



PROPOSAL FOR A TEMPORARY OFF-CAMPUS LOCATION WITH A THREE-YEAR LEASE AGREEMENT

Pursuant to Title 281, Chapter 10, Section 007.04 of the Nebraska Administrative Code, prior approval of the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Post-Secondary Education (CCPE) is required when an institution is “making a commitment to facilities for longer than one year at a cooperating institution, an off-campus center, or off-campus site. Section 8 of Chapter 10 specifies the following criteria will be considered in the review of off-campus courses, programs, or facilities:

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| 008.01 | Evidence of need and demand |
| 008.02 | Consistency with authorized institutional role and mission |
| 008.03 | Avoidance of unnecessary duplication of similar courses or program offerings by another institution in the same service area |
| 008.04 | Adequacy of resources for instruction (e.g., physical facilities; adequate and appropriate library, information resources, and other student support service; and adequate and appropriate faculty and faculty-related academic resources |
| 008.05 | Avoidance of long-term commitments unless there is substantial evidence of continuing need and demand |

Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC) is seeking approval of a three-year lease agreement with a local industry partner to provide temporary space for the college’s new construction technology program. This precedes WNCC’s application for a new location with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

BACKGROUND

In September 2024, the CCPE approved WNCC’s proposal to create an associate of applied science degree and four professional skill awards in construction technology ([Attachment A](#)). On March 27, 2025, WNCC received notice that the program has also received tentative approval from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), dependent upon final review by the HLC’s Institutional Review Council in May 2025 ([Attachment B](#)).

WNCC will begin offering courses in construction technology starting fall 2025. On pages 4 and 5 of the program proposal, WNCC discusses the challenges currently faced with inadequate space for the program. The current applied technology building on the Scottsbluff campus is at capacity, and the flexible space utilized on campus for some non-credit training, including construction trades, will no longer be available as the college renovates the John N. Harms Center to expand and upgrade space for WNCC's nursing and allied health programs.

After extensive research, WNCC identified a suitable location through Eakes Office Solutions in Scottsbluff to serve as the primary location for non-credit construction trades training ([Attachment C](#)). The space is equally viable for the credit-bearing program.

Evidence of Need

WNCC is the only two-year institution in western Nebraska, serving a region encompassing more than 17,000 square miles over 12.5 counties. WNCC's main campus is located in Scottsbluff with two additional locations, one in Alliance and one in Sidney. The communities where facilities are located are equidistant in order to maximize coverage of the college's expansive service area.

In spring 2022, WNCC administrators conducted a "listening tour" of the WNCC service area in preparation for the college's 2023-2027 strategic planning process. The number one concern expressed by 10 of the 13 communities visited was training in the skilled trades – plumbers, electricians, HVACR technicians, masons, and framers. Very often, they identified affordable housing, lack of jobs for younger people, the aging and retiring workforce, and the aging infrastructure as critical issues in their communities.

All of these issues can be addressed, at least in part, by a well-trained workforce in the construction trades. The needs identified during the listening tour are supported by a review of the Nebraska Department of Labor's list of high-demand, high-wage, and high-skill (H3) positions, where construction-related occupations are consistently ranked. Regional Lightcast data also supports the need.

The college moved forward to respond to community need by developing a non-credit construction trades program based on the guidelines of the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER). Program offerings were made available at the college's three locations, and trailers were outfitted to travel to outlying communities as needed.

With demand for training increasing on the non-credit side and emerging requests for dual-credit programming in the area, WNCC began the process to expand the program to credit-bearing, with four professional skills awards (PSAs) stackable to an associate of applied science degree.

With regard to dual-credit instruction, for the past five years, WNCC has allowed Mid Plains Community College to offer dual credit courses in construction technology at one of the Panhandle's larger high schools in Gering. These courses have been well-subscribed, and several other high schools, including Scottsbluff High School, have requested construction technology classes through dual credit, as well. WNCC has worked closely with all 25 school districts in the service area to develop dual credit opportunities in construction technology.

With the need for training, comes the need for adequate space for the instruction (see "Adequacy of Resources" below).

Centrality to Institutional Role and Mission

As defined by Nebraska Revised Statute §85-962, WNCC has as its "...first instructional and service priority applied technology and occupational education..."

Further, WNCC's institutional mission is "To provide learning opportunities—enriching lives, invigorating communities, and changing futures."

Workforce development is central to the statewide and institutional missions of WNCC. A skilled labor force in the construction trades has the potential of supporting all of the communities in the College's service area, and higher wages and sustainable training has the potential of changing the trajectory of each student's future.

The program is also consistent with the CCPE's *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education* (revised 2022) which has as one of its major statewide goals that of workforce development, specifically improving the workforce readiness of graduates of public institutions and responding to workforce needs by developing, offering, and promoting degree or certificate programs in needed areas. In addition, the new program in construction technology responds to the plan's directives:

- "Postsecondary education institutions will assess evolving needs and priorities of students and people of Nebraska in a timely manner and will adopt new methods and technologies to address them."
- "Postsecondary education institutions will work as partners with one another and with other entities, including those in the private sector, whenever appropriate to share resources and deliver programs cooperatively to enhance learning opportunities for students."
- "Postsecondary education will work effectively with elementary and secondary schools to improve teaching and learning at all levels of education, provide opportunities for early college enrollment, and ensure the college and career readiness of high school graduates."

Adequacy of Resources for Instruction

A) Physical Facilities

1) Short-Term Solution

The applied technology facility on the main Scottsbluff campus, constructed in 1971-72, is at capacity, housing degree programs in automotive, collision repair, diesel, and welding technologies. As noted above, the flexible space utilized on campus for some non-credit training, including the construction trades, will no longer be available as the John N. Harms Center undergoes renovation to expand the space for WNCC's nursing and allied health programs.

WNCC reviewed a number of potential locations for the non-credit construction trades training in Scottsbluff, Alliance, and Sidney, before identifying temporary space in Scottsbluff. The facility has been leased from an industry partner and is two miles from the college's main campus. This space is equally viable to support the college's new construction technology program.

Eakes Office Solutions Facility ([Attachment D](#))

The gross space of the leased facility is approximately 3,990 square feet. Of that total, approximately 800 square feet is comprised of office spaces, break/lunchroom, a storage room, and a restroom. Remaining space is divided roughly in half for classroom and lab. The classroom will be equipped with classroom standard desks and chairs, as well as desktop computers having internet access.

Lab space is flexible to accommodate various equipment needed for different training modules. This space has exterior garage door access to facilitate equipment movement. Sufficient space is available for small student teams to create mock-ups for carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and heating ventilation-air conditioning-refrigeration (HVACR) required for hands-on training. Electrical infrastructure is projected to exceed that needed for power tools and charging stations in addition to that necessary for lighting and climate control.

In addition to the description above, the space is similar in size and arrangement to that dedicated to career and technical education programs on the main campus. For quality of curriculum and safety, starting class size will not exceed an instructor-to-student ratio of 1:18. Recognizing there will be attrition the instructor-to-student ratio will lower to the range of 1:15, 1:16. This is based on attrition rates common to other WNCC applied technology programs.

2) Long-Term Planning

Over the long-term, after the remodeling of the John N. Harms Center has been completed, the next project in the campus master facilities plan is to expand the space for the skilled and technical sciences—not just construction, but welding, automotive, collision repair, and diesel technologies, and other programs needed in the service area.

Wilkins Architecture Design Planning was retained to design the renovation of the John N. Harms Center and to update WNCC's master facilities plan. In anticipation of the next project, they were also asked to explore the initial space needs for applied technology programs with the skilled and technical science faculty. Executive leadership is discussing those needs in relationship to the WNCC's 2023-27 strategic plan, which calls for the "expansion... of career and technical educational programs and training in Alliance and Sidney..." as well as ongoing budget priorities. The WNCC Foundation has expressed interest in and committed support for the renovation of the current applied technology facility and/or smaller projects supporting career and technical education at WNCC's other locations as the foci of its next capital campaign.

B) Availability of Academic and Student Support Services

No unique support services are required for the construction technology program, but WNCC offers a wide range of academic and student support services for all students. The location for the construction technology program is two miles from the main campus in Scottsbluff, where all services can be directly accessed, including financial aid, academic and career advising, housing and dining, writing and math centers, counseling, student engagement opportunities, tutoring, and library resources. Professional staff from the main campus frequently travel to additional location to ensure the ongoing needs of WNCC students are met, and it is anticipated that this practice will continue for the construction technology program, as well.

Many student support services are also available remotely or in an online format. WNCC has and utilizes the technological and learning resources necessary to support students at all locations. WNCC's IT Department ensures students have adequate access to internet and computers at all of its instructional locations, and travel when necessary to troubleshoot issues.

The WNCC Student Portal serves as the primary access point for all students to the College's online environment. Through the portal, students can register for classes, make payments online, schedule appointments with professional staff, secure an unofficial transcript, or apply for graduation when the time is right. Easy access links to Blackboard, Zoom, and the library are available in the portal, which is available to all students from any location 24/7.

C) Adequacy of Faculty and Faculty-Related Academic Resources

As addressed in the original program proposal, there are currently no faculty employed at WNCC that are qualified to teach the construction technology program. Initially, courses will be taught by adjunct faculty identified from the existing pool of qualified non-credit trainers; qualified high school teachers will be engaged for dual credit instruction. An associate dean of instruction will oversee the delivery and assessment of the program, and after the 2025-26 academic year, WNCC will evaluate the need for a full-time faculty member.

WNCC's Human Resources Office is responsible for ensuring policy and procedures related to the recruitment and selection of employees are followed equitably by all hiring authorities at all locations. All full-time and adjunct faculty, regardless of campus affiliation, are required to meet the same qualifications as outlined in institutional policy. The faculty job description is the same for all faculty.

In addition to mandatory new employee orientation, faculty are onboarded at the division level with more specialized and administrative training being done by the dean of instruction. Professional development and affiliated release time are addressed specific to each faculty member. Professional development exists as a line item in annual budget planning, and these funds may be supplemented by the dean of instruction or Vice President for Academic Affairs if needed.

AVOIDANCE OF LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

The leasing of a facility to house WNCC's non-credit training and credit-bearing courses in construction technology is intended to be a temporary solution to limited available space, with the timeframe defined, in part, by the schedule of renovation projects and projected budget planning.

The three-year period for the initial lease allows WNCC to move forward with instruction until the renovation of the John N. Harms Center has been completed and thorough exploration can be given to possible solutions including, but not limited to, the renovation of the current facility or the investment in smaller capital projects at WNCC's other locations. During the initial lease, the college will be able to evaluate the continued viability of the leased facility given student demand and instructional needs and enter into a year-by-year lease following after the initial three-year lease, as necessary.