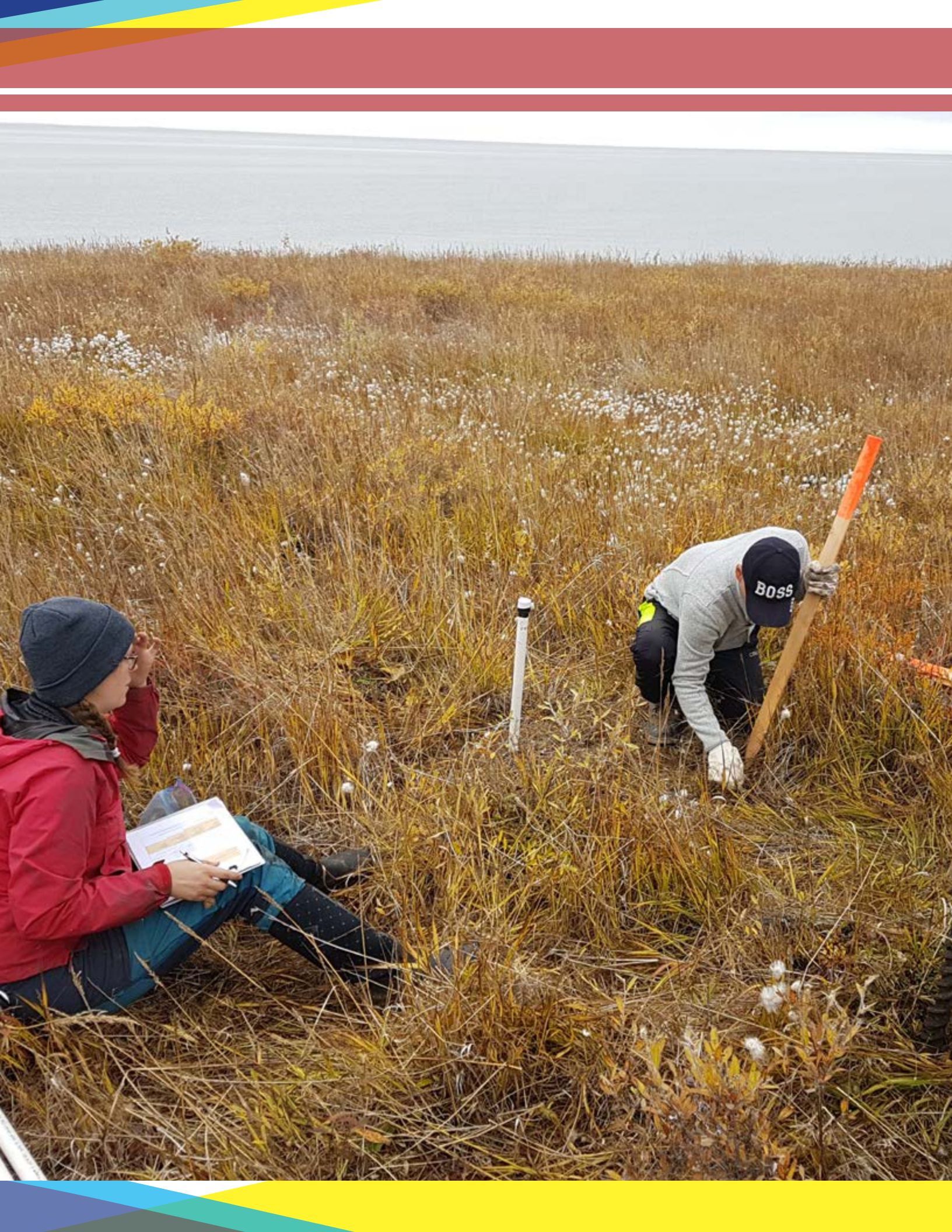
## **PRIORITIES:**

- Invest in teaching and learning technologies and resources that enable students and faculty to explore new ideas and approaches;
- Support the use of multiple assessment options to accommodate different learning preferences;
- Support investment in faculty and staff by expanding professional development opportunities;
- Strengthen pathway options and transitional supports for all students to continue post-secondary education;
- Develop research opportunities that recognize the NWT's rich landscape of traditional knowledge and natural science resources;
- Increase opportunities for students to participate in research that is relevant to the societies and environment of the NWT.

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We will continue to work to maintain and increase a high standard of program delivery in the NWT. This includes the introduction of the Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Social Work, and the new General Studies programs to Aurora College's offerings. These will increase the number of programs offered in the North and help students transition into post-secondary studies.

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# Learning Centred

**We are dedicated to providing learners with programs and services that are adaptive and flexible to help learners meet their academic and personal goals.**

We are focused on empowering learners to develop the confidence necessary to be successful during their studies and beyond. We recognize that the majority of Aurora College learners are Indigenous, and we remain committed to creating a culturally meaningful environment where all learners can grow and succeed. We provide a caring college community with excellent programming, supports, and services to maximize the learning experience and ensure success.

## PRIORITIES

- Strengthen and expand holistic learner supports.
- Ensure support and advising are consistent for all learners throughout their student life cycle.
- Ensure programming, services and supports provide equitable and meaningful opportunities for Indigenous learners.
- Provide a culturally safe and supportive learning environment for all.
- Continue to strengthen learner-staff relationships to support academic success.
- Demonstrate a college-wide learner-centred approach through cross-departmental collaboration.
- Recruit, develop and retain a skilled and knowledgeable college team.
- Increase the availability of alternative learning pathways and supports to promote learner success.

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Efforts to strengthen Aurora College as a learner-centred institution include the continued implementation of the Strategic Enrolment Management and Marketing (SEMM) plan. Learner supports and resources will be improved through enhanced academic advising. An Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Coordinator will be hired to guide the growth of an inclusive culture at the College. These initiatives will support the institution in providing programming and services that meet all Aurora College learners' academic and personal goals.

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# Connections

**We will establish, strengthen, and support partnerships with the Indigenous governments, communities, industry, the Government of the Northwest Territories, non-governmental organizations, and other academic institutions.**

These partnerships will be a key focus of our strategic plan, as we recognize the immense value of collaborative efforts in creating new opportunities for our learners and advancing Northern research priorities. Our approach will involve engaging with our partners to foster meaningful formal and informal relationships.

We acknowledge the importance of local culture and traditional histories in these partnerships, ensuring that they reflect the unique identity and heritage of the NWT.

Through these collaborations, we will establish connections that are not only meaningful but also aligned with the interests and values of the North. By doing so, we will build an effective, efficient, and sustainable institution that serves the needs and aspirations of the NWT community.

## PRIORITIES

- Maintain an open, welcoming, and respectful community within our institution;
- Establish partnership agreements with Indigenous governments, industry, NWT organizations, and academic institutions with an emphasis on being responsive to Northern employment needs;
- Commit to ongoing engagement with communities and partners, focused on ensuring the institution remains relevant;
- Enhance our presence and visibility among NWT primary and secondary students to encourage interest in Aurora College programs;
- Identify and promote the unique strengths and attractions of attending Aurora College in the NWT;
- Establish partnerships that build research capacity around Northern research priorities;
- Actively develop relationships with academic institutions on a national and international level;
- Create a clear pathway for potential students within communities to succeed in post-secondary programming and achieve their goals.

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By seeking out, building, and maintaining strong connections with partners and stakeholders, the institution will ensure students and staff have more opportunities to learn and grow. Building student mobility through articulation and transfer agreements with other academic institutions will increase student access to new and exciting programming while allowing them to complete more education in the North. The Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council will guide Aurora College in reconciliation to build stronger relationships with our community.

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# Organizational Effectiveness

**We are committed to being transparent, accountable, and responsive to recognize the need for integrated planning, operational excellence, and continuous quality improvement.**

Through the annual Corporate Plan, we will provide stakeholders and the public with comprehensive plans and detailed and transparent results of Aurora College's progress and performance.

## PRIORITIES

- Create thriving campus locations and community learning centres that leverage the unique opportunities at each site;
- Explore additional options and availability for students in campus communities that support housing and childcare needs;
- Expand, increase, and support processes to provide communication to and from internal and external stakeholders focused on institutional vision and direction;
- Demonstrate responsive actions to the changing needs and opportunities of northern communities who seek to provide growth opportunities for their residents;
- Create a workplace environment that fosters and supports opportunities that attract and retain quality talent focused on serving the needs of northern learners;
- Modify and establish internal systems, structures, and supports to allow for the institution's continued growth.

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Focused work to improve organizational effectiveness will result in a transparent, comprehensive, and ongoing system of monitoring and reporting institutional performance. Underlying this will be a clear understanding of operational needs and costs as they relate to programs, services, and research supports.

Aurora College's response to the Information Technology review and the recommendations for a new budget model will establish the internal infrastructure to support the requirements for a modern institution. The organizational redesign will provide a framework for College staff to grow into a polytechnic university and continue to expand into the future to meet the needs of the NWT.

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# Reporting Success

**This Strategic Plan is an essential step in advancing the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university.**

It will assist us in understanding priorities and create a clear role for the Aurora College team in planning and enacting transformational change. We are committed to establishing an effective, efficient, and sustainable polytechnic university that will benefit generations of Northerners.

The core values outlined in this strategic plan are mapped to each of the priorities outlined in the pillars. The priority statements translate to actionable outcomes in the annual Corporate Plan, the Academic Plan, as well as the SEMM plan. Demonstrating the interconnectedness of the College's strategic documents is central to supporting the College in meeting its strategic priorities identified in this document.

We will report on the progress through the Aurora College Corporate Plan and Annual Report.



