



Assurance Argument

HLC Year 10 Comprehensive Evaluation for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Table of Contents

Criterion 1: Mission	4
1.A Mission Alignment	4
1.B Mission and Public Good	10
1.C Mission and Diversity of Society	16
Criterion 1 Summary.....	22
Criterion 2: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	23
2.A Integrity	23
2.B Transparency	31
2.C Board Governance	35
2.D Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression	41
2.E Knowledge Acquisition, Discovery and Application	45
Criterion 2 Summary	48
Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning for Student Success	49
3.A Educational Programs	49
3.B Exercise of Intellectual Inquiry	56
3.C Sufficiency of Faculty and Staff	63
3.D Support for Student Learning and Resources for Teaching.....	69
3.E Assessment of Student Learning	74
3.F Program Review	84
3.G Student Success Outcomes	90
Criterion 3 Summary	97
Criterion 4: Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	98
4.A Effective Administrative Structures	98
4.B Resource Base and Sustainability	105
4.C Planning for Quality Improvement	116
Criterion 4 Summary	124

Assurance Argument

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College - L'Anse, MI

Review date: 10-19-2026

Welcome Message for Review Team

Introduction

Boozhoo and welcome,

To understand Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College, it is important to begin with the people and place from which the College emerged.

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community is part of the historic Lake Superior Band of Chippewa Indians—the Ojibwe Anishinaabeg—whose ancestral homelands extend across the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan and northern portions of Wisconsin and Minnesota. Our cultural and historical connections are centered around Gichigami (Lake Superior) and the Keweenaw Peninsula. The L'Anse Indian Reservation, established through the Treaty of 1854, is the oldest and largest reservation in what is now known as Michigan and is the primary land base of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community.

The Tribe chartered the College in July 1975 as an exercise of sovereignty and self-determination. Establishing the College affirmed the right and responsibility of the Community to shape education for its people, sustain Anishinaabe culture and language, and prepare future generations to serve their families and communities.

That responsibility continues to guide us. As a Tribal land grant institution, KBOCC supports and uplifts all learners to achieve their goals through holistic education while promoting Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways. Guided by the Seven Grandfather Teachings, we aspire to be an intergenerational center of educational excellence and innovation for community advancement and well-being.

We serve Indigenous, first-generation, adult, place-bound, and other learners through associate degrees, certificates, workforce education, land grant initiatives, and community programming. Small classes, close relationships, culturally grounded learning, and holistic support help learners pursue their goals and Mino-Bimadiziwin - the good life.

During this review period, KBOCC strengthened academic assessment and program review, expanded student success and institutional research capacity, renewed strategic and enrollment planning, and improved the governance and administrative structures supporting its mission. This work reflects both meaningful progress and an honest commitment to continued learning and improvement.

Our comprehensive evaluation theme, *Planting Seeds for Seven Generations*, expresses the responsibility underlying this work. The programs we develop, relationships we nurture, resources we steward, and improvements we make today help shape the educational opportunities and cultural vitality future generations will inherit.

We offer this Assurance Argument as an evidence-based account of that responsibility and as the collective work of faculty, staff, students, Regents, Tribal leaders, Elders, and community partners. Miigwech for your service and for the care you bring to your review. We hope your time with KBOCC helps you understand not only our institutional practices and progress, but also the history, relationships, and sense of responsibility that give our work meaning.

1 - Mission

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

1.A. Mission Alignment

The institution's educational programs, enrollment profile and scope of operations align with its publicly articulated mission.

Argument

Most recently reviewed and refreshed by the KBOCC Board of Regents in 2024, the official [mission](#) of Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College is:

As a Tribal land grant institution, Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College supports and uplifts all learners to achieve their goals through holistic education, while promoting Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways.

KBOCC's mission is grounded in its responsibility to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) and the rural region it serves. It unites four commitments: upholding Tribal land grant mission, supporting and uplifting learners to achieve their goals, providing holistic education, and promoting Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways. These commitments are enacted together through academic programs, student supports, workforce and land grant activity, and community engaged learning. An essential goal of KBOCC's existence and purpose is to contribute to Anishinaabe cultural revitalization and resurgence. Three examples of this are: Anishinaabe language fluency, knowledge and practice of Anishinaabe governance, and original ways of knowing and believing.

The College's educational pathways serve students seeking transfer, employment, skill development, and lifelong learning. Cultural knowledge and perspectives are embedded through curriculum, programming, and partnerships, while advising, academic support, and cocurricular opportunities address the academic, personal, family, and community dimensions of student success. This alignment gives KBOCC a coherent basis for evaluating programs, enrollment, operations, and long-term priorities.

Reviewing, Refining, and Articulating the Mission

KBOCC's practice is to revisit its mission in connection with each new strategic planning period. The prior mission statement was formally adopted by the Board of Regents on June 13, 2012, with only minor revisions made since 1998. During development of the [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#), the President and Board reviewed the [mission](#) and retained it without revision.

The next strategic planning process began in 2023-24. As part of that process, the Board of Regents convened a dedicated retreat in July 2024 to review the College's [mission, vision, and values](#). The [retreat](#) included facilitated discussion, professional development on strategic planning and accreditation expectations, and structured dialogue on the role of mission in guiding institutional direction. Board members, institutional leaders, and the College's cultural advisor, who provides guidance on Anishinaabe knowledge and protocols, examined the existing statements and identified areas for refinement.

The mission review process incorporated stakeholder-informed perspectives gathered through the broader strategic planning effort, including campus discussions, leadership and committee conversations, surveys, and community engagement. These inputs emphasized the importance of cultural revitalization, strong community relationships, holistic student support, and responsive programming. During the retreat, the Board affirmed that the mission, vision, and values should be updated to better reflect the College's identity, current work, and direction.

Through this process, the Board of Regents developed and reached consensus on updated mission, vision, and values statements. The Board formally adopted the updated statements in [August 2024](#), providing a stable foundation for continued planning and institutional decision-making through a period of leadership transition and institutional reorganization. The updated mission reflects continuity with KBOCC's historical purpose while more clearly articulating its identity as a Tribal land grant institution and its commitment to holistic education. This refinement strengthens the integration of student success, cultural revitalization, and community responsibility within a single, cohesive framework. Rather than signaling a change in direction, the updated mission clarifies and reinforces how KBOCC understands and communicates its purpose.

The mission is further supported by a complementary vision statement that articulates the College's long-term direction as an intergenerational center of educational excellence grounded in Anishinaabe values for community advancement and wellbeing. Together, the mission and vision provide a coherent framework linking present institutional action to long-term outcomes for students, community, and future generations.

The mission and vision anchor the College's [Strategic Plan 2030-31](#), *RISE*, which the Board of Regents approved on September 14th, 2026. The plan explicitly treats the mission and values as the headwaters from which four priorities flow: Holistic Learner Success, Relationship-Centered Engagement, Sustainable Systems and Stewardship, and Mission-Aligned Innovation and Responsiveness.

The mission and vision are communicated consistently across institutional materials and practices. Internally, they are embedded in key documents and workflows, including the College [Catalog](#), [employee](#) and [student](#) handbooks, and [strategic planning](#) materials. They are also intentionally incorporated into operational templates, including the [master syllabus template](#) (and therefore all course syllabi), [institutional letterhead](#), policy templates, and committee meeting materials. This consistent inclusion reinforces a shared understanding of institutional purpose across academic, administrative, and governance processes. The mission is further reinforced

through onboarding and orientation processes, as well as its use in planning discussions and committee work.

Publicly, KBOCC articulates its mission and vision through multiple formal and externally-accessible communication channels. The mission and vision are published on the College's official [website](#), ensuring visibility to prospective and current students, employees, and external stakeholders. They are also reflected in outreach and recruitment materials, where they frame how the College presents its purpose, programs, and role within the community.

Education, Enrollment, and Operations Aligned with Mission

At KBOCC, mission alignment is a structural feature of the curriculum. The [Anishinaabe Awareness requirement](#) and the Anishinaabe culture general education outcome (GELO 6), applicable to all associate degree programs; and the [Anishinaabe Cultural Integration across the Curriculum policy](#) together ensure that every student, regardless of program or educational goal, graduates with demonstrated knowledge of Anishinaabe worldview, history, and lifeways.

Within that architecture, programs vary in how directly the mission is expressed. Three programs within the Anishinaabe Studies Department make Anishinaabe culture, language, and governance the explicit subject of the curriculum: the [Anishinaabe Studies A.A.](#), which develops language revitalization, Tribal governance, and community service competencies through required Ojibwa language coursework and a community internship; the [Anishinaabe Art A.A.](#), which formalizes Anishinaabe artistic tradition as a college-level credential with visual sovereignty as an explicit program outcome; and the [Tribal Management Certificate](#), which prepares students for leadership within Anishinaabe tribes and organizations with decolonization and self-determination as required learning outcomes. In these programs, the mission is the curriculum.

A second group embeds mission alignment in program design. The Environmental Science A.S. and Sustainability Emphasis concentration, along with their two certificate counterparts, include an outcome explaining the importance of the natural world in Anishinaabe culture and engage students with Indigenous scientific frameworks. The Nursing A.S., launched in Fall 2024 to address a documented healthcare workforce shortage, names culturally sensitive care with an emphasis on Native American culture as its first learning outcome and targets 70% of graduates employed in organizations serving KBIC Tribal members. The Psychology A.S. requires Indigenous Research Methods and Postcolonial Psychology, with outcomes explicitly addressing Indigenous healing practices within Indigenous communities. The Early Childhood Education A.S. and Child Development Certificate prepare students to serve children and families in KBIC and regional early learning settings, including Head Start and Migiziinsag Preschool. The noncredit Certified Nurse Assistant Certificate of Completion carries dedicated Anishinaabe Culture learning outcomes.

A third group serves the mission through KBOCC's land grant obligation to strengthen Tribal economic capacity and self-determination. The Business Administration A.S. and certificate

respond to documented [community need](#), and the Small Business Start-Up Certificate supports Indigenous entrepreneurship. The Culinary Arts Certificate connects professional training to Anishinaabe foodways and the land grant food sovereignty work of the Arts and Agriculture Center. The Health Science A.S., Healthcare Management Certificate, and Medical Billing and Coding Certificate build healthcare workforce capacity in a medically underserved region. The Criminal Justice Certificate names Tribal law within its required ethical framework. The Office Services Certificate, noncredit Welding Certificate of Completion, and noncredit Basic Life Saving with First Aid Certificate of Completion extend access to vocational and safety credentials in a rural labor market with limited options. The General Studies A.A. and General Studies Certificate, the College's primary transfer pathway, carry the strongest Anishinaabe Awareness requirement of any program, requiring both AS101 Introduction to Anishinaabe Studies and OS110 Ojibwa Language and Culture I, ensuring transferring students carry the fullest cultural grounding KBOCC can provide. These requirements ensure that transfer preparation remains culturally grounded.

Mission-aligned Operations

The mission guides institutional planning and operations. KBOCC's [Strategic Plan 2030-31, RISE](#), translates the mission into four priorities spanning learner success, relationships, institutional capacity and stewardship, and mission-aligned responsiveness. The [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#), [academic program review](#), facilities planning, division and unit planning, and the [annual budget process](#) provide more specific pathways for carrying those priorities into practice. As the College continues to advance its integrated planning efforts, the mission informs priorities related to academic programming, strategic enrollment, student support, and community engagement. Program offerings, including degree programs, workforce certificates, short-term training, and noncredit and extension activities, are developed and sustained in alignment with student needs, community priorities, and long-term institutional sustainability.

The Board's 2025 presidential search provides another example of the mission guiding institutional action. Developed with College and community input, the [Presidential Profile](#) called for a leader who understands Tribal sovereignty and the distinctive role of Tribal Colleges and Universities, upholds Anishinaabe values, advances cultural revitalization and holistic student success, and strengthens community relationships and institutional sustainability. The profile translated KBOCC's mission into expectations for its next chief executive.

Mission-aligned Enrollment Profile

KBOCC's [enrollment profile](#) reflects its mission to serve Native and non-Native learners while centering Native student success and Nation-building through accessible, culturally grounded pathways. The profile documents an intergenerational and predominantly local learner population. In AY2025–26, dual-enrolled high school students represented approximately 30% of enrollment, students age 25 and older represented 51.2%, enrolled Tribal members and

descendants represented 59.3% of credential-seeking students, and 94.1% of students resided in Baraga or Houghton County.

KBOCC interprets these patterns with care because IPEDS race and ethnicity categories do not fully capture Tribal citizenship or affiliation, particularly for students who report more than one race or ethnicity. The College therefore considers institutional Tribal affiliation data alongside federally reported data when evaluating mission reach and service to Native learners.

KBOCC's educational reach also extends beyond the learners represented in college enrollment data. The Ojibwa Early Learning Center serves children from infancy through early school age, and Migiziinsag provides culturally grounded pre-K programming for four-year-olds. Noncredit and community education programs extend learning opportunities to adults and elders. Together, these programs demonstrate KBOCC's role as an intergenerational community resource grounded in Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways—planting seeds for generations to come.

The [2023 Community Needs Survey](#) provides additional evidence that learners experience the mission in practice. Current and former students rated five mission-aligned outcomes an average of 4.20 on a five-point scale. Among respondents, 89% agreed or strongly agreed that their KBOCC experience fostered a sense of belonging, 81% affirmed that KBOCC supported student development across mind, body, heart, and spirit, and 73% agreed that KBOCC prepared them well for Mino-bimaadiziwin. Of the 25 current and former students who rated their likelihood of recommending KBOCC on a zero-to-ten scale, 72% selected nine or ten, and none selected a score below seven. These results demonstrate that KBOCC's mission is not only articulated in institutional documents but experienced by the learners the College commits to serve.

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1.B. Mission and Public Good

The institution's operation of the academic enterprise demonstrates its commitment to serving the public good.

Argument

KBOCC's academic enterprise serves the public good by strengthening educational opportunity, cultural continuity, workforce capacity, and community well-being for the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) and the surrounding region. As a Tribally chartered land grant institution, the College evaluates public benefit not only through credentials, employment, and local economy, but also through whether learners, families, and community partners gain the knowledge, relationships, and capacity to contribute to the long-term vitality of the community.

KBOCC's participation in the [American Indian Higher Education Consortium \(AIHEC\)](#) further extends this commitment beyond the local community through collaboration with Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) across the United States. Participation in AIHEC initiatives supports institutional advocacy, Indigenous student success efforts, cultural revitalization, leadership development, and knowledge sharing among Tribal institutions, reinforcing KBOCC's role within the broader national movement for Tribal higher education and self-determination.

The evidence in this section therefore focuses on how KBOCC's academic programs, cultural education, land grant work, and constituent engagement produce benefit beyond the individual classroom. Criterion 1A explains how these activities align with mission; Criterion 3 documents their educational quality and student learning results.

Education as Tribal Obligation

KBOCC was established by [Ordinance No. 75-1](#) of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) Tribal Council on July 12, 1975, and operates as a nonprofit educational corporation under its tribal charter. The [charter](#), which undergoes periodic review, was substantially updated by the Board of Regents on July 14, 2025, and formally approved by the KBIC Tribal Council on October 1, 2025, reaffirming the foundational relationship between the institution and the sovereign nation it serves. The College's legal and governance structures make explicit what its mission implies: KBOCC's educational responsibilities take primacy over all other purposes, and institutional revenues are reinvested in programs, student support, facilities, and community engagement.

All eight voting members of the Board of Regents are [required](#) to be enrolled KBIC members. The Board's [Code of Ethics](#) calls members to conduct their governance duties in accordance with the College's mission and the Seven Grandfather Teachings. This cultural grounding connects the Board's fiduciary responsibility for institutional sustainability with accountability to the community, whose sovereignty the College was created to strengthen.

Academic Programs Address Community Need

KBOCC develops and sustains academic [programs](#) that respond directly to the workforce and educational needs of the KBIC and the broader region. Programs are developed, reviewed, and revised in response to community knowledge, learner goals, labor market evidence, and KBOCC's mission and capacity.

The Nursing Associate Degree program, launched in Fall 2024, responds directly to healthcare workforce shortages in Baraga County and the surrounding rural, medically underserved region. The four-year, \$4 million [HRSA Nursing Workforce Expansion](#) project supports student tuition, fees, technology, clinical transportation, simulation-based learning, expanded faculty capacity, and development of local nurses as clinical preceptors. The project was designed in consultation with area healthcare facilities and establishes clinical experiences in rural settings where students examine healthcare access and disparities. By preparing students locally and building partnerships intended to support graduates' employment in the region, the program simultaneously expands educational opportunity and strengthens the community's long-term healthcare workforce.

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) program serves a parallel function in the early learning workforce. The Child Development Certificate prepares students to pursue the Child Development Associate credential, while the ECE degree prepares graduates for work in settings such as KBIC Head Start, Migiziinsag (Little Eagles) Preschool, and other regional early childhood programs. KBOCC's own early learning programs further connect academic preparation with service to children and families.

The Environmental Science program's relationship with the KBIC Natural Resources Department (NRD) represents another documented alignment between program design and community employer need. The NRD Director served as a formal panelist in the [2018 program review](#) of Environmental Science, and the NRD Wildlife Biologist served as a panelist in the [2024-25 program review](#). The Environmental Science program has strong placement of graduates with the KBIC NRD, and the program's design reflects that relationship explicitly. All three Spring 2025 Environmental Science graduates were accepted at Northern Michigan University, a direct result of intentional transfer pathway development following program review.

The Business Administration program and Tribal Management Certificate address KBOCC's land grant mission to strengthen KBIC's economic capacity and governance infrastructure. The [2022 KBIC Employee Educational Needs Survey](#) found that Tribal Management Certificate and Business Administration programs were the top credential interests among KBIC employees, with professional development in budgeting, organizational leadership, and strategic planning drawing the highest noncredit interest. These findings document that KBOCC's Business programs are preparation for the actual governance and enterprise work being done within the Tribal nation the College serves.

Although economic impact is neither the sole nor central measure of KBOCC's public good, it provides tangible evidence of one dimension of the College's contribution. As a Tribal land grant

institution, KBOCC understands public value more broadly through cultural and language revitalization, educational opportunity, strengthened relationships, workforce capacity, sovereignty, and community well-being. Within that broader framework, the [Economic Value of KBOCC](#) study, based on FY2022–23 data, estimated that KBOCC added \$3.7 million to the regional economy and supported 69 jobs, one of every 56 jobs in Baraga County. For every dollar students invested, the study projected \$4.90 in higher lifetime earnings.

Cultural Education as Intergenerational Public Good

For KBOCC, the public good is not measured only in credentials conferred and jobs obtained, but also measured in whether Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways are alive in the next generation. Cultural revitalization is an act of community survival, and KBOCC's academic enterprise treats it accordingly. Anishinaabe language and cultural instruction is embedded across the curriculum and offered as a dedicated academic program. Every degree program requires an Anishinaabe Studies [course](#). The [College Learner Goals](#), approved in 2024, position cultural knowledge—*Bezhig: Think Anishinaabe by applying the Anishinaabek ways of knowing and being*—as the first of four institutional outcomes for all graduates.

The Anishinaabe Studies program has grown substantially in the current review period, with enrollment increasing 62.5% between Fall 2021 and Fall 2024. The Anishinaabe Art Associate of Arts degree, launched in Fall 2024 following program review, recognizes Anishinaabe artistic tradition as a distinct body of college-level knowledge and creates an academic pathway with cultural, transfer, and career relevance.

The L'Anse Area Schools fund Ojibwe language instruction at KBOCC as a second language option for high school students, a K–12 partnership that positions KBOCC as the community's institutional steward of language access across age groups. Cultural faculty are credentialed through tribal verification of expertise, recognizing that community-held knowledge is as legitimate a qualification as a graduate degree for instruction in language and lifeways. The Cultural Education Specialist and Cultural Advisor roles embedded in the institution's staff structure ensure that this work is supported and sustained, rather than dependent on individual faculty availability.

KBOCC also extends cultural education beyond credit-bearing instruction. The Land Grant Department's [Cultural Programming Summary](#) documents community workshops and continuing education grounded in Anishinaabe teachings and Indigenous artistic traditions, including the Seven Grandfathers Community Painting, a nine-session quill-making continuing education experience, beadwork, ribbon skirts, and Native arts programming. These opportunities support the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations, while making the College's educational and cultural resources available to community members as well as enrolled students.

The community has confirmed this prioritization. In the [2023 Community Needs Survey](#), cultural and language revitalization in Native communities ranked second among all 13 community priorities rated by respondents, above workforce development, childcare access, and internet connectivity. In the [2024 Stakeholder Survey](#), preservation and promotion of tribal culture, languages, and lifeways was selected as a top institutional purpose, the highest of all eight

options offered, chosen by every constituency group surveyed, naming cultural continuity as what it most needs KBOCC to protect.

Land Grant Stewardship

As a 1994 Tribal land grant institution, and member of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), KBOCC extends its mission through outreach, research, and community education. This obligation is fulfilled through by the Land Grant Department through the Arts and Agriculture Center in Pelkie, acquired in 2016 and developed with USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) funding into a site for both academic coursework and community workshops. The Center includes a hoop house, learning gardens, a fruit orchard, an apiary, and a maple tree stand. These are physical investments in the land that future generations will use.

KBOCC's Extension work is documented in the [USDA NIFA Extension Annual Progress Report, 2025–26](#) and through a [presentation](#) showing how Extension priorities were aligned with community input. Through *Native Food Pathways: Promoting Community Well-Being Through Food and Culture*, the College provided seven food sovereignty workshops and eight home-based learning kits; offered cultural, wellness, and Elder programming; and supported the KBIC Manoomin and Waawaashkeshi Camps. In collaboration with the KBIC Natural Resources Department, KBOCC also supported community gardens and manoomin restoration, including the purchase of 3,150 pounds of green wild rice seed for restoration planting. The project distributed 288 shrubs and plants to strengthen community food production and supported two students in experiential learning related to traditional foods, food systems, gardening, and science. Post-event feedback indicated increased knowledge of traditional foods, food preparation and preservation, gardening, and Anishinaabe food practices, as well as increased capacity to prepare, preserve, grow, and use foods at home. These outcomes demonstrate how KBOCC's land grant role advances food sovereignty, environmental stewardship, experiential learning, and community well-being for future generations.

The USDA Rural Development Transportation Connectivity Initiative grant has made it possible to provide student transportation directly, addressing one of the most consistently documented barriers to participation for KBOCC's rural, reservation-based student population. Transportation was identified as a barrier in the [2021 Community Survey](#) and appeared again in the [2023 Community Needs Survey](#). The land grant program's transportation support is a direct institutional response to a documented community access gap.

The College's energy stewardship work, including solar PV installation, LED lighting installation, energy-efficient roofing, and water conservation stations, reflects the Anishinaabe principle of stewardship applied to institutional operations. KBOCC was previously recognized as a finalist for Michigan's annual Governor's Energy Excellence Award. Environmental sustainability extends the College's Anishinaabe stewardship responsibilities into its own operations.

Holistic Student Support as Community Investment

KBOCC's mission to support and uplift all learners through holistic education means that the public good is served not only through what graduates do after they leave, but through how students are supported while they are enrolled. Financial emergencies, unmet mental health needs, transportation challenges, and childcare barriers can interrupt student progress. KBOCC's holistic student support infrastructure, including emergency aid, food pantry access, transportation assistance, counseling, cultural advising, and academic support, is structured to remove the material and psychological barriers that prevent students from completing what they started.

The Cultural Advisor, situated primarily within Academic Affairs, and the Cultural Education Specialist, positioned within the Land Grant Department, provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff that situates a student's academic experience within their cultural identity, family context, and community responsibility. Their placement across two divisions reflects the College's understanding that cultural grounding is not a student services add-on. It is simultaneously an academic function, embedded in how courses are designed and delivered, and a community-facing function, embedded in how the land grant mission is carried into the broader service area. 89% of current and former students, [surveyed in 2023](#), agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of belonging as a result of their KBOCC experience and 81% affirmed that KBOCC took a holistic approach to student development addressing mind, body, heart, and spirit. Those responses are evidence that the institution's mission to uplift learners holistically is being experienced by the people it was designed to serve.

KBOCC's student support services are also responsive to documented community realities. The [2021 Childcare Survey](#) found that 37.5% of enrolled students were likely or very likely to need childcare to participate in coursework, with demand spread across all weekdays and daytime hours. Respondents identified a broader regional gap: "We need more childcare in Baraga County." The College's Early Childhood Education program, and its connection to the KBOCC Migiziinsag Preschool, represent a structural contribution to the community's childcare infrastructure, not only training the workforce that will staff childcare centers, but modeling and supporting their operation within the community.

Community Priorities Confirmed through Systematic Engagement

KBOCC's claim to serve the public good is validated by the community through documented, multi-year constituent engagement. Between 2021 and 2026, KBOCC administered several surveys reaching students, alumni, KBIC employees, community members, Board members, and campus staff. The findings across these instruments are a consistent community voice, confirming what KBOCC is, what it does well, and what it must continue to do.

The [2021 Community Survey](#) confirmed program demand aligned with KBOCC's current offerings, including Anishinaabe Studies (30%), Business Administration (22%), Early Childhood Education (21%), while documenting enrollment barriers the College was positioned to address. The [2022 KBIC Employee Educational Needs Survey](#) established that KBOCC's primary Tribal employer partner actively supports employee enrollment and has specific

credential and professional development needs the College can meet. The [2023 Community Needs Survey](#) rated cultural and language revitalization second among all 13 community priorities and produced a composite mission outcome score of 4.20 out of 5.0 from current and former students.

During Phase I of strategic planning, KBOCC expanded this engagement through the [2024 Stakeholder Survey](#) and a [June 2024 Stakeholder Forum](#). The stakeholder forum brought together 22 participants representing local schools, Tribal education departments, higher education, local businesses, the KBOCC Board of Regents, and student and alumni perspectives. Participants identified cultural awareness, belonging, affordability, small classes, and commitment to community as institutional strengths. They also emphasized workforce-aligned programs, flexible learning, childcare and family supports, housing and transportation, transfer pathways, technology and facilities, and the importance of applying a cultural and language lens across institutional priorities. The [2024 Stakeholder Survey](#) similarly found that 72% of respondents rated KBOCC as very or extremely effective at achieving its mission and vision. Net Promoter Scores among students (73.7), employees (73.9), and Board members (80.0) reflected strong institutional confidence across groups with direct experience of the College.

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1.C. Mission and Diversity of Society

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

KBOCC prepares students to engage ethically with community, Tribal sovereignty, diverse perspectives, and an interconnected world. Its [mission, vision, values](#), [College Learner Goals](#), and [General Education outcomes](#) establish cultural grounding, respectful dialogue, and community-minded action as expectations for all learners. These commitments are expressed through curriculum, cocurricular participation, freedom of expression, and relationships with Indigenous and regional partners. Since 2020, KBOCC has reinforced them through expanded curriculum, institutional learning outcomes, Land Grant staffing, cultural infrastructure, and cocurricular programming serving a growing and increasingly diverse student population.

Civic and Cultural Responsibility as Institutional Outcomes

[Faculty Council](#) approved the College Learning Goals (CLGs) in June 2024 and the [Board of Regents \(BOR\)](#) in October 2024. The four goals, extending from KBOCC's mission and grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings and applicable to all learners across all programs, establish the essential knowledge, skills, and values KBOCC commits to developing in every student. The first goal, *Bezhig: Culture — Think Anishinaabe by applying the Anishinaabek ways of knowing and being*, places Anishinaabe epistemology first among the College's institutional expectations. The second, *Niizh: Community-Minded — Build community by committing to service with and for others*, directly names civic responsibility as an institutional learning outcome.

KBOCC's [General Education](#) structure addresses both cultural grounding and civic ethics as institutional learning expectations. GELO 6 — *Anishinaabe Culture* — is the primary outcome of the Anishinaabe Awareness requirement, carried by AS101 Introduction to Anishinaabe Studies and OS110 Ojibwa Language and Culture I. GELO 5 — *Ethical Responsibility* — is a primary outcome across the Social Science and Humanities requirements, assessed through ethics reflections and case analyses in 10 courses including ES218 Environmental Justice and Ethics, SO200 Critical Thinking and Ethics, CJ110 Introduction to Criminal Justice, ES217 Environmental Policy, and HS110 Introduction to American Government. GELO 5 sub-outcome 5.2 — *Reflect on how personal and collective choices impact others, community, and the natural world* — appears across nearly every GELO 5 course, positioning civic ethics as a pervasive General Education expectation rather than a single-course requirement. Because AS101 also carries GELO 5 and the Seven Grandfather Teachings ground the CLGs and institutional values, KBOCC understands culture and ethical responsibility through an Anishinaabe relational framework.

Curriculum That Engages Diverse Perspectives and Knowledge Systems

The Anishinaabe Awareness requirement of the General Education curriculum reflects curricular improvement since 2020. [Faculty Council approved](#) AS101 Introduction to Anishinaabe Studies as the institutional Anishinaabe Awareness requirement in May 2025, replacing AS102 Anishinaabe Values and Philosophy effective Fall 2025. The change was proposed by Anishinaabe Studies faculty on the basis that AS101's broader scope covering Anishinaabe history, values, philosophy, lifeways, and contemporary issues, provides a more comprehensive foundation, and that its availability in asynchronous online format improves access for students with demanding schedules and those enrolled in fully online programs. OS110 Ojibwa Language and Culture I remains an approved alternative. This dedicated requirement is reinforced by KBOCC's [Anishinaabe Cultural Integration across the Curriculum policy](#), which holds that all courses across all disciplines will include Anishinaabe content grounded in the cultural, historical, and contemporary perspectives of the Anishinaabe people. Taken together, these two institutional commitments position Indigenous knowledge not as a cultural enrichment add-on but as a foundational dimension of every student's learning experience at KBOCC.

The Anishinaabe Studies program has grown 62.5% in enrollment between Fall 2021 and Fall 2024, reflecting sustained student engagement with courses that directly serve the College's civic and cultural mission. In Fall 2024, KBOCC launched the [Anishinaabe Art Associate of Arts degree](#), a curriculum-driven revision of the former Liberal Studies A.A. with Art Emphasis that more precisely aligns the credential with Anishinaabe artistic tradition as a distinct area of study. [Faculty Council approved](#) new program learning outcomes (PLOs) and four new courses in April 2024, anchoring the revised degree in Anishinaabe-specific content: Introduction to Anishinaabe Art, Anishinaabe Art History, Anishinaabe Art Entrepreneurship, and Anishinaabe Art Forms. AS232 Tribal Government continues to be offered, providing students with direct instruction in the structures of Anishinaabe governance and the frameworks for civic participation within a sovereign Indigenous nation.

Humanities distribution requirements extend this engagement to broader worldviews. HU110 World Cultures examines traditional worldviews, religions, and customs across global regions. EN210 World Literature and EN255 Modern Anishinaabe Literature position students to engage global and Indigenous literary traditions within the same degree plan. ES218 Environmental Justice and Ethics and ES219 Anishinaabe Environmental Studies connect local Anishinaabe environmental concerns to broader systemic and global contexts.

Cocurricular Civic Engagement

Responsibility for cocurricular programming has matured since 2020. A cross-functional cocurricular workgroup helped develop KBOCC's first institution-wide Cocurricular Assessment Framework, establishing shared expectations for mission-aligned learning outside the classroom. Student Government has also been reactivated following pandemic-era declines in participation, providing a renewed avenue for student voice, leadership, and campus engagement. Where civic programming was previously organized primarily through individual academic departments, the

Student Services and Community Programs Divisions now coordinate civic and community engagement activities across the student body, providing a more sustainable and broadly accessible structure.

Recent activities include the annual Job Fair and Career Expo, community blood drives, the Children's Powwow, Native American Heritage Month programming, food sovereignty workshops, and cultural arts programming. The campus Teaching Lodge provides a dedicated setting for Anishinaabe teachings, talking circles, and other cultural and academic engagement. The [Cultural Programming Summary](#) provides a current example of how KBOCC extends cultural and community learning beyond the classroom through workshops and continuing education grounded in Anishinaabe teachings and Indigenous artistic traditions. Open to KBOCC constituents and community members, these activities create opportunities to engage culture, community responsibility, creativity, and lifelong learning across generations. The accompanying [Cultural Activity and Event Report](#) further documents participation, program purposes, and alignment with the College Learning Goals of Culture, Community-Mindedness, Growth Mindset, and Balance and Wellbeing.

Equitable Access and Inclusive Participation

KBOCC's [open enrollment policy](#) admits all qualified applicants regardless of age, race, color, religion, sex, marital status, disability, or national or ethnic origin. Since 2020, the College has developed Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) infrastructure coordinated by the Student Success Council through the [Cultivating Native Student Success \(CNSS\) initiative](#), funded by the American Indian College Fund (AICF). The newly adopted SEM Plan uses the Anishinaabe Teaching Lodge as its organizing metaphor, framing belonging and student success as shared responsibilities among learners, employees, families, communities, and partners, and preparing learners to carry their knowledge into community service and future generations. This work establishes access and student success as institutional commitments rather than the responsibility of a single office. Total enrollment more than doubled from 142 students in AY2020–21 to 323 in AY2024–25, reflecting intentional access strategies across multiple pathways.

The expansion of dual enrollment has been among the most mission-significant access developments since 2020. Dual-enrolled students grew from 2 (1%) in AY2020–21 to 97 (30%) in AY2024–25 through the partnership with Copper Country Intermediate School District (CCISD), reaching high school students in L'Anse, Baraga, and Houghton. The Early Middle College (5th Year Program) formalizes this commitment to the next generation as a distinct institutional pathway. Reaching the community's young people with Anishinaabe-centered coursework before they must choose between higher education and tribal identity is a direct expression of the seven-generations commitment: the College does not wait for students to arrive at traditional college age.

Access barriers are addressed through financial, logistical, and cultural support structures that have grown substantially since 2020. Adult learner access has been strengthened through Michigan Reconnect and the Michigan Learning and Education Advancement Program (MiLEAP), with 292 Reconnect applicants from 2021 to 2024, including 62 in Fall 2024 alone. The Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver, additional tuition waivers, and an expanding institutional

scholarship portfolio reduce financial barriers for Native and low-income students. Student transportation directly addresses what community surveys have consistently identified as a primary participation barrier for rural, reservation-based students.

Student support services, discussed in further detail in Core Component 3D, provide the material and relational conditions for equitable participation: tutoring, including 24/7 assistance through Tutor.com, 24/7 counseling through UWill, financial and emergency aid, disability accommodations, success coaching, and learning resources. Since 2020, culturally grounded infrastructure has been deepened by a dedicated cultural role: a full-time Cultural Advisor embedded in Academic Affairs supports students navigating academic demands, alongside cultural identity. This position also teaches in Anishinaabe Studies and Environmental Science, ensuring cultural knowledge runs through instruction rather than being siloed in student services. The Mino-Bimaadiziwin Cultural and Wellness Center, a culturally responsive student lounge under Student Services, serves as a gathering space for all students, including commuter students who use it as a campus base between classes or for joining remote coursework from campus. Utilization has increased significantly since 2020, reflecting student demand for a space that honors cultural identity as part of daily campus life. To accommodate both social and academic needs, dedicated quiet study space in the Library and Learning Resource Center is offered as an alternative for students seeking individual study or a respite from group activities. The RGM Fitness Center and Ojibwa Early Learning Center, which provides significantly discounted, culturally responsive childcare, extends holistic support to students' physical wellbeing and family needs. In the [2023 Community Needs Survey](#), 89% of current and former students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of belonging at KBOCC, and 81% affirmed the College had taken a holistic approach to their development, addressing mind, body, heart, and spirit.

Land Grant Engagement in Community

KBOCC's land grant obligations to democratize access to higher education, apply knowledge for community benefit, and make public service an essential institutional function, have been substantially strengthened through increased Land Grant capacity since 2020. The department now operates with a Director, Coordinator, Land Grant Assistant, and Cultural Education Specialist (formerly titled Cultural Wellness Coordinator), an addition of 3.0 FTE, and in 2026, was formally situated within the new Community Programs Division, a structural decision that positions land grant work as a core community-engagement responsibility, not a grant management function.

KBOCC's land grant work creates direct opportunities for students, and community members, to participate in place-based, culturally grounded learning. The [USDA NIFA Extension Annual Progress Report](#) documents educational workshops, home-based learning activities, environmental initiatives, student experiential learning, and collaboration with the KBIC Natural Resources Department. These activities connect food sovereignty, environmental stewardship, cultural knowledge, and community wellbeing, while illustrating how civic responsibility at KBOCC includes participation in the care and future of the community. The broader public-benefit and resource dimensions of this work are addressed in Core Component 1B and Core Component 4B.

Reciprocal Community Engagement and Educational Partnerships

KBOCC and KBIC also maintain collaborative relationships that support shared educational and community priorities. These relationships, including the [2024 Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the KBIC Education Department, advance the College's mission and responsiveness to community need. This relationship reflects KBOCC's responsibility to sustain educational opportunity, cultural vitality, and community well-being for current learners and future generations, supporting collaborative educational programming, student success initiatives, and community engagement through the [Promise Neighborhood initiative](#).

A Climate of Respect Across Diverse Perspectives

KBOCC's engagement with a diverse society is grounded in *Manaa'iji'idiwin* (respect) which calls the College to value diverse cultures and perspectives and foster inclusive dialogue and collaboration. The College's [Freedom of Expression Policy](#) affirms freedom of expression as foundational while holding the campus community to respectful engagement with divergent perspectives and opinions. Students encounter these expectations in [LS103 College Success Seminar](#), where the Seven Grandfather Teachings provide a cultural and ethical framework for listening, dialogue, disagreement, and learning across differences. The [College Learning Goals](#), adopted through shared governance in 2024, give this commitment formal assessment structure by establishing respectful, culturally grounded engagement as an institutional learning expectation.

KBOCC recognizes diversity well beyond Native identity. The student body reflects students with multi-tribal and multi-racial family backgrounds, and non-Native students from across the rural Upper Peninsula. Faculty and staff represent a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and cultural faculty are credentialed through [tribal verification of expertise](#), recognizing that community-held knowledge is a legitimate academic qualification. Participation in AIHEC Annual Student Conferences and related consortium activities connects KBOCC students with peers from Tribal Colleges and Universities nationwide, providing opportunities for leadership development, cultural exchange, academic competition, civic engagement, and exposure to diverse Indigenous perspectives and experiences. HU110 World Cultures, EN210 World Literature, and AR103 Art Appreciation engage students with traditions outside their own experience. [NC-SARA participation](#), first achieved in 2024, extends distance education access across state lines, expanding the reach of KBOCC's Anishinaabe-centered offerings to a broader geographic population.

The community has confirmed that this work resonates and that it expects it to continue. In the [2024 Stakeholder Survey](#), preservation and promotion of tribal culture, languages, and lifeways was selected as the top institutional purpose by 54 of 72 respondents — the highest of all eight options offered, chosen by every constituency group surveyed. In the [2023 Community Needs Survey](#), cultural and language revitalization ranked second among all 13 community priorities. These findings confirm that KBOCC's commitment to civic engagement and diverse perspectives, is the community identifying what it most needs the College to protect and

KBOCC demonstrating through curriculum, institutional roles, physical infrastructure, and community-facing programming that it has answered that call and deepened its capacity to sustain it.

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Criterion 1 Summary

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

Argument

KBOCC's mission as a Tribal land grant institution is a clear, public framework for institutional decision-making, educational programming, governance, and community engagement. Curriculum, enrollment pathways, student supports, land grant work, and planning increasingly align with the College's responsibility to support and uplift learners while promoting Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways.

Planting seeds for seven generations is the long-term expression of that mission: decisions made today must sustain educational opportunity, cultural continuity, and community well-being for those who follow. The evidence demonstrates that KBOCC's mission is operational rather than symbolic, shaping how the College serves learners, works with its community, and evaluates its public responsibilities.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

In fulfilling its mission, the institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A. Integrity

Actions taken by the institution's governing board, administration, faculty and staff demonstrate adherence to established policies and procedures.

Argument

Values and Policy Foundation

KBOCC's approach to integrity is grounded in its mission and values and is implemented through written standards for students, employees, faculty, and institutional leaders. The [Student Code of Conduct](#), [academic integrity provisions](#), [Employee Handbook](#), [Faculty Guidebook](#), and related policies establish expectations for honesty, respectful conduct, confidentiality, nondiscrimination, and responsible use of institutional authority.

At KBOCC, integrity is demonstrated when those expectations guide routine decisions and when there are defined processes for addressing concerns. The College communicates standards through handbooks, syllabi, onboarding, training, and the systems through which students and employees seek support, make reports, or appeal decisions. This framework provides a common basis for ethical practice across the institution.

Institutional Practices Demonstrate Adherence to Policies

KBOCC demonstrates integrity through the consistent application of its policies and expectations in institutional practice. Academic integrity expectations are reinforced through [syllabus requirements](#), classroom instruction, and assessment practices, where students are required to demonstrate original work, proper citation, and ethical engagement with knowledge. Faculty incorporate these expectations into coursework and evaluation, ensuring that policies are actively implemented rather than passively stated.

Student conduct and grievance processes further demonstrate adherence to institutional policies. The [Student Handbook](#) outlines structured procedures for addressing violations and resolving concerns, ensuring that expectations are applied consistently and fairly. These processes emphasize accountability and learning, aligning disciplinary actions with institutional values and reinforcing integrity through practice.

Employee expectations are similarly operationalized through onboarding, required acknowledgements of institutional policies, and [annual and ongoing training](#), including FERPA and Title IX training. These practices ensure that faculty and staff understand and uphold ethical responsibilities related to student information, safety, and equity. Through these mechanisms, KBOCC demonstrates that institutional policies are actively implemented across all areas of the College.

Governance and Leadership Adherence

The Board of Regents, President, and administrative leaders exercise their responsibilities within established [bylaws](#), policies, [delegated authority](#), and documented review processes. Board independence, fiduciary oversight, and the relationship between KBOCC and KBIC are addressed in Core Component 2C. Core Component 4A explains how Board-approved decisions are implemented through administrative structures, and Core Component 4B documents financial stewardship and monitoring.

Within this framework, KBOCC's leaders are responsible for implementing approved policies, maintaining appropriate records, and using established channels to address compliance, operational, and student-related concerns. Board members are expected to act in accordance with ethical standards, including [conflict-of-interest policies](#) and [disclosure](#) requirements, which reinforce independent and responsible decision-making. Administrative leadership supports institutional integrity by implementing Board-approved policies and ensuring compliance with financial, operational, and regulatory expectations. The College continues to strengthen written procedures and shared repositories so that policy application and institutional documentation remain consistent as roles and systems evolve.

Institutional relationships with the KBIC are guided through a combination of charter authority, governance documents, and collaborative agreements developed throughout the review period. A formal [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) between KBOCC and KBIC established shared responsibilities and operational expectations through 2022, while more recent collaborative efforts have continued through [focused partnership agreements](#) and ongoing intergovernmental coordination. These evolving relationships reflect both institutional independence and continued accountability to the community the College serves.

Cultural Responsibility and Community Accountability

As a Tribal College, KBOCC understands integrity as more than compliance with policies and regulations. It includes adherence to Anishinaabe values, respect for Indigenous knowledge systems, and accountability to relationships with the community and future generations. This relational understanding recognizes that individual and institutional actions affect not only the College but the broader community it serves.

Student conduct processes emphasize reflection, accountability, and awareness of how actions affect others rather than relying solely on punitive responses. Instruction, orientation, student

support services, and culturally grounded programming similarly connect institutional values with academic, personal, and community responsibility.

Anishinaabe values are explicitly referenced in institutional publications, most notably in the [College Catalog](#) and reinforced across the [Student Handbook](#) and institutional website. The College's mission affirms its responsibility to promote Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways, positioning education within a framework of cultural continuity and community responsibility.

Through its Values and College Learning Goals, the [College Catalog](#) incorporates the Seven Grandfather Teachings of truth (*Debwewin*), wisdom (*Nibwaakaawin*), respect (*Manaadendamowin*), honesty (*Gwekwaadziwin*), humility (*Dabasendizowin*), bravery (*Aakode'ewin*), and love (*Zaagi'idiwin*), as guiding principles that inform expectations for ethical conduct across institutional roles.

Among these teachings, *Debwewin* (truth) provides a particularly direct foundation for institutional integrity. KBOCC understands *Debwewin* as prioritizing truth in academic integrity and the pursuit of knowledge while ensuring transparency and authenticity. This commitment is expressed through expectations for honest academic work and accurate records; evidence-based institutional reporting and public information; documented Board deliberation and action; disclosure and management of conflicts of interest; and the College's willingness to acknowledge both its strengths and areas requiring improvement. *Debwewin* therefore connects individual conduct, academic inquiry, institutional decision-making, and public accountability.

While the [Student Handbook](#) does not always name the teachings explicitly, the principles are embedded throughout policies related to student conduct, academic integrity, and community expectations. Similarly, the [Employee Handbook](#) and [Faculty Guidebook](#) reinforce these values through expectations for professional conduct, respect, and ethical responsibility.

Board Actions Demonstrate Fiduciary Integrity and Policy Adherence

The Board of Regents exercises fiduciary oversight in accordance with adopted bylaws and ethical standards that guide decision-making and governance practice. The Board regularly reviews institutional policies, financial reports, and audit results, and maintains responsibility for approving budgets and major institutional actions. Board members acknowledge and uphold ethical obligations through established [codes of conduct](#), reinforcing the Board's responsibility to act in the best interests of the institution and the students it serves.

Board authority and responsibilities are defined through [Board of Regents Bylaws](#) and governance policies, which establish the Board's role in financial oversight, policy approval, and institutional accountability. In practice, the Board fulfills these responsibilities through regular meetings where members review and act upon key institutional matters. Board meeting agendas and minutes document these actions and provide evidence of the Board's active role in governance.

Board records demonstrate that policies and governance procedures are actively used. During 2026, the Board reviewed and [approved new or revised policies](#) addressing conflicts of interest, communications, social media, student technology, credit hours and instructional modalities, distance-education identity verification, campus safety, employee expectations, and financial controls. The minutes record the responsible administrator presenting each item, the Board's discussion, the motion, and the vote. Supporting documents are identified in the minutes, creating a record connecting the policy presented to the formal action taken.

The records also demonstrate that review is substantive rather than procedural. For example, the Board discussed whether the Media and Communications Policy applied to student capstone presentations, required faculty and academic advisors to provide appropriate guidance, and amended the proposed Policy Amendment and Update Authority to require Board review when a revision would have a financial impact. Other matters were tabled when additional information was needed. These practices demonstrate adherence to established decision-making processes and the Board's attention to policy scope, implementation, and institutional consequences.

Board members further demonstrate ethical responsibility through adherence to conflict-of-interest policies and codes of conduct, which require disclosure of potential conflicts and reinforce independent, objective decision-making. These practices ensure that Board actions are guided by the best interests of the institution and the students it serves, consistent with both governance standards and institutional values.

Administrative Leadership Implements and Upholds Board-Approved Policy

The Board of Regents establishes institutional policy and [delegates responsibility](#) for its implementation to the President, the Board's sole direct employee. Through this governance structure, the President is accountable to the Board for the College's day-to-day administration and directs other institutional leaders and employees in carrying out Board policy, following documented procedures, and maintaining ethical and effective operations. This delegation preserves the Board's policy setting and oversight roles, while establishing a clear line of administrative authority and accountability.

Financial integrity is supported through Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, annual independent audits, and documented internal controls governing purchasing, disbursements, receipts, account reconciliation, grant expenditures, cash handling, and financial reporting. The [Accounting Procedures Manual](#) establishes approval requirements, expenditure thresholds, supporting-documentation standards, reconciliation procedures, and multiple levels of review designed to safeguard institutional resources, reduce the risk of error or misuse, and promote compliance. Governance-level oversight is further defined in the [Board of Regents Manual](#), which assigns the Board responsibility for approving budgets or major contracts, regular revenue/expenditure reporting, and delivery of the annual audit.

Expectations for ethical leadership are also evident in the [Presidential Search Profile](#), which states that the President must "uphold the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and

accountability” and engage openly with students, employees, and the community. By incorporating these expectations into the selection of its sole direct employee, the Board affirms that integrity, transparency, accountability, and Anishinaabe values are central not only to student-facing policies, but also to executive leadership and the administration of the College.

Financial Practices Reflect Ethical Stewardship and Accountability

KBOCC’s financial practices demonstrate integrity through ethical stewardship, internal controls, and fiscal oversight. The institution follows established [financial policies](#) governing budgeting, expenditures, and financial management, with oversight provided by both administrative leadership and the Board of Regents. Annual independent audits provide external validation of compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and accounting standards.

Financial decision-making reflects a commitment to responsible stewardship of resources entrusted to the College, on behalf of the community it serves. [Audit](#) results and fiscal reviews inform ongoing improvements, reinforcing accountability and transparency. These practices support the College’s land grant responsibility and long-term sustainability, ensuring that financial resources are managed in ways that benefit both current operations and future generations.

KBOCC demonstrates financial integrity through structured oversight, clear internal controls, and consistent adherence to established financial policies. Fiscal responsibility is shared between administrative leadership and the Board of Regents, which reviews and approves the [annual operating budget](#), receives regular financial reports, and formally reviews independent [audit results](#). Monthly financial reporting and Board oversight ensure transparency, while internal controls, such as defined approval processes and separation of duties, support accurate and responsible financial management.

Annual independent audits provide external validation of compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and accounting standards, with results reviewed by the Board to inform continuous improvement. Financial decisions, including budget allocations and major expenditures, are aligned with institutional priorities and documented through formal governance processes. These practices reflect KBOCC’s commitment to ethical stewardship, accountability, and responsible use of resources, in service to its students and community. Grounded in Anishinaabe values, financial integrity at KBOCC reflects both compliance and a broader responsibility to sustain resources for future generations.

Faculty and Staff Actions Are Guided by Clear Professional Standards

KBOCC ensures that faculty and staff actions are guided by clear professional standards through a combination of institutional policies, employee-facing documents, onboarding practices, and culturally-grounded values. Professional expectations are articulated across the Faculty

Guidebook, Employee Handbook, Board policies, and the Student Handbook, establishing consistent expectations for ethical conduct, accountability, respectful communication, and compliance with institutional and regulatory requirements. The [Board of Regents Code of Ethics](#), for example, requires individuals to act with integrity, avoid conflicts of interest, maintain confidentiality, and uphold the mission of the College. These same principles are reinforced across [employee expectations](#) and mirrored in the [Student Handbook](#), which outlines standards of conduct, responsibility, and community expectations, grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings. This alignment demonstrates a cohesive institutional approach in which governance, faculty, staff, and students operate within a shared ethical framework.

Professional standards are further communicated and reinforced through onboarding and ongoing supervisory practices. New employees are introduced to institutional policies, reporting structures, and compliance expectations, including FERPA, Title IX, and financial aid regulations, through orientation and role-specific training. These expectations are consistently reinforced in daily operations. For example, faculty are required to maintain organized and accessible course materials in Canvas, communicate expectations clearly with students, and adhere to institutional procedures during campus closures, by transitioning to virtual instruction and maintaining attendance expectations. Similarly, staff follow structured processes outlined through institutional practice and supported by the KBOCC website, such as student services procedures for financial aid, admissions, and emergency support. The [Student Services webpage](#) provides clear, publicly accessible guidance, on how students access services like advising, tutoring, and financial aid, reinforcing transparency and consistency in service delivery. Additionally, processes such as emergency aid requests requiring documentation and review, and [financial aid policies](#) related to satisfactory academic progress and disbursement, demonstrate that staff actions are guided by established procedures, rather than informal decision-making.

KBOCC's professional standards are further strengthened by their foundation in Anishinaabe values, particularly the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which emphasize honesty, respect, humility, truth, and responsibility. These values are embedded across institutional documents and practices, ensuring that professional conduct is not only policy-driven but also culturally grounded. At the same time, the institution recognizes opportunities for continued improvement. While expectations are clearly aligned across documents, some standards are repeated across the Faculty Guidebook, Employee Handbook, and other materials, and certain practices, especially those communicated through supervisory guidance, are consistently followed but not yet fully formalized in written procedures. KBOCC is actively working to strengthen alignment, expand centralized access to [employee policies](#) through its [website](#), and further document operational practices. Overall, the institution demonstrates a strong and consistent framework in which faculty and staff actions are guided by clear, communicated, and culturally aligned professional standards.

Academic Operations Follow Defined and Consistently Applied Policies

Integrity in academic operations is reinforced through defined processes governing curriculum development, program approval, grading, academic status, and degree completion. Academic

integrity expectations are clearly communicated to students through the [College Catalog](#), [Student Handbook](#), and [required syllabus statements](#), and students affirm these expectations through an [academic integrity pledge](#) each semester.

When academic concerns cannot be resolved at the instructional level, established appeal and review processes ensure fair and consistent application of policy.

Curriculum and academic program oversight are guided through faculty-led processes, including the Faculty Council, which monitors educational needs, reviews curriculum, and ensures academic quality prior to institutional approval. This structure ensures that academic offerings are developed collaboratively, grounded in disciplinary expertise, and aligned with institutional goals before implementation. Academic expectations related to grading, course participation, and progression are communicated through institutional documents such as the College Catalog and reinforced through faculty syllabi and Canvas course environments.

Academic integrity expectations are formally outlined in both the syllabus and Academic Integrity Pledge signed by students, then reinforced through course-level requirements and instructional practices. Students are clearly informed of expectations related to honesty, academic responsibility, and ethical conduct, which are grounded in both institutional policy and the Seven Grandfather Teachings. These expectations are consistently communicated through syllabus statements, classroom instruction, and institutional messaging, and students affirm these standards through ongoing participation in coursework and institutional expectations.

Institutional policies governing academic standing further demonstrate consistent application of academic standards. For example, [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\)](#) policies require students to meet defined GPA and completion thresholds, with structured warning, probation, and suspension processes applied uniformly across the student body. These policies are aligned with federal financial aid regulations and are administered consistently through the Financial Aid Office, ensuring equitable treatment and compliance.

When academic concerns cannot be resolved at the instructional level, KBOCC provides clearly defined grievance, appeal, and review processes to ensure fairness and consistency. The Student Handbook outlines formal procedures for [grievance, resolution, and appeals](#), including defined steps and expectations for review. These processes ensure that students have access to structured pathways for addressing concerns, and that decisions are reviewed through appropriate institutional channels.

In practice, these policies are reinforced through coordinated efforts between faculty, Academic Affairs, and Student Services. Faculty are expected to follow established academic policies and communicate expectations clearly, while administrative offices provide oversight to ensure consistent application. Institutional practices, such as attendance verification, academic alerts, and financial aid recalculations, tied to enrollment and participation, demonstrate that academic policies are actively implemented and monitored across departments.

KBOCC continues to strengthen alignment and documentation of academic processes to ensure clarity and accessibility. Ongoing efforts include refining written procedures, enhancing

consistency across instructional and administrative practices, and expanding access to academic policies through institutional resources such as the College Catalog.

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2.B. Transparency

The institution presents itself accurately and completely to students and the public with respect to its educational programs and any claims it makes related to the educational experience.

Argument

Public Information Is Accurate, Accessible, and Grounded in Institutional Practice

As a Tribal land grant institution, KBOCC understands transparency as a form of relational responsibility. Accurate and accessible information supports trust with students, families, the community, and funding partners, and reflects the College's responsibility to steward educational opportunities for current learners and future generations. The College works to ensure that its public descriptions of programs, services, and the educational experience are supported by approved requirements and actual practice.

KBOCC provides public information about its educational programs, institutional policies, costs, and student services through its official website, [College Catalog](#), tuition and fee schedules, and student-facing publications. These sources communicate academic offerings and credentials, admission requirements, program expectations, student-support resources, and other information needed by prospective and current students to make informed decisions.

Academic & Educational Program Information

KBOCC's [Catalog](#) and [program webpages](#) are intended to reflect current academic programs, credentials, course requirements, and progression expectations. The College's [Course and Program Proposal Guidelines](#) establish a documented process for developing and revising curriculum, including consideration of mission alignment, cultural relevance, student and community need, learning outcomes, delivery format, assessment, and resource implications. Faculty Council exercises faculty-led authority for review and approval of new or revised courses, academic policies, and program proposals. Proposals are developed in consultation with the Department Chair and Dean of Academic Affairs and use standardized course and program proposal forms maintained by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. New and modified programs also follow the applicable institutional review and approval process, including review by the Anishinaabe Advisory Committee and Board of Regents, as well as external approval when required.

Following the appropriate approvals, the Dean of Academic Affairs oversees academic implementation and Catalog updates in coordination with the Registrar, who updates relevant student-information-system, registration, and academic-record materials. Academic Affairs also verifies program content for public use. This process helps ensure that published information reflects approved curriculum before it is communicated to current or prospective students.

Students Receive Clear Information Throughout Educational Experience

Transparency extends beyond initial public disclosures to communication throughout the student lifecycle. During new student [orientation](#), students receive account and Canvas setup assistance, a campus and resource tour, information about academic, wellness, financial-aid, internship, and holistic supports, Title IX training, bookstore assistance, advising or coaching connections, and appropriate placement activities. Enrolled students use the MYKBOCC portal to access schedules, grades, progress information, financial-aid information, and institutional communications. Canvas serves as the College's learning-management system and provides students with course materials, instructional expectations, assignments, and communication from faculty.

The College Catalog, Student Handbook, program materials, and [student services webpages](#) provide additional information about academic expectations, policies, available services, and procedures for seeking assistance or resolving concerns. Together, these resources help students understand both what the College offers and what is expected of them as learners.

Consumer, Compliance, and Governance Information

KBOCC makes required consumer and compliance information available through its [consumer information webpage](#) and [related institutional webpages](#). These disclosures include information related to accreditation, financial aid, campus safety, student rights, Title IX, FERPA, and other required notices. The College's accreditation status with the Higher Learning Commission is publicly identified, including its HLC Mark of Affiliation.

KBOCC also recognizes the importance of transparent communication regarding institutional governance activities. Board of Regents meeting notices, agendas, approved minutes, and significant actions document institutional decision-making and provide the College community with access to key governance information. These records distinguish matters presented for discussion from matters receiving formal Board action and preserve a public record of motions and votes. The President's Office and Board support staff maintain these records and support their public communication.

As KBOCC's governance and records management practices continue to mature, the College is strengthening the consistency, timeliness, organization, archival retention, and public accessibility of Board materials. These ongoing improvements support the institution's broader commitment to transparent governance and accurate public representation.

Communication Capacity Supports Timely and Consistent Public Information

To strengthen its capacity for timely, accurate, and accessible public communication, KBOCC established a dedicated Marketing and Communications Coordinator function within the new [Community Programs Division](#) in spring 2026. The position supports more consistent maintenance of institutional webpages, public messaging, announcements, event communications, and community-engagement materials.

Responsibility for accuracy remains with the offices that have authority over the information being communicated. The Marketing and Communications Coordinator works with those content owners to review and update public information. For example, Academic Affairs and the Registrar verify academic requirements; Accounting verifies tuition and fee information; Student Services verifies financial aid, student support, and related service information; and the President's Office verifies institutional and governance communications.

When an error or outdated item is identified, the responsible office confirms the correct information, and the Marketing and Communications Coordinator coordinates the necessary public-facing revision and, when warranted, communication to affected students or other stakeholders. This shared process connects communication capacity with subject-matter responsibility and supports the continued improvement of KBOCC's public information as institutional operations and enrollment expand.

Institutional Effectiveness and Ongoing Review

KBOCC grounds public claims about educational programs, student support, cultural programming, and institutional effectiveness in documented practice and available evidence. Program descriptions reflect approved curriculum; information about student services reflects services actually available to students; and claims related to student learning, enrollment, and student success draw on institutional data, assessment results, program-review findings, and other documented reports.

The College reviews and updates public information as programs, policies, services, and institutional practices change. Catalog revisions, addenda, webpage updates, and other communication processes help maintain alignment across institutional publications. KBOCC recognizes that maintaining consistency across multiple platforms requires ongoing coordination and continues to strengthen its processes for content ownership, review, documentation, and timely public communication.

Through these practices, KBOCC presents its educational programs and student experience accurately and completely, enabling students and the public to rely on institutional information when making decisions about enrollment, participation, and engagement.

Sources

- KBOCC Website Capture - Student Services
- Organization Chart_approved 1.12.2026

- KBOCC Website Capture Program Webpage Examples (2026)
- Student Orientation Schedule
- Course and Program Proposal Guidelines
- KBOCC Website Capture_Title IX_Sexual Misconduct
- KBOCC Website Capture_Consumer Information

2.C. Board Governance

In discharging its fiduciary duties, the institution's governing board is free from undue external influence and empowered to act in the best interests of the institution, including the students it serves.

Argument

Institutional Authority and Board Responsibility

KBOCC is governed by an independent, eight-member Board of Regents with clearly defined authority and fiduciary responsibility for the College. Members serve four year terms, with the option for reappointment. KBOCC was [chartered](#) in 1975 by Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) as a nonprofit educational corporation with the authority to grant postsecondary degrees under [KBIC Tribal Council Ordinance No.75-1](#). The College subsequently received federal land grant status in 2005. This history establishes KBOCC as a Tribally chartered, degree-granting institution whose governance is grounded in both Tribal sovereignty and responsibility to the learners and community it serves.

Since the last 2020 review, the Board has operated under its [2020](#) and [2023](#) Bylaws and its [2016](#), [2022](#), and [2023](#) Board Manuals. For most of AY2025-26, the Board operated under its [October 27, 2025 Bylaws](#) and [October 27, 2025 Board Manual](#). Following revision of the [2016 College Charter](#) in [2025](#) through Tribal Governance processes, the Board approved updated [Bylaws](#) and [Board Manual](#) on September 14, 2026 to better align its current governance framework and operating procedures with the [revised Charter](#). The updated documents continue the Board's established responsibilities while clarifying current requirements related to membership and appointments, fiduciary oversight, Board operations, delegation to the President, ethics, and Board development and evaluation.

As a Tribal land grant institution, KBOCC understands governance as a form of stewardship. The Board's responsibility is not limited to immediate operational decisions; it includes sustaining institutional stability, educational opportunity, and mission fulfillment for current learners, the KBIC community, and future generations. Administrative implementation of Board-approved decisions and the College's organizational structures are addressed in Core Component 4A; this section focuses on the Board's authority, independence, and fiduciary practice.

Fiduciary Oversight Is Exercised Through Deliberate and Documented Action

The Board of Regents exercises its fiduciary responsibilities through regular meetings, documented deliberation, and formal action on matters within its authority. In accordance with its governing documents, the Board reviews and [approves annual budgets](#); receives financial reports and [independent audit results](#); adopts and revises institutional policies; considers major

institutional initiatives; approves new academic programs through the College's established approval process; and hires and evaluates the President. Public notice of Board meetings, agendas, approved minutes, and significant actions is addressed in Core Component 2B as part of KBOCC's broader commitment to public information and transparency. Within the governance framework, these records demonstrate that institutional authority is exercised collectively through meetings, deliberation, and recorded action, rather than through informal or individual decision-making. When time-sensitive action occurs outside a regular meeting, the Board's subsequent review and documentation of that action preserve institutional accountability.

Board records demonstrate the breadth of this oversight in practice. During 2026, the [Board received and formally acted on](#) the FY2024–25 independent audit and [approved](#) the FY2026–27 institutional budgets. It also approved revisions to the Accounting Procedures Manual, including purchasing, procurement, and disbursement controls; considered institutional investments and employee retirement-plan administration; and acted on major expenditures, contracts, staffing structures, and facilities-related matters ([BOR 2026 Policy Actions](#)). These actions demonstrate continuing Board attention to financial accountability, internal controls, and the stewardship of institutional resources.

Board records also demonstrate active policy and academic oversight. The Board reviewed and [approved policies](#) addressing conflicts of interest, communications and social media, student technology, campus safety, credit hours and instructional modalities, student identity verification in distance education, and employee expectations. It also approved modifications to the Tribal Management Certificate, accepted the completed Business Administration and Early Childhood Education academic program reviews, and approved the Faculty Guidebook and institutional Catalog. These actions connect the Board's governance authority to institutional integrity, academic quality, regulatory compliance, and student interests.

The minutes document deliberation, as well as formal votes. The Board has asked questions about policy scope and implementation, requested additional information before acting on proposed expenditures, amended the Policy Amendment and Update Authority to retain Board approval when revisions carry a financial impact, rescinded an earlier email poll so that the land-into-trust resolution could be considered and acted upon during a formal meeting, and tabled matters when additional review was needed. These examples demonstrate that the Board does not function as a passive approval body; it considers information, identifies implications, modifies proposals, and records its decisions through established governance processes.

Presidential Selection

The Board's 2025 [presidential search](#) provides a recent example of these responsibilities in practice. The Board authorized the engagement of the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) to support a national search, designated members of its Executive Committee to serve as the Board Search Committee, and retained responsibility for interviewing finalists and making the appointment. The Board invited College and community input in developing the [Presidential Profile](#), reviewed and approved the initial profile, and issued an updated profile when the search was relaunched. The profile centered Anishinaabe culture and values,

understanding of Tribal Colleges and sovereignty, holistic student success, community relationships, accreditation, and institutional sustainability.

When the initial search did not result in an appointment, the Board formally concluded that process, reviewed the salary range, and initiated a new search. It communicated the revised process and timeline to the College community, publicly announced the finalists, and invited employees, students, and community members to participate in finalist forums and provide feedback for the Board's consideration. Following the renewed search, finalist interviews, and review of constituent feedback, the Board selected Melissa Kiesewetter as President on October 16, 2025. The process demonstrates the Board's exercise of its authority to select the chief executive, its independence in reaching that decision, and its attention to KBOCC's mission and best interests.

Ethical Standards and Conflict-of-Interest Requirements

Board members are expected to act in accordance with the ethical standards, confidentiality expectations, and conflict-of-interest requirements established in the [Board Bylaws](#), [Board Manual](#), and [Code of Ethics](#). These provisions require Board members to act with integrity, avoid using their position for personal benefit, disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest, and take appropriate action when a conflict could affect independent judgment.

KBOCC's Board-approved [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) applies to Regents, administrators, employees, committee members, and others acting in an institutional decision-making capacity. It requires annual conflict-of-interest disclosures from Board members, administrators, and full-time employees, as well as written disclosure of conflicts arising during the year. Individuals with an actual, potential, or perceived conflict may not participate in related discussion, deliberation, or voting; Board recusals must be recorded in the minutes. The policy also addresses nepotism, gifts, procurement and federal grant compliance, outside employment, confidential information, enforcement, and record retention. Oversight rests with the President for employees and with the Board for the President and Regents, protecting independent judgment and institutional accountability.

Board Autonomy Within Tribal Governance

The Board of Regents exercises the governing and fiduciary responsibilities assigned through the College's [Charter](#), [Board Bylaws](#), and Board [policies](#), including stewardship of mission, institutional policy, financial oversight, and presidential selection and supervision. Within KBIC's sovereign governance framework, the Board is sufficiently autonomous from undue external influence, including day-to-day direction by the KBIC Tribal Council, and from the College's administration to exercise independent institutional judgment and act in the best interests of KBOCC and its students.

The KBIC Tribal Council chartered the College and retains authority to amend its [Charter](#), codified in Tribal law under Title 114, Education, Chapter 2 of the KBIC Tribal Code. Under the revised Board [Bylaws](#) implementing [Charter](#) Section 114-27, the Board appoints

Regents each December from qualified KBIC applicants. Voting Regents must be enrolled KBIC members, may not serve simultaneously on Tribal Council or be employed by the College, and may be removed only by Tribal Council and only for cause. These provisions preserve accountability to the sovereign Tribal Nation while assigning the Board authority to govern the College without day-to-day direction from Tribal Council.

KBOCC and KBIC also maintain collaborative relationships that support shared educational and community priorities. The [2024 Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the KBIC Education Department supports educational programming and responsiveness to community needs without altering the Board's governance responsibilities. It followed the conclusion of a [prior Memorandum of Agreement](#) covering 2019–2022 and reflects a transition toward more focused collaborative agreements. Through these relationships, KBOCC advances educational opportunity, cultural vitality, and community well-being while maintaining the governance authority established by its [Charter](#).

Appropriate Delegation of Authority

Consistent with the Board's responsibility to select and oversee the chief executive, the [Board Manual](#) identifies the President as KBOCC's chief executive officer and expressly delegates the College's general administration and operation to the President, subject to the Charter, bylaws, and Board policy. This delegation establishes a direct line of accountability: the Board retains responsibility for mission, policy, fiduciary oversight, and strategic direction, while the President implements Board decisions, manages institutional operations, supervises College personnel, and reports to the Board on institutional performance and needs.

The Board's financial oversight is supported by an institutional [Finance Committee](#) that brings together representatives from Accounting, Sponsored Programs, Campus Operations, and the Board of Regents, with participation by the President as needed. The Committee reviews the annual budget, financial performance, audit results, revenue sources, financial trends, and investments and makes recommendations to the Board. This structure provides the Board with cross-functional analysis, while preserving its authority to approve budgets and other significant financial actions.

The Board also recognizes faculty authority in academic matters through established shared-governance structures. Faculty Council exercises [faculty-led authority](#) for curriculum, academic policy, and academic appeals, while proposals requiring Board action are advanced through the appropriate institutional process for Board consideration. This separation of responsibilities supports sound governance: the Board retains its ultimate institutional authority while academic and administrative leaders carry out their respective responsibilities within established policy and delegated authority. More on shared governance is discussed in Core Component 4A.

Board Development Supports Continuous Improvement in Governance

KBOCC supports informed and effective Board governance through orientation, ongoing professional development, and access to governance resources. Orientation materials introduce new Board members to the College's mission, governance framework, fiduciary responsibilities, and institutional context. Board members also participate in relevant training and development opportunities through organizations such as the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and other higher-education associations.

The College also evaluates Board effectiveness through a formal [self-evaluation process](#) established in the Board Manual. In May 2026, seven Regents completed an anonymous [self-evaluation](#) addressing Board performance, conduct, leadership, and adherence to governing procedures. Results identified strengths in working from strategic goals, reviewing and approving academic programs, understanding Board expectations, and familiarity with governing policies. The evaluation also identified opportunities to strengthen committee use, meeting participation, trustee recruitment and orientation, preparation for meetings, and application of learning from Board development activities.

The report translated these findings into specific actions for consideration, including reviewing governance role descriptions, strengthening trustee orientation, establishing processes for sharing learning from training and retreats, reviewing the Code of Ethics annually, improving meeting preparation, and identifying priority training topics. By identifying both strengths and areas for growth, the process demonstrates the Board's willingness to examine its own effectiveness and use the results to guide continued development.

Through its clearly defined authority, ethical standards, documented fiduciary oversight, and appropriate delegation of responsibility, KBOCC's Board of Regents is empowered to act independently and in the best interests of the institution and its students. The Board's governance framework protects institutional integrity while honoring the College's relationship with KBIC and its responsibility to serve learners, community, and future generations.

Sources

- Ordinance No. 75-1
- KBOCC Charter 7.14.25
- BOR Bylaws Approved 9.14.2026
- KBOCC MOU 8.5.24
- BOR Bylaws (revised July 2023)
- BOR Conflict of Interest Policy 2026
- BOR MOA 19-20
- BOR Manual Approved 9.14.2026
- BOR Presidential Search Profile 2025
- BOR Board Manual 2026 Code of Ethics
- BOR 2026 Self-Evaluation Results Report
- BOR Finance Committee Charter
- KBOCC Faculty Council Bylaws 2025
- BOR Presidential Search and Appointment Record 2025

- BOR 2026-01-12 Minutes_Audit
- BOR 2026-03-09 Minutes_Policy Approval
- BOR 2026-04-13 Minutes_Land Into Trust
- BOR 2026-05-11 Minutes
- BOR 2026-06-29 Minutes_Budget Approval
- BOR_2026 BOR Self-Evaluation Results Report
- BOR Board Manual 2026 Evaluation
- BOR 2026 Minutes_Policy Actions
- BOR Audit (FY24, FY25)
- BOR Budget Approval (FY25-FY26)
- BOR Manual Approved 10.27.25
- BOR Bylaws Approved 10.27.2025
- BOR Bylaws (revised March 2020)
- BOR Board Manual 2022
- BOR Board Manual 2023
- BOR Board Manual 2016
- KBOCC Charter Approved July 2016

2.D. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

The institution supports academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of knowledge as integral to high-quality teaching, learning and research.

Argument

Academic Freedom as Foundational to Teaching and Learning

KBOCC supports academic freedom and [freedom of expression](#) as conditions for high-quality teaching, learning, and inquiry. Faculty and students may engage questions, evidence, interpretation, and differing viewpoints within the professional, ethical, and educational standards, that protect a respectful learning environment. Academic freedom does not eliminate professional responsibilities or standards for respectful conduct; rather, it enables disciplined inquiry within them. Faculty retain appropriate discretion in instructional design, learning materials, assignments, and classroom discussion within approved curricula. Students are encouraged to question, analyze, and communicate ideas, and they have defined avenues for raising concerns about instructional practice, classroom conduct, or policy application.

These commitments are consistent with KBOCC's mission and the Seven Grandfather Teachings. *Debwewin*, in particular, connects academic freedom with responsibility: the pursuit of truth requires the freedom to question, evaluate evidence, consider differing perspectives, and engage multiple ways of knowing. It also requires intellectual honesty, respectful dialogue, and fidelity to evidence. Within this context, academic freedom and cultural responsibility are mutually reinforcing, enabling open inquiry while maintaining respect for people, community, culture, and the responsibilities that accompany knowledge.

The College's commitment is reflected in its [Catalog](#), Faculty Guidebook, Student Handbook, curriculum processes, [Employee Handbook](#), and grievance and appeal procedures. Together, these documents and structures support intellectual exploration, instructional discretion, respectful expression, and fair consideration of academic concerns.

Faculty Authority and Instructional Discretion Protect Academic Inquiry

Faculty members exercise professional judgment in designing and facilitating learning within approved courses and programs. They select instructional materials, develop assignments and learning activities, guide classroom discussions, determine appropriate teaching methods, and incorporate relevant disciplinary and culturally grounded content. This discretion allows faculty to introduce students to evidence, competing interpretations, differing perspectives, and multiple

ways of knowing while maintaining alignment with approved course outcomes, program requirements, assessment expectations, and professional standards.

Faculty academic authority is further protected through shared governance. [Faculty Council](#) provides faculty-led review and approval of curriculum and academic policy and participates in academic appeals, assessment, and program review. Through these responsibilities, faculty members collectively exercise disciplinary expertise and help determine the academic standards that guide teaching and learning. Faculty participation in curriculum development and review also helps ensure that academic decisions are based on educational quality, evidence, and student-learning needs.

Course syllabi ([CE111](#), [EN202](#), [ES218](#)), Canvas course environments, and instructional materials demonstrate how faculty exercise this authority in practice. Across programs, faculty use discussion, research, reflective writing, presentations, laboratory and field experiences, community-based activities, and other forms of inquiry to help students examine ideas and apply knowledge. For example, [AS101 Introduction to Anishinaabe Studies](#) requires students to analyze historical and colonial processes, discuss contemporary issues facing Anishinaabe communities, and develop a culturally informed response to a community issue. Students communicate their learning through discussion, policy analysis, reflection, and a culminating project that may take written, multimedia, visual, or artistic form. These activities pair freedom of inquiry with responsibility to evidence, culture, community, and respectful engagement.

Student Freedom of Inquiry

Students exercise freedom of inquiry and expression through classroom discussion, collaborative learning, written and oral communication, research assignments, experiential learning, and engagement with community issues. These learning experiences ask students to evaluate information critically, develop and support conclusions, listen to differing viewpoints, and communicate responsibly within academic, professional, cultural, and community settings.

The College's general education curriculum develops the abilities needed for meaningful participation in academic inquiry, including critical thinking, communication, information literacy, cultural awareness, and ethical decision-making. Course-level and program-level learning outcomes further require students to analyze information, apply knowledge, communicate ideas, and reflect on their responsibilities to others. Students therefore encounter freedom of inquiry not only as an institutional principle, but as a regular part of the learning expected throughout their education. General Education coursework and the [College Success Seminar](#), as part of the general education requirements for all degree programs and encouraged for all students, introduce students to institutional expectations for conduct and academic integrity.

Student expression is accompanied by expectations for academic integrity, respectful conduct, and responsible participation in the learning community. These expectations do not require students to avoid disagreement or difficult questions. Instead, they provide a framework in which students can explore and express ideas, while respecting the rights of others and maintaining an environment conducive to learning.

Curriculum Brings Differing Perspectives and Ways of Knowing

KBOCC's curriculum provides opportunities for students to engage with diverse intellectual traditions, histories, perspectives, and knowledge systems. General education courses, Anishinaabe Studies requirements, and culturally grounded learning experiences encourage students to examine how knowledge is developed, interpreted, and applied across different contexts.

[Required Anishinaabe Studies](#) coursework deepens students' understanding of Anishinaabe histories, cultures, languages, and knowledge systems alongside other academic traditions. This approach does not limit intellectual inquiry; it broadens the questions, sources, and perspectives students learn to consider. Students are encouraged to understand knowledge in relationship to community, place, culture, and responsibility, as well as within established academic disciplines.

As a Tribal College, KBOCC recognizes that intellectual freedom includes the ability to engage Indigenous knowledge on its own terms, while also examining relationships among Indigenous and Western academic traditions. This creates a learning environment in which cultural grounding and intellectual exploration inform one another and prepare students to participate thoughtfully in diverse academic, professional, and community settings.

Institutional Processes Protect Fairness and Responsible Expression

Academic freedom and freedom of expression operate within institutional standards intended to protect educational quality, individual rights, and a respectful learning environment. The [Faculty Guidebook](#) and [employee policies](#) establish expectations for [professional conduct](#), instructional responsibility, [nondiscrimination](#), and respectful communication. The [Student Handbook](#) and [College Catalog](#) similarly communicate expectations related to academic integrity, student conduct, classroom participation, nondiscrimination, and the resolution of academic concerns.

Faculty members and students have established processes for raising concerns related to instructional practice, academic decisions, classroom interactions, conduct, or the application of institutional policy. [Student grievance and academic appeal procedures](#) provide pathways for concerns to be reviewed, beyond the immediate classroom when necessary. Faculty participation in academic review and appeal processes helps ensure that questions involving curriculum, instruction, and academic standards, receive appropriate academic consideration.

These procedures distinguish academic disagreement from misconduct and provide structured review, rather than relying on informal or unilateral intervention. They support fair treatment while recognizing that academic freedom does not remove the responsibility to meet professional standards, follow approved curriculum, protect student rights, or maintain an environment in which learning can occur.

Through its policies, curriculum, shared-governance structures, instructional practices, and review procedures, KBOCC supports academic freedom and freedom of expression as active components of institutional life. These commitments enable faculty and students to pursue knowledge, engage differing perspectives, and participate in responsible inquiry grounded in academic quality, Anishinaabe values, and responsibility to present and future generations.

Sources

- Catalog 2025-26 Freedom of Expression Page 12
- LS103 Spring 2026 Syllabus
- Student Handbook 2026-2028 Grievance and Appeals pp. 27-32
- CE111 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- EN202 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- ES218 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- AS101 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- Employee Handbook 2026 Ethics, Conduct, and Discipline pp. 4-6, 27-39
- Employee Handbook 2026 Nondiscrimination pp. 33-34
- KBOCC Faculty Council Bylaws 2025
- Student Handbook 2026-2028_Mission Vision Values
- Employee Handbook 2026 p. 4

2.E. Knowledge Acquisition, Discovery and Application

The institution adheres to policies and procedures that ensure responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge.

Argument

Policies and Institutional Expectations Support Responsible Knowledge Practices

KBOCC adheres to policies and procedures designed to ensure that knowledge is acquired, created, shared, and applied responsibly in teaching, learning, research, and community engagement. [Academic integrity policies](#), instructional standards, [artificial intelligence guidance](#), [research oversight procedures](#), and [information literacy](#) expectations establish institutional standards for ethical scholarship and responsible use of knowledge.

Gwayakwaadiziwin (honesty) provides a cultural foundation for these responsible knowledge practices. KBOCC understands this teaching as upholding integrity and trust in all interactions and scholarship. In academic work, this requires accurate representation of sources, evidence, methods, and findings; appropriate attribution of others' ideas and knowledge; and avoidance of plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation. In work involving Indigenous knowledge, honesty also requires respect for cultural context, community relationships, appropriate attribution, and applicable cultural protocols. *Gwayakwaadiziwin* therefore connects conventional standards of academic integrity with KBOCC's relational responsibilities as a Tribal College.

These expectations reflect both professional academic standards and the institution's commitment to relational accountability, ethical stewardship, and respect for Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Responsibility in knowledge practices is reinforced through clear institutional expectations, faculty oversight, instructional design, and student support structures.

Information Literacy and Ethical Responsibility Are Reinforced & Supported Across the Curriculum

KBOCC integrates information literacy and ethical responsibility into General Education learning outcomes and course-level instruction. GELO #4 (Information Literacy) and GELO #5 (Ethical Responsibility) establish institution-wide expectations that students develop foundational competencies in evaluating information, using sources responsibly, and applying knowledge ethically.

Mapping of General Education outcomes to courses demonstrates that information literacy and ethical scholarship are reinforced across academic programs and instructional levels. Faculty

assessment processes further support the continuous evaluation of how students develop these competencies over time. This integration supports both academic quality and student success by preparing students to engage responsibly with information in educational, workforce, and community settings.

Library services, tutoring, academic coaching, and faculty mentoring support students in developing practical research and information literacy skills. These services assist students in locating, evaluating, synthesizing, and citing information appropriately, while reinforcing ethical use of academic and community-based knowledge.

Academic support services also help students understand institutional expectations related to plagiarism, citation practices, source reliability, and responsible communication of information. Through these supports, KBOCC reinforces that responsible knowledge acquisition is a shared institutional responsibility rather than solely an individual expectation.

Oversight Structures Support Ethical Research and Responsible Knowledge Creation

KBOCC maintains oversight structures to ensure that research and scholarly activity involving human participants are conducted ethically and in compliance with applicable standards. The [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) reviews research proposals involving human subjects to ensure protection of participant rights, ethical conduct, and adherence to institutional and regulatory expectations.

IRB members receive appropriate training and review proposals using established procedures designed to support responsible inquiry and protect institutional credibility. These processes reinforce accountability in research practices and help ensure that knowledge creation involving human participants occurs within appropriate ethical frameworks.

The institution also recognizes responsibilities associated with Indigenous knowledge stewardship. Culturally-grounded coursework, community-based learning, and institutional practices emphasize respect for community knowledge, relational accountability, appropriate attribution, and ethical engagement with Indigenous perspectives and cultural knowledge.

KBOCC continues strengthening documentation alignment and visibility of IRB and research guidance processes to improve clarity and accessibility for faculty, students, and external stakeholders.

Sources

- Catalog 2025-26 General Education Page 61-63
- Catalog 2025-26 Academic Integrity Page 42

- AA Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy
- Institutional Review Board 9.8.25 Update

Criterion 2 - Summary

In fulfilling its mission, the institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Argument

KBOCC demonstrates integrity through written expectations, clear governance authority, public disclosure, academic and professional standards, and processes for addressing concerns. Grounded in Anishinaabe values, these policies and practices distribute responsibility among the Board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

Planting seeds for seven generations requires trustworthiness in the present. The evidence shows an institution practicing relational accountability and ethical stewardship: defining expectations, documenting decisions, protecting inquiry, supporting responsible knowledge practices, and improving the consistency and accessibility of records and procedures. These practices sustain trust with students, employees, the KBIC community, the public, and future generations.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning for Student Success

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

3.A. Educational Programs

The institution maintains learning goals and outcomes that reflect a level of rigor commensurate with college-level work, including by program level and the content of each of its educational programs.

Argument

Appropriate Rigor Across Programs

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (KBOCC) demonstrates a comprehensive and mission-driven approach to teaching and learning that ensures academic quality, student success, and institutional accountability. As a 1994 Tribal land grant institution, KBOCC designs associate degrees and certificates that meet established expectations for lower-division higher education, reflect appropriate levels of academic rigor and are consistently delivered across all modalities. Each program is intentionally designed to provide students with college-level knowledge and skills that prepare them for transfer, employment, or service within the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), while maintaining fidelity to the College's commitment to holistic, culturally grounded education.

Program requirements, course sequencing, and credential expectations are clearly defined in the [College Catalog](#), which serves as the authoritative source for academic policies, program structures, and publicly accessible degree and certificate pathways. KBOCC's [associate degree and certificate programs](#) reflect expectations consistent with lower-division higher education and are intentionally structured to balance foundational knowledge with discipline-specific learning. Associate degree programs incorporate general education requirements aligned with the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA), ensuring that coursework meets statewide transfer standards and supports seamless continuation to four-year institutions. In addition to transfer-focused pathways, KBOCC offers workforce-aligned certificate programs designed to meet regional and tribal employment needs, emphasizing applied competencies, technical skills, and industry relevance while maintaining alignment with institutional learning outcomes.

The [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#) provided direction for this work through Objective 1, Academic Programs, which called for maintaining and enhancing quality academic and vocational programs responsive to community needs. Its actions included incorporating Anishinaabe

content into the curriculum, expanding advanced secondary enrollment, supporting articulation and transfer, exploring distance learning methods, and developing programs in response to documented need. The curriculum structures and quality assurance practices described below demonstrate how KBOCC carried these priorities into program and course design during the review period.

KBOCC's approach to academic rigor and curriculum design is grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which serve as a foundational framework for teaching, learning, and assessment. Rooted in Anishinaabe philosophy, these values shape how knowledge is defined, delivered, and evaluated across all academic programs, ensuring that students develop competencies that support both immediate academic and workforce success, and the long-term wellbeing of the KBIC. As a Tribal land grant institution, KBOCC further integrates its mission of community-based education, practical application of knowledge, and public service into program development, ensuring that academic offerings remain responsive to local workforce demands, cultural priorities, and community needs.

Academic rigor at KBOCC is defined through structured intellectual progression, discipline-specific expectations, and applied learning experiences. Program structures, required credit hours, disciplinary depth, and transfer alignment reflect standards consistent with two-year postsecondary education. Students are expected to demonstrate competency in communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving while also engaging in culturally grounded learning that integrates Anishinaabe perspectives and ethical responsibility. Through this intentional design, KBOCC ensures that academic programs are not only rigorous and aligned with higher education expectations, but also relevant, meaningful, and responsive to the communities the College serves.

Student Learning Outcomes Framework

KBOCC maintains an aligned student learning outcomes framework spanning institution-wide College Learning Goals (CLGs), General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs), Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), and institutional and activity-level cocurricular outcomes. Academic and cocurricular assessment serve as complementary pathways that contribute evidence toward the College Learning Goals. Together, these outcomes establish clear expectations for student learning and support alignment, rigor, and transparency across the institution's educational offerings and experiences.

All [student learning outcomes](#) are reviewed and formally approved by Faculty Council during new course or program proposals, as well as through ongoing curriculum review and revision processes. Faculty Council serves as the [primary academic oversight body](#), ensuring that all outcomes are appropriate for college-level work, aligned across the curriculum, reflective of disciplinary standards, and consistent with the mission and cultural responsibilities of KBOCC as both a two-year community college and a Tribal College. This shared governance model ensures that learning expectations are not only established through faculty expertise but are also continuously evaluated and refined.

Faculty Council-approved curriculum governs course design and teaching regardless of modality, location, or instructor. Course learning outcomes, credit hour expectations, required content, assessment expectations, and approved curricular changes apply to face-to-face, online, and dual-enrollment sections alike; faculty expertise shapes delivery while the approved curriculum establishes the common academic standard.

Student learning outcomes are publicly communicated to ensure transparency and accountability. College Learner Goals and General Education Learning Outcomes are published in the College Catalog and serve as institution-wide anchors for both academic and cultural competencies. Program Learning Outcomes are made available on program webpages, providing clear expectations for each degree and certificate. Course Learning Outcomes are included in course syllabi and learning management system (LMS) course shells, ensuring that students are consistently informed of learning expectations at the course level each term.

The College Learner Goals reflect institutional priorities grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings and emphasize cultural knowledge, community engagement, adaptability, and holistic wellbeing. These goals serve as a unifying framework that informs curriculum design, instructional practices, and assessment strategies across all programs.

To support alignment and continuous improvement, KBOCC maintains a centralized [Student Learning Outcomes \(SLO\) Matrix](#), maintained by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). The SLO Matrix catalogs and aligns CLGs, GELOs, PLOs, and CLOs across all programs and courses, functioning as a master reference for curricular coherence and assessment planning. This tool allows the institution to systematically map outcomes, monitor alignment, identify gaps, and ensure that learning expectations evolve alongside program development.

Scaffolded Curriculum and Sequenced Pathways

KBOCC's curriculum is intentionally scaffolded to support progressive intellectual development and student success. Academic programs are designed with clear sequencing that guides students from foundational knowledge and skill development toward increasingly advanced application, analysis, and synthesis. Course numbering, prerequisite structures, and [program sequencing](#) demonstrate a clear and intentional pathway from introductory (100-level) coursework to more advanced (200-level) courses required for degree completion.

Curriculum mapping further ensures alignment between Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs), supporting the cumulative development of competencies across each program.

Students begin with foundational coursework designed to build essential academic skills, including First Year Experience courses (LS103/LS133), composition, and mathematics. These courses introduce and establish competencies in communication, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning, preparing students for the expectations of college-level work. Prerequisites, placement processes, and gateway course design further support student readiness and ensure appropriate entry into coursework.

As students' progress, they engage in discipline-specific courses that require increasing levels of analytical sophistication, disciplinary fluency, independence, and application of knowledge. Advanced coursework, including internships, directed studies, research projects, and capstone experiences, require students to synthesize knowledge, apply theoretical concepts, and demonstrate mastery of program learning outcomes.

This structured and intentional progression ensures learning builds over time rather than feeling disconnected, reflecting thoughtful curriculum design instead of just accumulating credits, and preparing students to graduate with the skills needed for their credential.

Curriculum Oversight by Faculty

Faculty Council exercises formal oversight of curriculum, learning outcomes, academic standards, and program development at KBOCC. As the primary faculty governance body, [Faculty Council](#) is responsible for reviewing and approving all new courses, program proposals, and substantive curriculum modifications. This includes evaluation of course content, rigor and alignment of learning outcomes (CLOs, PLOs, and GELOs), credit hour appropriateness, prerequisite structures, and overall program coherence.

The [curriculum approval process](#) follows a structured and documented workflow. Faculty proposing new courses or program changes are required to complete standardized proposal forms that include course descriptions, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and justification for the change. These proposals are reviewed at multiple levels, typically beginning with the Department Chair, followed by Faculty Council for academic review and recommendation. Final approval is granted through established institutional processes, including administrative review and, when applicable, Board of Regents approval. Faculty Council meeting minutes document discussion, feedback, and formal approval actions, providing clear evidence of faculty oversight and participation in academic decision-making.

Through this process, Faculty Council ensures that all curriculum changes maintain disciplinary integrity, reflect appropriate academic rigor, and align with both institutional learning outcomes and external expectations such as transfer requirements and workforce standards. Program revisions and new program proposals are evaluated not only for academic quality, but also for alignment with the College's mission, including its commitment to Anishinaabe cultural integration and community responsiveness.

Faculty qualifications further support the integrity of this oversight process. KBOCC maintains clearly defined credentialing standards for instructional faculty, requiring appropriate academic preparation or demonstrated expertise in the teaching discipline. Faculty involved in curriculum review and approval possess the disciplinary knowledge and experience necessary to evaluate academic content, learning outcomes, and instructional expectations. This ensures that decisions regarding curriculum and academic standards are grounded in subject matter expertise.

Together, this structured curriculum approval process, supported by documented review, faculty qualifications, and shared governance practices, ensures that academic programs remain rigorous, relevant, and aligned with institutional mission and accreditation standards.

Credit Hour Policy and Workload Standards

KBOCC maintains a clear [credit hour definition](#) that aligns with federal regulations and Higher Learning Commission expectations, ensuring consistency and integrity across all academic programs. The College follows the standard Carnegie Unit definition of a credit hour, where one credit represents one hour of direct instruction and a minimum of two hours of student work outside of class per week over a semester. This definition is clearly outlined in the College Catalog and serves as the foundation for course design and academic expectations.

This standard is applied consistently across all course types, including lecture, laboratory, clinical, studio, practicum, internship, and online courses. The [Faculty Guidebook](#) and [Credit Hour and Instructional Modality Policy](#) further clarifies how credit hours translate into contact hours and student workload expectations across different instructional formats, including the calculation of lab, clinical, and experiential learning hours.

Faculty are responsible for designing courses that reflect appropriate academic workload and for clearly communicating expectations through course syllabi, including time on task, assignments, and engagement requirements. Additional course designations, such as [Writing-Intensive \(WI\) courses](#), further reinforce expectations for student work and academic rigor. Together, these practices ensure that credit is awarded based on meaningful academic engagement and that students receive a consistent and comparable educational experience, across all programs and delivery modalities.

Consistency Across Modalities

KBOCC ensures that academic rigor is consistent across all delivery modalities, including face-to-face, hybrid, online, and dual enrollment courses. Learning outcomes, assessment expectations, and faculty qualification standards remain the same regardless of format. While most programs are offered in traditional or hybrid formats, KBOCC also provides a fully online Associate of Science in Psychology and several fully online certificates, including Small Business Start-Up, Healthcare Management, and Medical Billing & Coding. These programs utilize the same Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), academic expectations, and cultural integration as their on-campus counterparts, ensuring that rigor is maintained regardless of modality.

In 2025-26, KBOCC piloted a formal [Course Readiness Review process](#) to further strengthen consistency and college-level expectations across all instructional formats. This process requires faculty to submit syllabi and LMS course shells prior to the start of each semester to ensure courses are fully developed and aligned with institutional standards. Reviewers, which include the Dean of Academic Affairs and Assessment and Curriculum Coordinator, verify key components such as clearly articulated course-level outcomes, alignment between assignments and CLOs, weekly learning expectations, technology requirements, and integration of Anishinaabe values where appropriate. This proactive process ensures that students encounter well-structured, fully prepared courses from the first week of instruction, regardless of delivery

format. Following the pilot process implementation, improvements and changes are planned for AY2026-27 to strengthen the process.

The expansion of Canvas-supported and distance-capable instruction also advanced the [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#)'s call to explore and implement distance learning methods. KBOCC paired that expansion with common learning outcomes, syllabus expectations, faculty oversight, and Course Readiness Review practices intended to maintain comparable rigor and quality regardless of modality.

Dual enrollment courses follow the same syllabi, learning outcomes, materials, and assessment processes as on-campus courses, and instructors are held to the same qualification standards. Together, these practices ensure that academic rigor is format-neutral and that all students experience consistent expectations and quality. Expansion of dual and advanced secondary enrollment was an identified action in Objective 1 of the [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#). KBOCC's faculty qualification, course approval, syllabus, and oversight requirements ensure that expanded access does not reduce the academic expectations applied to college-level coursework.

This consistency, combined with intentional integration of Anishinaabe perspectives, enhances academic rigor by requiring students to engage with multiple ways of knowing, apply knowledge in culturally relevant contexts, and demonstrate deeper levels of understanding. Students are expected to analyze, interpret, and apply knowledge within both academic and community frameworks, reinforcing intellectual engagement and critical thinking across all modalities.

Cultural Integration as Academic Expectation

KBOCC intentionally integrates Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways across the curriculum as a core component of academic quality. Cultural integration is embedded within program design and course delivery, rather than treated as supplemental content. As outlined in the Academic Catalog and Faculty Guidebook, [Anishinaabe Cultural Integration Across the Curriculum](#) is a fundamental expectation of course design, ensuring that cultural knowledge is incorporated alongside disciplinary content in meaningful and intentional ways. Objective 1 of the [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#) also called for incorporating Anishinaabe content into curriculum mapping. The College's curriculum matrices, syllabus expectations, College Learning Goals, and reporting of Anishinaabe content provide increasingly systematic ways to carry that commitment into educational programs.

KBOCC blends Western academic standards with Anishinaabe knowledge systems to create learning experiences that are both culturally grounded and academically rigorous. Faculty incorporate cultural perspectives, community knowledge, and Indigenous ways of knowing into coursework, while maintaining alignment with disciplinary expectations and transfer or workforce requirements. Faculty also collaborate with Elders, culture bearers, and language speakers to ensure cultural accuracy, relevance, and authenticity.

To support faculty in this work, KBOCC developed an internal resource titled [Using Culture in the Classroom](#), created by KBOCC employees and Anishinaabe Advisory Committee to provide practical, culturally grounded teaching tools and examples. This guide includes curated books,

documentaries, lesson ideas, classroom activities, Ojibwemowin language resources, and recorded materials that faculty can directly incorporate into their courses. It also provides examples of culturally grounded instructional practices such as storytelling, land-based learning, community engagement, and integration of traditional knowledge systems. This internally developed resource ensures that cultural integration is not left to individual interpretation alone, but is supported through shared, institutionally grounded guidance that reflects the community KBOCC serves.

Students are expected to engage with disciplinary content while also situating knowledge within ethical, relational, and community contexts. This approach reflects institutional values and strengthens, rather than replacing academic rigor by requiring students to think critically across multiple perspectives. Through this intentional integration, students develop a deeper understanding of course content, apply knowledge in culturally relevant ways, and demonstrate higher levels of intellectual engagement.

Sources

- Catalog 2026-2028_Programs
- SLO Matrix Updated Fall 2026
- Catalog 2025-26 Program Paths
- Course and Program Proposal Guidelines
- Catalog 2026-2028 Credit Hour Policy Pages 33-34
- Catalog 2026-2028 WI Courses Page 56
- Course Review Process AY2025-26 Pilot
- Faculty Guidebook 2026 Cultural-Integration Page 56
- Using Culture in the Classroom
- KBOCC Faculty Council Bylaws 2025
- Strategic Plan 2020-2025
- AA Credit Hour and Instructional Modality Policy

3.B. Exercise of Intellectual Inquiry

The institution's educational programs engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in practicing modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

Argument

Information Gathering, Analysis, and Communication

KBOCC's educational programs require students to gather evidence, analyze information, and communicate findings through written, oral, quantitative, visual, and applied formats that support both academic achievement and community application. Across disciplines, including composition, environmental science, business, health sciences, and Anishinaabe studies, students are expected to locate and evaluate sources, interpret evidence, construct arguments, solve problems, and communicate findings using methods appropriate to their field of study. These expectations are embedded in course-level outcomes and reinforced through writing-intensive assignments, field-based research, presentations, laboratory experiences, internships, and capstone projects. Intellectual inquiry is not confined to general education; it is intentionally integrated throughout disciplinary coursework. Through these activities, students put *Gwayakwaadiziwin* (honesty) into practice by collecting and representing evidence accurately, attributing sources and knowledge appropriately, and communicating their methods, interpretations, and conclusions honestly.

The [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#) reinforced this emphasis through actions involving student internships, enhanced science laboratory capacity, development of programming at the Arts and Agriculture Center in Pelkie, and greater inclusion of Anishinaabe content across the curriculum. These commitments expanded the settings in which students engage in research, observation, creative work, applied problem-solving, and culturally grounded ways of knowing.

In the Environmental Science program, students engage in authentic research experiences that mirror professional scientific inquiry. In [ES204 Forests of the Upper Great Lakes](#), students completed a semester-long collaborative research project focused on ecological disturbance and forest succession in mesic northern forests. Working as a research team, students co-developed the central research question, selected field study sites, designed sampling strategies, and conducted field-based data collection over eight class sessions. Using standard forestry protocols, students identified and measured trees, assessed canopy structure, documented soil and groundcover characteristics, recorded quantitative observations in field notebooks, captured photographic evidence, and transferred field data into classroom spreadsheets for analysis.

Following data collection, students collaboratively analyzed patterns across study sites, interpreted ecological succession stages, and synthesized their findings into a professional research poster. Beginning with only a basic template, students designed the poster layout, developed written narratives for the introduction, methods, and findings sections, incorporated

quantitative data, selected visual evidence, created maps and graphical representations, and applied APA-style citation standards. The completed [poster](#) was printed, framed, and permanently displayed on campus, providing students with an authentic public dissemination experience while building skills aligned with conference presentations and KBOCC capstone expectations. Assessment criteria evaluated research design, methodological accuracy, scientific writing, interpretation of findings, visual communication, and overall presentation quality.

The resulting student work demonstrates that intellectual inquiry at KBOCC extends beyond classroom discussion or textbook analysis. Students actively participate in generating new knowledge, interpreting real-world data, and communicating findings to academic and community audiences. These inquiry-based experiences prepare students to think critically, communicate effectively, and apply disciplinary methods in both transfer and workforce settings.

This same commitment to inquiry and communication extends across other disciplines. In [EN202 College Composition II](#), a writing-intensive course, students complete a research proposal requiring them to identify a focused research question, evaluate peer-reviewed sources, and organize arguments using structured academic writing. This assignment develops students' ability to assess source credibility, synthesize information, and communicate ideas clearly in written form.

The research proposal transitions into a final research project modeled after a systematic review (PRISMA), in which students utilize academic databases to locate relevant literature and critically analyze peer-reviewed journal articles based on titles, abstracts, and research methodologies. Students apply analytical reasoning to establish appropriate inclusion and exclusion criteria, demonstrating their ability to evaluate the quality and relevance of evidence.

Both the proposal and final project are developed through an iterative writing process that includes drafting, peer review, instructor feedback, and revision prior to final submission. This process reinforces writing-intensive expectations and supports the development of higher-order communication and inquiry skills. The [culminating project of EN202](#) results in a document of at least 3,000 words.

Student performance is evaluated using a standardized rubric that assesses critical analysis, integration of sources, depth of thematic analysis, organization, clarity, and adherence to APA style. The final project culminates in an oral presentation, requiring students to communicate their findings using professional presentation formats and appropriate technology.

KBOCC further reinforces inquiry through culturally grounded research experiences. In LS290 Indigenous Research Methods, students participate in extended data collection and [data analysis activities](#) using tools such as Excel, R, and JASP, strengthening both quantitative reasoning and applied research skills.

Applied and Inquiry-Based Learning Across Disciplines

Students at KBOCC engage in intellectual inquiry through coursework that requires them to gather evidence, analyze information, and communicate findings in multiple formats. Across disciplines, assignments require students to evaluate sources, construct arguments, analyze data, and present conclusions through written, oral, quantitative, and creative means. These expectations are embedded within course-level outcomes and reinforced through writing-intensive courses, research assignments, presentations, and applied projects. Intellectual inquiry is not isolated within general education but is integrated throughout program curricula, ensuring that students consistently practice analytical and communication skills.

Beyond foundational research skills, KBOCC's academic programs provide structured opportunities for creative, scholarly, and inquiry-based learning that reflect the institution's land grant mission and emphasis on applied education. These experiences are intentionally embedded within departments and disciplines to ensure that inquiry is both relevant and appropriately aligned with program outcomes. Courses incorporate simulations, laboratory experiences, field-based research, directed studies, internships, and capstone projects that require students to frame questions, test ideas, interpret results, and synthesize learning.

At the program level, departments design discipline-specific inquiry experiences that reflect both academic standards and community relevance. In the Environmental Science program, students engage in hands-on, field-based inquiry and applied research. Recent [student capstone projects](#) included hydrology and environmental monitoring studies, such as a comparative hydrology analysis of the Falls River and Silver River during major precipitation events. Students present their findings through formal research posters and presentations, demonstrating their ability to collect and analyze environmental data, interpret results, and communicate findings in both scientific and community-relevant contexts. These presentations often mirror professional conference formats, reinforcing expectations for disciplinary communication.

In Psychology and Human Services-related coursework, students engage in research and applied inquiry that addresses real-world and community-centered issues. In courses such as PY299 Research and Special Projects and PY297 Psychology Capstone, students design and conduct independent or guided research projects. Recent examples include studies on [historical loss and PTSD in Indigenous populations](#), [comparative attitudes toward physician-assisted suicide](#), feasibility studies related to [assisted living for individuals with co-occurring conditions](#), and research examining the role of [cultural identity and grit in Native American students](#). These projects require students to apply research methodologies, analyze data, and communicate findings through formal written papers and presentations, demonstrating both academic rigor and relevance to community needs.

Across programs, inquiry-based learning culminates in student presentations, showcases, and capstone experiences that provide opportunities for students to publicly demonstrate their learning. As shown in recent Environmental Science [student research posters](#), students synthesize fieldwork, data analysis, and cultural or community context into professional-quality presentations that reflect both disciplinary expectations and applied learning. These experiences reinforce that knowledge is most meaningful when it is actively applied, critically examined, and shared with others.

Through this intentional integration of research, applied learning, and student presentation opportunities across departments, KBOCC ensures that students not only develop foundational inquiry skills, but also demonstrate the ability to apply, communicate, and extend their knowledge in ways that prepare them for transfer, employment, and community leadership.

General Education as Foundation for Inquiry

The [general education curriculum](#) at KBOCC provides a structured foundation for intellectual inquiry, emphasizing communication, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry, and ethical responsibility. General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs), published in the Academic Catalog, establish expectations for analytical reasoning, problem-solving, and effective communication and serve as the foundation upon which program-level inquiry is developed.

Courses such as composition ([Comp I](#) and [Comp II](#)), mathematics ([MA103](#)), and First Year Experience ([LS103](#) or [LS133](#)) require students to analyze information, solve problems, and communicate effectively in both written and applied formats. First Year Experience courses further support student development by introducing strategies for academic success, critical thinking, and self-directed learning. Together, these courses build core competencies that prepare students for more advanced, discipline-specific inquiry.

KBOCC also supports student success in gateway courses through corequisite models in mathematics and English, which provide additional academic support while maintaining college-level expectations. This approach ensures that students are able to engage in rigorous coursework while receiving the support needed to develop foundational skills.

General education functions as the intellectual infrastructure across all programs, ensuring that inquiry and communication skills are intentionally developed and reinforced rather than occurring in isolated courses. This foundation ensures that all students, regardless of program of study, are prepared to engage in higher-level inquiry and apply their knowledge in academic, professional, and community contexts.

Integration of Anishinaabe and Disciplinary Ways of Knowing

KBOCC's approach to intellectual inquiry reflects a synthesis of Western academic methodologies and Anishinaabe ways of knowing. Intellectual inquiry across the curriculum integrates disciplinary analysis with relational, ecological, and ethical perspectives, ensuring that students engage in learning that is both academically rigorous and culturally grounded. The Academic Catalog affirms the College's commitment to Anishinaabe cultural integration across the curriculum, reinforcing that this approach is embedded within, rather than separate from, academic expectations.

This approach expands traditional definitions of inquiry by incorporating cultural knowledge, oral traditions, and community-based learning alongside established academic methods. Students

are encouraged to engage with evidence through multiple lenses, applying methodological precision, while also considering context, relationships, and long-term impacts. They are expected to analyze information, interpret findings, and apply knowledge in ways that are community-centered and ethically grounded.

By integrating disciplinary methods with Anishinaabe perspectives, KBOCC strengthens intellectual engagement rather than replacing it. Students develop the ability to think critically across multiple frameworks, situate knowledge within lived experience and community responsibility, and apply their learning in ways that support collective wellbeing and long-term stewardship. This integration is evident across multiple disciplines and course levels.

In EN202 College Composition II, students operationalize this approach through a [comparative analysis assignment](#) requiring them to critically examine Western knowledge systems alongside Indigenous ways of knowing. Drawing on prior educational experiences, course materials, and Indigenous perspectives shared through guest speakers, students evaluate how knowledge is created, shared, and connected to relationships, land, and ethics. The assignment requires a structured academic essay with a clear thesis, organized comparison, supported analysis, and adherence to formal academic conventions such as APA formatting. Assessment criteria emphasize comparative analysis, organization, and clarity, ensuring alignment with course and general education outcomes.

This same commitment to multiple ways of knowing is further demonstrated in [ES218 Environmental Justice and Ethics](#), where students are intentionally challenged to communicate knowledge through both traditional Anishinaabe and contemporary academic frameworks. Students complete two scaffolded major projects centered on the same environmental justice or ethics topic but communicated through distinctly different epistemological approaches. Midway through the semester, students lead a teaching circle, a culturally grounded oral learning experience designed to develop traditional ways of communicating knowledge in a communal setting. Students research a topic connected to course concepts, share preliminary findings with limited reliance on technology, facilitate discussion using traditional talking circle protocols, and are assessed on topic knowledge, Indigenous values, facilitation skills, interpersonal respect, and alignment with the KBOCC mission. The [rubric](#) explicitly evaluates students' ability to honor cultural norms, reflect Indigenous perspectives, and create space for reciprocal dialogue.

Building on this experience, students revisit the same topic during final week through a formal PowerPoint presentation, requiring them to translate their learning into a contemporary academic format commonly used in professional conferences, capstone experiences, and transfer settings. Students are assessed on content depth, organization, visual communication, presentation skills, and their ability to respond to audience questions using evidence-based reasoning. By requiring students to communicate the same body of knowledge through both a traditional talking circle and a formal academic presentation, KBOCC challenges students to move fluently between Indigenous and Western academic frameworks, demonstrating adaptability, critical thinking, and culturally grounded intellectual engagement.

This assignment structure is intentionally embedded within the course design. The [ES218 syllabus](#) identifies both the midterm teaching circle and final presentation as core assessed

learning experiences and explicitly aligns them with course learning outcomes related to Indigenous environmental justice, environmental ethics, and oral communication. The course further aligns with program learning outcomes focused on explaining the importance of the natural world in Anishinaabe culture, applying social science concepts, and delivering presentations developed through independent research. In addition, the course explicitly operationalizes KBOCC's College Learning Goal (CLG) *Bezhig: Culture: Think Anishinaabe*, emphasizing traditional ecological knowledge, relationships, responsibility, respect, and reciprocity as academic expectations rather than supplemental content.

The faculty expertise supporting this culturally grounded pedagogy further strengthens the integrity of this approach. Environmental Science Department Chair [Dr. Andrew Kozich](#), who holds both a Ph.D. in Forest Science and an Associate of Arts in Anishinaabe Studies, has published peer-reviewed scholarship focused on Indigenous environmental perspectives, and has secured multiple externally funded grants supporting Indigenous research methodologies and community-based environmental science education. This combination of disciplinary expertise, scholarly research, and cultural grounding ensures that students engage in intellectually rigorous learning experiences that authentically integrate Anishinaabe and disciplinary ways of knowing.

Applied Learning and Adaptable Skill Development

KBOCC prepares students to apply knowledge in dynamic and evolving academic, professional, and community environments. Program Learning Outcomes emphasize critical thinking, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making, ensuring that students develop transferable skills that support success across multiple contexts.

Through applied learning experiences such as internships, clinical placements, sustainability initiatives, workforce-aligned projects, and community engagement, students practice adapting their knowledge to real-world challenges. These experiences allow students to apply analytical and disciplinary skills in practical settings, reinforcing the connection between academic learning and community impact.

A current example is documented in the [USDA NIFA Extension 2025-26 Annual Progress Report](#). During the reporting period, two students participated in experiential learning related to traditional foods, food systems, gardening, and science. Students engaged with community partners through hands-on activities, while developing knowledge and skills in professionalism, leadership, self-confidence, and community engagement. Although modest in scale, these experiences illustrate how Land Grant programming creates culturally and environmentally relevant opportunities for students to apply learning in community settings.

Programs are intentionally designed to support both transfer and workforce readiness, with learning outcomes that reflect adaptability and applied problem-solving. This approach aligns with KBOCC's land grant mission, which emphasizes education that serves immediate community needs while also preparing students for long-term resilience and changing environments.

Community-Engaged Inquiry

KBOCC's educational programs encourage inquiry that connects classroom learning with community contexts. At KBOCC, intellectual inquiry carries an obligation to the community it serves, a direct expression of CLG Niizh. CLG Niizh - *Community-Minded: Build community by committing to service with and for others* - is operationalized as an assessed institutional outcome mapped across multiple programs in the SLO Matrix, including Anishinaabe Studies, Environmental Science, Early Childhood Education, Health Science, and Nursing. GELO 5 (Ethical Responsibility) crosswalks directly to CLG Niizh and requires students to "*demonstrate responsibility and reciprocity in academic, personal, or community contexts.*" Community engagement is a graduation-level expectation embedded in program design.

In Anishinaabe Studies, AS298 Internship is a required course in the A.A. degree. The catalog defines it as a structured service-learning experience in which students meet community needs by applying knowledge from their coursework, completing 20 hours of service per credit, maintaining written journals, and meeting regularly with their advisor. AS298 is a prerequisite for AS297 Capstone Seminar, where students synthesize the internship experience against program learning outcomes that include "develop a comprehensive solution to a specific community issue that effectively addresses the identified needs and resilience of a tribal community while aligning with Anishinaabe culture, goals, and principles of self-determination." The two-course sequence ensures that community-engaged learning is both structurally required and academically assessed at the culmination of the degree.

In Environmental Science, capstone projects are conducted in direct partnership with KBIC and its Natural Resources Department and presented to community audiences. Projects address real resource management questions with direct consequences for the KBIC. Examples include a study of temperature trends in the Portage Waterway to optimize the traditional ogaawag (walleye) spear harvest; a walleye population study conducted with KBIC-NRD Fisheries personnel across three tribal lakes; analysis of arsenic contamination in residential well water in Baraga County; and assessment of emerald ash borer impacts on black ash, a species of documented cultural significance to the Anishinaabe. Students present findings at the program capstone and at external conferences. The Environmental Science internship record further documents graduate placements with USDA surface and groundwater programs, the KBOCC Land Grant Program, and the KBIC Natural Resources Department across graduation years 2019–2023, confirming that community-engaged fieldwork is embedded across the program, not limited to the capstone.

The KBOCC Land Grant Department extends these opportunities further through Native Food Pathways, a Tribal land grant initiative that partners with academic programs to connect capstone and program requirements to community-based research in Native food systems and food sovereignty. In a recent example, an Environmental Science student completed their required capstone project through a Native Food Pathways placement, conducting community-based research in collaboration with the KBIC Natural Resources Department. The student presented the project to fulfill Environmental Science degree requirements and is now employed at KBIC-NRD, where they continue the work they began as an intern. This outcome is the seven generations principle enacted: seeds planted through academic inquiry, still growing.

Sources

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- EN202 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- ES218 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- ES204 - Fall 2025 Syllabus
- ES204 poster 2025
- EN202 Comparative Analysis Assignment
- LS290 Data Analysis Assignment
- ES Capstone Project Examples
- PY297 JS_Capstone
- Intellectual Inquiry Example 1_Redacted
- PY297 Sample
- ES Capstone Posters
- EN102 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- MA103 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- LS133 Syllabus - Spring 2026
- ES218 presentation instructions
- Kozich CV 2026
- Intellectual Inquiry Example 2 Redacted
- LG USDA Extension Annual Report 2026
- Strategic Plan 2020-2025

3.C. Sufficiency of Faculty and Staff

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

Argument

Faculty and Staffing Levels

KBOCC maintains faculty and staff capacity sufficient to deliver its current academic programs and student services. The College's AY2025-26 [faculty roster](#) and [staffing profile](#) included 11 full-time faculty, 30 adjunct faculty, and 11 staff supporting academic and student-facing functions. KBOCC's most recently reported IPEDS student-to-faculty ratio, reported in Spring 2026, was 8:1.

The [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#) identified intellectual capital as an institutional priority. Objective 4 called for expanding and retaining institutional capacity through additional full-time faculty, employee-retention planning, support for internal Native candidates, and access to position-specific professional development. KBOCC's growth in instructional staffing, targeted faculty hiring in Nursing and Health Science, and continuing support for employee credential development reflect that direction.

Sufficiency is evaluated in relation to enrollment, course demand, program growth, faculty qualifications, advising and support needs, financial capacity, and known vacancies. When demand or program complexity increases, KBOCC responds through hiring, workload adjustment, adjunct coverage, professional development, or revised operational assignments. The addition of faculty capacity in Nursing and Health Science illustrates this approach: growth in programs with documented student and workforce demand was matched with instructional capacity and associated teaching resources.

Qualification standards are addressed separately below. Together, the staffing profile and the College's documented planning practices demonstrate that KBOCC monitors not only whether courses can be staffed, but whether learners have access to appropriately qualified faculty and the support personnel needed for high-quality programs.

Faculty Qualifications and Proven Experience

KBOCC's Faculty Guidebook establishes differentiated [faculty qualification standards](#) for academic, vocation, and culturally specialized instruction. Academic faculty are ordinarily qualified through a graduate degree in the teaching field or a closely related field, or through a bachelor's degree with appropriate graduate preparation. Vocational faculty may qualify through relevant education or certification combined with demonstrated professional experience.

Instructors of Anishinaabe language, art, or culture may also be [qualified](#) through official tribal verification of subject matter expertise.

When a candidate's qualifications depend substantially on applied or community-based expertise, the College uses documented [Proven Experience](#) Rubrics for academic and general education, Anishinaabe arts and culture, Native language, and vocational instruction. Candidates submit evidence for review, and a score of at least 20 of 27 is recommended for approval. The current [faculty qualifications roster](#) records each instructor's teaching area, employment status, degrees, licenses, certifications, and approved proven-experience score where applicable. New and alternatively credentialed faculty receive mentoring and may be assigned professional-development or credential-completion plans, helping ensure that alternative pathways maintain instructional quality rather than functioning as exceptions to it.

KBOCC's faculty contribute both disciplinary expertise and cultural grounding reflective of the College's mission. Instruction integrates field-specific knowledge with awareness of community context and Anishinaabe perspectives where appropriate. Faculty experience includes academic scholarship, professional practice, and lived knowledge relevant to tribal and rural communities. This combination strengthens instructional quality by situating content within meaningful contexts. Cultural integration is supported through faculty capacity and expertise and the Anishinaabe Advisory Committee.

Faculty Evaluation

KBOCC [evaluates](#) teaching effectiveness through multiple sources of evidence intended to support instructional quality, professional growth, and continuous improvement. These sources may include syllabus review, end-of-course student evaluations, classroom observations, annual faculty self-assessment, participation in professional development, learning-outcomes assessment and reporting, and evidence of Anishinaabe content integration. No single measure is used independently; evidence is considered collectively to provide a more complete understanding of faculty performance and teaching effectiveness.

Full-time faculty participate in an annual review conducted by the Dean of Academic Affairs. All new faculty are observed during their first semester, with additional classroom observations conducted periodically or when further support is needed. Adjunct faculty may be evaluated through syllabus review, student evaluations, classroom observations, and other measures determined by the Dean. Evaluation findings may result in feedback, mentoring, professional-development opportunities, additional observations, or a formal improvement plan when appropriate. Department Chairs are also evaluated on their leadership, planning, curriculum oversight, assessment, faculty support, and contributions to institutional priorities. Through this process, faculty are expected to use student feedback, assessment findings, and evaluation results to strengthen instruction and student learning.

Data-Informed Staffing Decisions

KBOCC evaluates staffing levels in relation to enrollment data, program viability, student support needs, and financial sustainability. As a Tribal land grant institution committed to access and community responsiveness, the College balances fiscal stewardship with the need to maintain instructional quality and effective student support. Decisions regarding new positions, reassignments, and workload adjustments are informed by institutional data, including enrollment trends, course demand, and program review findings, as well as budget planning processes that prioritize personnel needs aligned with strategic goals.

Staffing decisions are regularly reviewed through institutional planning and budget development processes, ensuring that resources are allocated in ways that sustain academic programs and student services. Recent position adjustments and role restructuring reflect the College's responsiveness to evolving program needs, including growth in workforce-aligned programs and expanded student support services. These decisions demonstrate alignment between staffing, institutional mission, and community priorities.

Faculty workload expectations and course load assignments are defined through institutional policies and guided by program needs, enrollment levels, and delivery modalities. This ensures equitable distribution of instructional responsibilities while maintaining course availability and academic continuity for students.

Professional Development

KBOCC maintains a layered approach to faculty development that includes annual expectations, institutional and faculty-specific training, and individualized development. Full-time faculty complete at least eight hours of professional development annually, while continuing part-time and adjunct faculty complete at least four hours. The [Faculty Guidebook](#) identifies improvement of teaching, disciplinary currency, instructional technology, and knowledge of Anishinaabe cultures, traditions, and values as professional development priorities.

The College uses Vector Solutions to assign and document [annual training](#), including modules required of all employees and others based on position responsibilities. KBOCC also provides scheduled opportunities for collective learning and institutional alignment. [Professional development days](#) were held at the beginning of this 2026-27 academic year and addressed topics such as institutional priorities, policies and procedures, campus communication, student support, assessment, cultural learning, and other identified campus needs. In addition, KBOCC convenes a two-hour all-faculty meeting before each semester. Full-time, adjunct, and credentialed dual-credit instructors are invited to these meetings, promoting consistency across instructors, courses, modalities, and locations.

In Summer 2026, supported through the American Indian College Fund's Cultivating Native Student Success initiative, KBOCC engaged a contractual, part-time [Teaching and Learning Specialist](#) as the foundation for an emerging Center for Teaching and Learning. The Specialist supports faculty, helps identify instructional-development needs, and develops or coordinates internal professional development opportunities related to teaching, course design, instructional technology, assessment, and student learning. Because this capacity is newly established, its programming and evidence of participation will continue to develop during AY2026-27.

Professional development is supported through departmental budgets and external awards. [Title III Part A budgets](#) support registration, tuition, training, and associated travel, while the American Indian College Fund's [2026 faculty-development award](#) provides \$9,118 for professional development and travel.

KBOCC also monitors use of these opportunities. As of March 31, 2026, 26% of eligible faculty, staff, and Board members had participated in professional-development or related travel opportunities, compared with an annual target of 30%. This documented baseline identifies an opportunity to strengthen awareness, access, and participation. Together, defined expectations, recurring learning opportunities, dedicated funding, and participation monitoring demonstrate structured support for the employees responsible for effective teaching and student services.

Dual Enrollment Instructor Qualifications and Oversight

Dual enrollment and advanced secondary instructors at KBOCC are held to the same faculty qualification standards as on-campus instructors, ensuring consistency in instructional quality and academic expectations across all delivery locations. Instructor credentials are reviewed and verified through established hiring and approval processes prior to course assignment, confirming that instructors meet faculty credentialing requirements for teaching in the applicable discipline.

In addition to credential verification, KBOCC ensures that dual credit courses maintain full alignment with on-campus offerings. Course learning outcomes, syllabi, textbooks, instructional materials, and assessment expectations are standardized across sections, regardless of delivery location. This alignment ensures that students enrolled through dual enrollment experience the same level of academic rigor, content, and expectations as those taking courses on campus.

Dual credit instructors receive ongoing support to maintain instructional consistency and quality. This includes access to institutional resources such as syllabus templates, course expectations, and learning management system guidance. Instructors are provided with clear communication regarding course requirements, grading standards, and academic policies to ensure alignment with institutional practices.

Oversight of dual enrollment instruction is maintained through coordination with academic leadership, including Department Chairs and the Dean of Academic Affairs. This structure supports regular communication, review of course materials, and alignment of instructional practices. Through consistent credentialing, standardized course design, and ongoing support and oversight, KBOCC ensures that academic rigor remains consistent and format-neutral, regardless of instructional location or delivery model.

Sources

- Employee Qualifications 2025-26 Faculty
- Employee Qualifications 2025-26 Staff

- Faculty Guidebook 2026 Faculty Classification & Qualifications Pages 10-11
- Faculty Guidebook 2026 Proven Experience Pages 57-63
- Faculty Guidebook 2026 Professional Development Page 1
- Title III Part A Professional Development
- College Fund Faculty Professional Development
- Back to Campus PD AY2026-27
- HR Vector Training Email
- Teaching and Learning Specialist
- Faculty Guidebook 2026 Faculty Evaluation
- Strategic Plan 2020-2025

3.D. Support for Student Learning and Resources for Teaching

The institution provides student support services that address the needs of its student populations, as well as the teaching resources and infrastructure necessary for student success.

Argument

Holistic and Integrated Student Support Services

KBOCC provides comprehensive [student support services](#) and instructional resources that address the academic, cultural, and holistic needs of its student population. The College delivers integrated support designed to address academic readiness, financial stability, personal well-being, and cultural connection, recognizing that student success is multifaceted and interconnected.

Student services, including advising, tutoring, financial aid, counseling, disability accommodations, and student success programming, operate in coordination to support students throughout their academic journey. As outlined in the [Catalog](#) and on the [College website](#), services such as academic advising, tutoring, counseling, transportation assistance, emergency aid, food pantry access, and childcare resources are intentionally embedded within the student experience to reduce barriers and promote persistence.

These services are structured to work collaboratively, with advising, tutoring, and academic programs maintaining regular communication to identify student needs and provide timely support. Students are informed of available services through multiple channels, including orientation, advising sessions, course materials, and institutional communications, ensuring awareness and accessibility.

Within a Tribal college context, KBOCC's approach to student support reflects a commitment to holistic education by addressing challenges that extend beyond the classroom while maintaining clear academic expectations. This integrated model ensures that students are supported not only as learners, but as individuals connected to family, community, and culture, reinforcing both academic success and overall well-being.

Student feedback confirms both the value of these supports and the continuing challenges faced by KBOCC students. The [Spring 2026 Student Voice Survey](#) identified faculty and staff relationships, advising, tutoring, emergency assistance, food resources, mental-health resources, and cultural integration as institutional strengths, while also identifying transportation, housing, food security, caregiving, and scheduling as continuing barriers. The College uses these findings to refine services and institutional priorities.

Responsiveness to Tribal and Rural Student Needs

KBOCC serves a rural region with unique geographic, economic, and infrastructural realities, and its student support systems are intentionally designed with this context in mind. The College offers a wide range of services to address barriers to student success, including advising, tutoring, counseling, transportation assistance, emergency aid, food pantry access, and childcare resources. These supports reflect an understanding that student success is influenced by academic, personal, and socioeconomic factors.

In response to the specific needs of tribal and rural students, KBOCC provides targeted supports such as transportation assistance, flexible scheduling, dual enrollment access, and corequisite academic support in gateway courses. These services are designed to reduce barriers related to distance, work and family responsibilities, and access to resources, while still maintaining academic expectations.

Aligned with its land grant mission, KBOCC prioritizes expanding access and addressing structural obstacles to education. As a result, student support systems are not based on generic institutional models but are intentionally responsive to the lived realities of the communities the College serves. This approach ensures that students are supported in ways that are relevant, accessible, and effective in promoting both persistence and success.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin Cultural and Wellness Support

Culturally grounded supports at KBOCC extend beyond the classroom and are intentionally integrated into the student experience to strengthen belonging, persistence, and overall academic engagement. Cultural programming, language revitalization efforts, community events, and designated spaces for gathering create an environment where students see their identities, values, and lived experiences reflected in their educational journey. These efforts align with the College Learner Goals and institutional values outlined in the Academic Catalog, reinforcing the importance of culture, community, and holistic wellbeing in student success.

KBOCC further supports this work through dedicated personnel, including a Cultural Education Specialist and a Cultural Advisor, who provide guidance, resources, and programming that connect students to Anishinaabe culture, traditions, and community knowledge. These roles support both students and faculty by facilitating cultural activities, advising on culturally grounded practices, and helping integrate cultural perspectives into both curricular and cocurricular experiences. Their presence ensures that cultural support is not incidental but intentionally embedded within the institutional structure.

Culturally grounded support is also reflected in advising and mentoring practices, where faculty and staff engage students in ways that emphasize relationality, respect, and community connection. Students are encouraged to connect their academic goals with their personal, cultural, and community identities, reinforcing the relevance and purpose of their education.

At KBOCC, belonging is not treated as a peripheral initiative, but as a foundational component of student success. By creating culturally affirming environments and support systems, the College helps students build confidence, resilience, and a stronger connection to their

educational pathways. These efforts contribute directly to persistence and engagement, ensuring that students are supported both academically and as members of their communities.

Access Across Modalities

KBOCC delivers instruction in face-to-face, hybrid, online, and dual enrollment formats, and student support services are structured to ensure access across all modalities. Orientation, advising, tutoring, financial aid assistance, and other key supports are available both in person and through virtual platforms, ensuring that access to services is not dependent on a student's physical location.

Students have access to virtual advising through Microsoft Bookings, allowing them to schedule appointments either in person or via Teams. Tutoring is available both on campus and online, including 24/7 access through Tutor.com. New student orientation is offered in both in-person and online formats, ensuring that all students, including online and dual enrollment students, receive consistent onboarding and support.

These services are supported by digital communication tools and learning resources that allow students to stay connected regardless of course format. Through virtual advising, online orientation, and accessible tutoring and support systems, KBOCC ensures that all students have equitable access to the resources they need to succeed, regardless of how or where they take courses.

Teaching Resources and Academic Infrastructure

KBOCC supports effective teaching through academic technology, library and information resources, specialized instructional facilities, and direct assistance with curriculum, course design, and assessment. Canvas serves as the College's learning management system and provides a consistent platform for course materials, communication, assignments, and assessment across face-to-face, hybrid, and online instruction. Faculty also have access to classroom instructional technology and institutional guidance for using Canvas and other digital tools effectively.

To strengthen online and technology-enhanced instruction, KBOCC secured an institutional membership in the Online Learning Consortium in Fall 2025. The membership makes research, webinars, workshops, and practical resources related to online course design, instruction, accessibility, and student engagement available to faculty and staff. This external resource complements the College's internal course-design support and provides access to current practices in online learning.

The [College Library](#) provides faculty and students with physical and digital collections, research databases, academic journals, eBooks, and discipline-specific resources that support course assignments, information literacy, and student research. Digital resources are available through the College portal, extending access to online and hybrid learners, as well as students and faculty working off campus. The Library also provides study space, computers, wireless internet,

research assistance, and access to additional materials through regional library cooperation and the Michigan Electronic Library.

Academic leadership, Department Chairs, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness provide direct support for curriculum development, syllabus expectations, learning outcome alignment, and assessment. The Assessment and Curriculum Coordinator assists faculty with curriculum processes and the design, documentation, and use of assessment. The [Course Readiness Review process](#), piloted in AY2025–26, provides an additional mechanism for examining syllabi and Canvas course shells for course organization, learning outcome alignment, instructional expectations, technology requirements, student services, and readiness. Together, these structures translate institutional expectations into practical assistance rather than requiring individual faculty members to navigate curriculum and assessment processes independently.

KBOCC further strengthened its teaching infrastructure in Summer 2026 by engaging a part-time contractual Teaching and Learning Specialist as the foundation for an emerging Center for Teaching and Learning. The specialist consults with faculty on course design and instructional practice and helps identify and deliver internal professional development responsive to faculty and student needs. Title III funding also provides annual resources for faculty development tied to instructional and program priorities. Additional information about faculty professional development is provided in Core Component 3.C. Specialized facilities supporting laboratory, simulation, clinical, applied, and land-based learning are described in the following section.

Specialized Facilities and Applied Learning Environments

Faculty use specialized laboratories, simulation environments, cultural spaces, and land-based learning sites to provide applied instruction, appropriate to the learning outcomes and professional expectations of their programs. KBOCC's physical and instructional infrastructure supports hands-on, applied, and land-based learning, aligned with its land grant mission. The College provides facilities and resources that allow students to engage in experiential learning and apply knowledge in real-world and community-based contexts.

Recent upgrades to science laboratories and nursing simulation spaces have enhanced hands-on instruction and created opportunities for students to develop practical skills in controlled, high-quality learning environments. These improvements support programs that require laboratory, clinical, and technical training, ensuring students are prepared for workforce and transfer pathways.

In addition, the Arts & Agriculture Center and surrounding environmental learning spaces provide opportunities for land-based and community-connected learning. Students engage in field-based activities, sustainability initiatives, and culturally grounded practices that connect academic content to the local environment and community.

Together, these facilities and investments support inquiry-based instruction and strengthen instructional quality by allowing students to actively engage with course material, apply their learning, and develop skills relevant to their disciplines and communities.

Monitoring Support and Teaching Resources

KBOCC monitors student supports and teaching resources through student feedback, service-utilization data, early-alert and referral activity, course and program assessment, Course Readiness Review, academic program review, annual unit assessment, and faculty and Department Chair input. These processes help the College distinguish between the availability of a resource and its effectiveness in supporting teaching and learning.

KBOCC also evaluates student engagement and support through national and institutional surveys. The Student Success Committee's review of the [2024 SENSE](#) and [2025 CCSSE](#) results identified strengths in early connections, faculty-student relationships, and active and collaborative learning, together with opportunities to improve academic challenge, awareness and use of tutoring and technology resources, career counseling, and artificial-intelligence literacy. Findings have informed early-alert improvements, expanded writing support, course-design initiatives, and faculty development priorities.

In 2025-2026, Student Services strengthened its division-wide assessment structure through a division assessment process that aligns unit missions and indicators with institutional outcomes and identifies definitions, data sources, review frequencies, and targets. In the 2025-26 assessment plan, measures address early alert participation and response, Student Success Center reach, basic needs and wellness supports, financial aid access, library utilization, cultural advising, and student persistence. The matrix establishes a consistent foundation for collecting and reviewing evidence across Student Services; results and resulting actions will be documented through the annual unit-assessment [reporting process](#).

Sources

- KBOCC Website Capture - Student Services
- Course Review Process AY2025-26 Pilot
- KBOCC Library Handout
- Teaching and Learning Specialist
- 2026 Student Voice Survey Summary_public
- CCSSE 2025 Executive Summary
- SENSE 2024 Executive Summary
- SS Assessment Plan Outcomes Matrix 2025-26
- SS Assessment Reports 2025-26
- Catalog 2026-2028 Student Services

3.E. Assessment of Student Learning

The institution improves the quality of educational programs based on its assessment of student learning.

Argument

KBOCC maintains a structured and recurring process for assessing student learning outcomes across the institution, governed by the [Assessment Committee](#) and guided by a set of [Assessment Principles](#). Assessment of student learning is the systematic process through which the College determines whether it is delivering its mission and vision. Each cycle of evidence gathering, reflection, and action is an act of planting seeds for seven generations, ensuring that educational decisions made today are accountable to the learners and community who will inherit their outcomes.

Assessment was an explicit institutional commitment in the [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#). Objective 2 called for institution-wide assessment to support continual quality improvement, continued reporting of assessment results, and greater integration of Anishinaabe content into student learning. During the review period, KBOCC strengthened the structures supporting that commitment through the Assessment Committee, updated learning outcomes and reporting processes, the College Learning Goals, and a more clearly differentiated framework for course, program, general education, cocurricular, and institutional assessment.

Assessment Governance and Infrastructure

Assessment at KBOCC is governed by an [Assessment Committee](#), which fosters a culture of inquiry and improvement by ensuring that student learning, student success, and program quality are regularly examined in ways that reflect the mission and values of the College. Membership includes all full-time faculty, as well as representatives from cocurricular and student services staff. The Assessment & Curriculum Coordinator chairs the committee with support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE).

The committee oversees assessment and program review processes, promotes the use of results, and strengthens communication and transparency. A published [annual calendar](#) establishes responsibilities for assessment planning, reporting, peer review, campus-wide sharing of findings, and evaluation of the committee's effectiveness. The committee meets twice monthly during the academic year, and meeting materials are maintained in SharePoint, embedding faculty participation in regular academic operations.

In Spring 2026, the Assessment Committee adopted seven [Assessment Principles](#) grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings and the responsibility to consider future generations. The principles establish assessment as a relational and cyclical practice involving outcome clarification, evidence gathering, reflection, documented action, and follow-up. They recognize

multiple ways of knowing and the appropriate use of quantitative and qualitative evidence while keeping direct evidence of student learning central.

On September 14, 2026, the Assessment Committee approved the [Student Learning Assessment Handbook & Institutional Assessment Plan](#) and its companion [Institutional Assessment of the College Learning Goals](#). Together, these documents formalize KBOCC's approach to assessing student learning at the course, program, general education, cocurricular, and institution-wide levels. They establish a common cycle—Envision, Embark, Reflect, and Celebrate & Act—along with shared expectations for evidence, documentation, responsibilities, communication, improvement actions, and follow-up. The College Learning Goal plan further establishes a recurring four-year institutional assessment rotation beginning with Bezhig—Culture in AY2026–27.

Assessment at Multiple Levels

Student learning is assessed through interconnected course, program, general education, cocurricular, and institution-wide processes. Course-level assessment examines achievement of CLOs; program assessment examines PLO attainment; general education assessment examines the six GELOs; cocurricular assessment examines institutional and activity-level cocurricular outcomes; and institution-wide assessment synthesizes aligned evidence to examine the four College Learning Goals. The approved Assessment Handbook defines the distinct purpose, process, documentation, and use of results at each level, while the Student Learning Outcomes Matrix documents the relationships among them.

The [Student Learning Outcomes \(SLO\) Matrix](#) serves as KBOCC's centralized curriculum and outcomes alignment map. Updated in 2026, the Matrix documents the College Learning Goals (CLGs), Institutional Cocurricular Outcomes (ICOs), General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs), Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), along with the relationships among them. It demonstrates how learning is scaffolded from individual courses and cocurricular experiences through program, general education, and institutional expectations. OIE maintains the Matrix as a master reference for curriculum review, assessment planning, syllabus alignment, and identification of gaps requiring faculty attention.

Course Level

All faculty participate in assessment of course learning outcomes (CLOs). Each semester, instructors select CLOs to assess and report, guided by program-level assessment and the Department Chair. All CLOs are required as part of the syllabus while also acknowledging the CLOs selected for assessment. At semester's end, instructors complete a [Course Assessment Report](#) (CAR) documenting assessment methods and results and a reflection of student learning including analysis of results and planned adjustments ([example CARs](#)). Instructors are responsible for tracking course-level data collection, although encouraged to use Canvas Outcomes. Reports are submitted through Qualtrics and the results tracked and shared in SharePoint. A course readiness review process implemented in AY2025-26 provides systematic

review of all course syllabi to ensure outcomes are current and alignment to higher-level outcomes is accurately communicated.

Course learning outcomes (CLOs) are aligned with applicable program learning outcomes (PLOs), general education learning outcomes (GELOs), or both, depending on the role of the course within the curriculum. These relationships are documented in the [Student Learning Outcomes Matrix](#) and communicated through the master syllabus template. The Course Readiness Review process, piloted in AY2025–26, provides a systematic mechanism for verifying that syllabi include current CLOs and accurately communicate their alignment with higher-level outcomes.

Program Level

At the program level, assessment draws on multiple evidence sources appropriate to program type and the students available in a given cycle. KBOCC has strengthened its data collection and analysis at the program level, including moving programs and general education to [annual reporting](#) from biennial reporting, within a four-year assessment cycle in which all PLOs are assessed at least once.

For degree programs, the program-defined capstone is the primary site of direct, summative PLO assessment, providing evidence of cumulative learning at the point of program completion. In years when no students complete the capstone, or to complement capstone data, programs use course-embedded assessment of PLOs drawn from CAR data across the program's courses. Indirect evidence, including course evaluation surveys and exit interviews or surveys, supplements direct measures by providing student perspective on their own learning and program experience. Annual Program Assessment Reports ([AY2025-26](#), [AY2024-25](#), [2022-2024](#)) document the combination of evidence sources used in each cycle, with the mix reflecting both program structure and available data. Beginning with the 2022-2024 cycle, KBOCC requires completion of program assessment reports in its institutional effectiveness platform, Weave. Previously, reports were completed using a Word template.

Certificate programs vary in their relationship to the degree curriculum. Certificates embedded within a degree program rely primarily on course-embedded PLO assessment, drawing from the same CAR data that supports the degree program's reporting. Standalone certificate programs that do not share a degree program structure also use course-embedded assessment as their primary direct measure of PLO attainment.

Beginning in AY2024-25, all programs moved from [biennial](#) to [annual](#) PLO reporting within a [four-year assessment cycle](#) that ensures every PLO is assessed at least once per cycle. This reporting frequency is intentionally aligned with KBOCC's four-year academic program review rotation so that APR draws on longitudinal, multi-source PLO data rather than a single point-in-time measure.

General Education Level

Since 2022, KBOCC has documented general education assessment in Weave through reports structured similarly to academic program assessment reports. Reports were completed biennially through 2022–24, with annual reporting planned beginning in AY2024–25. The [2020–2022 report](#) includes findings from capstone and course-embedded measures across the six General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs). The [2022–24 assessment plan](#) documents intended outcomes, measures, and targets, although findings were not reported consistently.

Before the General Education Department Chair position was created and filled in 2021, responsibility for general education assessment rested primarily with the Dean of Instruction and the Assessment Committee. Although assessment activities occurred, the process lacked consistent ownership and coordination. Since 2021, responsibility has generally rested with the General Education Department Chair, working with participating faculty and the Assessment Committee.

KBOCC did not complete separate General Education Assessment Reports for AY2024–25 or AY2025–26. The General Education Department instead completed its first comprehensive [program review](#) in AY2024–25 and undertook the [General Education Assessment Refinement Project](#) in AY2025–26. These processes identified limitations in assessing GELOs primarily through program capstones, including unclear ownership and separation from the courses and faculty responsible for developing general education learning.

The refined framework defines four measurable sub-outcomes for each GELO and moves primary responsibility for GELO assessment to designated general education courses. Faculty will use mapped courses, signature or common assignments, shared criteria or rubrics, and Canvas Outcomes to collect direct evidence through a rotating multiyear cycle. Participating faculty and the Assessment Committee will interpret aggregated findings and document actions, responsibilities, timelines, and follow-up in a General Education Assessment Summary.

The revised approach is incorporated into the approved [Student Learning Assessment Handbook & Institutional Assessment Plan](#). Implementation continues in AY2026–27, and complete results are not yet available. The framework establishes clearer ownership and a more coherent process, while KBOCC recognizes that its effectiveness must be demonstrated through forthcoming assessment cycles.

Institutional Level

At the institutional level, KBOCC assesses student learning through two connected pathways: the [College Learning Goals](#) and the [Cocurricular Assessment Framework](#).

The four [College Learning Goals](#) (CLGs), approved in Fall 2024, describe the learning KBOCC expects students to develop across their curricular and cocurricular experiences: Bezhig—Culture; Niizh—Community-Minded; Niswi—Growth Mindset; and Niiwin—Balance and Wellbeing. Grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings, the CLGs express what distinguishes a KBOCC education and connect student learning to the College’s mission, community responsibilities, and commitment to future generations.

The CLGs are mapped to the six GELOs and five Institutional Cocurricular Outcomes. In Summer 2026, KBOCC also completed the systematic mapping of all 106 current Program Learning Outcomes to at least one CLG. The [Student Learning Outcomes Matrix](#) documents these relationships and provides the infrastructure for synthesizing evidence across courses, programs, general education, and cocurricular learning.

The [Institutional Assessment of the College Learning Goals](#), approved September 14, 2026, establishes a recurring four-year rotation in which KBOCC examines one CLG each year, beginning with Bezbig—Culture in AY2026–27. OIE will use the [Student Learning Outcomes Matrix](#) to identify relevant courses, programs, outcomes, and cocurricular activities. The Assessment Committee will select a manageable and representative set of existing direct evidence, apply an appropriate CLG-level rubric or synthesis protocol, and identify findings and actions for institutional improvement.

The process is proportionate to KBOCC's size and builds from evidence already generated through established assessment activities rather than imposing an additional assessment on every student or faculty member. Each course will continue to identify at least one meaningful assignment or learning activity through which students engage with Bezbig, regardless of the CLG receiving focused institutional review that year. Because AY2026–27 is the first implementation year, KBOCC expects to refine evidence-selection, synthesis, and reporting procedures based on what it learns from the initial cycle.

The [Cocurricular Assessment Framework](#), approved by the Assessment Committee in October 2025, establishes KBOCC's first consistent institution-wide process for planning, assessing, and improving learning outside the classroom. It applies to academic and non-academic units with cocurricular responsibilities, including Student Services, the Student Success Center, Library, Land Grant, Culture and Wellness, and academic departments. Five Institutional Cocurricular Outcomes connect cocurricular learning to the four College Learning Goals through cultural engagement, community-minded action, personal and academic goal setting, transferable skills, wellness, and Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

The framework follows a common assessment cycle. Lead Units identify intended outcomes before an activity and submit a Cocurricular Activity Reporting Form afterward to document participation, results, and reflection. OIE compiles the reports annually, returns summaries for unit assessment and improvement, and prepares an institutional report for review by the Assessment Committee and College leadership.

AY2025–26 was the framework's inaugural implementation year and focused on unit orientation, clarification of the distinctions among curricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities, and first-cycle data collection. At the end of the year, Lead Units were asked to [report](#) on activities conducted during the year. KBOCC recognizes that the volume and depth of evidence will reflect this early stage of adoption. Nevertheless, the initial reports provide a baseline for evaluating reach, identifying reporting and programming gaps, and improving outreach, scheduling, activity design, and assessment during AY2026–27. The framework therefore represents an emerging but structured extension of assessment across the broader educational experience.

Evolution and Refinement of Assessment

KBOCC's assessment system has continued to evolve in response to faculty experience, assessment findings, and program review. Following the 2020 HLC evaluation, the College continued using a single institutional capstone to assess both program and general education outcomes. In Fall 2022, faculty replaced that model with program-defined capstones, allowing each program to design a culminating experience appropriate to its discipline while retaining responsibility for direct assessment of Program Learning Outcomes.

Implementation revealed that using program capstones to assess GELOs placed responsibility with programs rather than the general education courses and faculty responsible for developing that learning. The AY2024–25 [General Education Program Review](#) documented this concern, and the Assessment Committee subsequently undertook the General Education Assessment Refinement Project.

The resulting framework moves primary GELO assessment into designated general education courses and uses signature or common assignments, shared criteria or rubrics, and Canvas Outcomes to collect direct evidence. Each GELO now includes four measurable sub-outcomes, strengthening clarity and consistency. Program capstones remain the principal site of summative Program Learning Outcome assessment.

A [May 2025 review](#) by Achieving the Dream coaches also affirmed strengths in KBOCC's program-defined capstones while identifying opportunities to clarify expectations, strengthen mentorship, and improve artifact collection. Together, these changes demonstrate an assessment system that uses evidence and faculty reflection to refine responsibilities and improve the usefulness of its results.

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Programs

Assessment at KBOCC is used to make documented improvements to curriculum, instruction, and program structure. KBOCC uses assessment results to guide improvements in curriculum, instructional strategies, sequencing, and student supports. Identified gaps or trends lead to adjustments such as assignment redesign, rubric refinement, prerequisite changes, pedagogical modifications, or program revisions.

[AY2025–26 program assessment reports](#) provide current evidence of faculty using findings to refine instruction and assessment. In Anishinaabe Studies, 72% of students met the target on an AS101 community-solution project; faculty identified uneven expectations across written, multimedia, visual, and artistic formats and planned clearer criteria, scaffolding, and exemplars for each format. Early Childhood Education found that 7 of 9 students met the practicum benchmark and identified continued support for field-based performance. Environmental Science documented strong achievement in research, field investigation, and communication, while identifying the need to strengthen cultural integration and related assessment measures. General Education reported that all assessed EN202 students met the research-paper benchmark and that 81.1% of students successfully completed College Success coursework, supporting continued use

of these assignments, alongside further attention to early intervention and student engagement. The General Education program review's [Action Plan](#) documents both the diagnosis of the GELO assessment problem and the planned corrective action.

Communication and Shared Use of Results

Assessment findings are communicated to faculty, staff, and leadership through structured reporting processes. OIE prepares summaries and facilitates review discussions. Results inform academic planning, program review, and strategic initiatives. Transparent communication supports shared responsibility for educational quality and reinforces alignment between assessment, planning, and resource allocation.

Assessment findings are reviewed by the Assessment Committee and Faculty Council as standing agenda items. OIE prepares summaries and facilitates review discussions throughout the year. The campus-wide data sharing event each spring creates a structured occasion for broad institutional engagement with assessment results beyond committee membership.

Beginning in AY2024-25, the Assessment Committee implemented a formal program assessment peer review process. After programs submit assessment reports in late June, committee members review each other's reports in the fall using a structured feedback [form](#), followed by facilitated discussion. The [November 3, 2025 Assessment Committee meeting](#) was devoted to presenting and discussing peer review key themes across all programs. Results from that review were compiled into a Key Themes [presentation](#) shared with the full committee, covering four evaluative dimensions: whether minimally required elements were present, whether outcomes were clearly measured, whether approaches were culturally responsive, and whether action plans were grounded in data.

The AY2024-25 peer review found that outcomes were clearly measured across programs and that action plans were grounded in data institution-wide. It identified curriculum map updates as a shared gap requiring attention across most departments, with specific instructions distributed to guide that work. That finding directly informed the 2026 update of the [Student Learning Outcomes Matrix](#), including completion of PLO-to-CLG mapping and consolidation of course-, program-, general education-, cocurricular-, and institution-level outcomes in a common institutional reference. Course Readiness Review provides the complementary process for verifying and refining course-level alignment as individual courses are prepared for delivery.

The Program Assessment Peer Review also highlighted strengths by program, including the Anishinaabe Studies program's robust analysis and action plans as an exemplar of continuous improvement, the Early Childhood Education program's alignment with national, college, and department-level standards and use of multiple and varied assessment measures, and the Business program's data-driven reflection and rubric use across the department. It also identified program-specific opportunities for growth: for example, the Business program received feedback to strengthen integration of Anishinaabe culture and ethics in coursework and to consider implementing a cultural integration rubric; Environmental Science received feedback to improve consistency in assessment documentation and to strengthen GELO 2 assessment in research courses. Next steps presented to the full committee directed faculty to read their department's

report, revisit AY2024-25 action plans with department stakeholders, and incorporate feedback into current planning.

The peer review also surfaced an institution-wide question that the committee committed to working through: what is the shared definition of "culturally responsive" assessment, and how should it be measured consistently across programs? That question reflects the kind of honest institutional inquiry that assessment governance is designed to produce. In AY2026-27, the peer review process is expanding to incorporate cocurricular assessment reports submitted under the new [Cocurricular Assessment Framework](#), extending peer accountability beyond academic programs for the first time.

As part of an emerging institutional effectiveness framework, KBOCC is developing an Annual Report of Student Learning to synthesize findings across course, program, general education, cocurricular, and College Learning Goal assessment. OIE will compile the evidence, and the Assessment Committee will review the findings and proposed actions before the report is shared through governance and institutional leadership. The inaugural report was initially planned for Summer 2026. During its development, KBOCC determined that it should function as one of a coordinated set of institution-wide outcome reports within the emerging Institutional Effectiveness Framework rather than as a separate assessment product. Following Board approval of the RISE Strategic Plan on September 14, 2026, the College will finalize, approve, and implement the Institutional Effectiveness Framework before issuing the first report. This sequencing will align student learning findings with student-success and operational outcomes and establish consistent expectations for institutional review, planning, resource allocation, and follow-up. Underlying assessment and reporting activities continue during this transition.

Faculty Participation in Assessment

Course Assessment Reports are submitted each semester by all instructional faculty across fall, spring, and summer terms. Annual CAR submissions in AY2022-23, AY2023-24, and AY2024-25 had participation rates of 84%, 86%, and 92% respectively. This upward trend reflects both the growth in course offerings across that period and improving faculty engagement with the assessment process. Fall 2025 submissions of 53 CARs against 61 scheduled fall sections (87%) indicate continued strong participation in the current cycle before spring and summer reporting is complete.

AY	Courses Offered	CARs Submitted	Rate
AY2022-23	95	80	84%
AY2023-24	108	93	86%
AY2024-25	126	116	92%
AY2025-26	121	108	89%

Program assessment reporting is completed annually through WEAVE by Department Chairs, covering PLO assessment plans and results for each degree and certificate program. Completion rates have ranged from 59% to 73% of programs against a 90% institutional target, consistently

below that target across four reporting periods. The programs completing reports include all primary degree programs which together represent the majority of enrolled students. Programs with incomplete or not-started reports are concentrated among standalone certificate programs, several of which are newer additions to the catalog. The 90% target reflects institutional ambition; closing the gap on certificate-level reporting is an identified area for improvement. The Assessment Committee's peer review process, assessment workshops, and the development of quick-reference guides for program assessment in AY2024-25 are the documented institutional responses to this gap.

AY	Programs with Enrollment	Reports Completed	Participation Rate
2022-23	22	16	73%
2023-24	22	13	59%
2024-25	20	12	60%
2025-26	22	16	73%

Sources

- Catalog 2026-2028 College Learning Goals
- SLO Matrix Updated Fall 2026
- Assessment Committee Charge approved 8.27.25
- Assessment Principles
- Academic Assessment Calendars 2022-2026
- Quick Guide to CAR
- CAR Examples
- AY2025-26 Program Assessment Report Guidelines
- AY2024-25 Program Assessment Reports
- Academic Program Assessment Reports, 2022-2024
- Multi-Year Program Assessment Planning Worksheet
- General Education Assessment Refinement
- Cocurricular Framework approved
- Capstone Changes Email 4.21.22
- 2025 Gen Ed Program Review Overview-2
- KBOCC May 2025 ATD Coach Letter
- Program Assessment Review & Feedback Form Fall 2025
- Assessment Committee Minutes 11.3.2025 Peer Review Results
- Peer Review Results Presentation
- GELO Framework
- Institutional Assessment Plan of College Learning Goals approved
- Assessment Handbook Approved
- GE APR Spring 2025
- General Education Assessment Report, 2020-2022
- General Education Assessment Report 2022-2024

- Program Assessment Reports AY2024-25
- Cocurricular Activity Reports AY2025-26
- Strategic Plan 2020-2025
- AY2025-26 Program Assessment Reports

3.F. Program Review

The institution improves its curriculum based on periodic program review.

Argument

KBOCC's mission calls for holistic education that supports and uplifts all learners while promoting Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways. Program review is the institutional mechanism for honoring that commitment over time, not just for students currently enrolled, but for those seven generations ahead who depend on the integrity of what is taught today. A program that has drifted from cultural grounding, from transferability, or from community workforce need fails both present students and future generations.

Formal academic program review was an explicit action under Objective 2 of the [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#). The plan called for continuing program review and systematizing the criteria used to evaluate the sustainability and need for academic programs. KBOCC's current four-year Academic Program Review cycle carries that commitment forward through faculty-led self-study, analysis of enrollment and student outcomes, external review, Faculty Council consideration, improvement planning, and Board of Regents acceptance.

Program Review Structure

KBOCC operates a four-year program review cycle governed by the Academic Program Review (APR) [Guide](#), first approved by the Board of Regents on December 13, 2017. Following the 2020 HLC mid-cycle review recommendation, the [APR Guide](#) was substantially revised and re-approved by the Board of Regents on June 14, 2021, and has been refined iteratively after each completed review cycle since.

Each review follows a defined sequence: a kick-off meeting establishing roles, responsibilities, and deadlines; data and evidence gathering; Assessment Committee confirmation of external reviewers; self-study drafting; a formal review meeting with external panelists; incorporation of external feedback into a final report; Faculty Council evaluation and approval; and Board of Regents action. A [12-month follow-up](#) meeting to track action plan progress was added in the [2021 revisions](#). This closing-the-loop documentation directly addresses prior concerns about review processes lacking demonstrable impact. Certificate programs are explicitly included in the master schedule under their respective academic departments.

Review evaluation authority rests with Faculty Council, the formal body responsible for approving changes to academic programs and curriculum, with final institutional action by the Board of Regents. This structural clarity was a deliberate improvement from the earlier process. Every review completed since 2022 has followed this full sequence with documented signatures from the Department Chair, Dean of Academic Affairs, and President.

The process is facilitated end-to-end by the Assessment & Curriculum Coordinator, now operating within the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, who manages data gathering, meeting scheduling, document preparation, and external reviewer coordination. A practice of regular weekly or bi-weekly check-in meetings between the Coordinator and the Department Chair under review has proven essential to keeping reviews on schedule. The Weave institutional effectiveness platform, onboarded in 2021, serves as the central repository and collaborative workspace for all reviews, enabling Department Chairs to build self-studies, attach evidence, and track action plans in a structured, documented format.

KBOCC's [review criteria](#) reflect its unique mission. Faculty Council evaluates each completed program review against: Respect (recognizing and respecting the value of Indigenous knowledges and lifeways); Relevance (demonstrated cultural and community relevance); Reciprocal Relationships (relating in good ways with learners, families, campus partners, and the community); Responsibility (responsible, value-driven use of resources to sustain the program); and, in the most recently revised criteria, Planning for Seven Generations. These criteria embed the mission into the review process itself. A program cannot pass Faculty Council scrutiny without demonstrating cultural grounding and community accountability.

Program review expectations include analysis of curriculum alignment, student learning outcomes, enrollment trends, course success rates, retention, and resource needs. Templates and guidance documents ensure consistency across programs. Program review incorporates course- and program-level assessment findings alongside enrollment, retention, and completion data. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provides standardized [data reports](#) to support faculty analysis. Programs are expected to interpret assessment findings in the context of broader student success indicators, ensuring that evaluation extends beyond anecdotal reflection. This integration strengthens the connection between assessment (3.E) and program-level decision-making. Program review results in identified action steps with timelines and responsible parties. These may include curriculum revisions, sequencing adjustments, course redesign, resource requests, or strategic planning alignment.

The [Assessment Handbook](#) clarifies that annual program assessment and periodic Academic Program Review are related but distinct processes: annual PLO assessment generates longitudinal evidence of student learning, while the four-year APR process considers that evidence comprehensively alongside curriculum, enrollment, student success, community relevance, resources, and external reviewer findings to guide broader program improvement.

History and Demonstrated Improvement

Program review was identified as an HLC concern in 2016 and again during the 2020 mid-cycle review, when only Environmental Science had completed the process and an attempted Liberal Studies review had been returned as incomplete. In response, KBOCC revised its Academic Program Review Guide, completed Business and Early Childhood Education reviews in AY2021–22, and documented the revised process and results in its January 2023 Interim Monitoring Report. HLC determined that no additional monitoring was required. Since then, KBOCC has sustained the four-year cycle across its academic departments and used review findings to make documented curricular, structural, instructional, and resource decisions.

The [Academic Program Review Master Schedule](#) documents completed, current, and scheduled reviews across all academic departments and their associated degree and certificate programs. Rather than repeat every review in this narrative, the following examples demonstrate continuity of the cycle and the use of findings for improvement.

Completed Program Reviews

Business and Early Childhood Education (AY 2021-22)

The Business Administration and Early Childhood Education departments completed comprehensive reviews in AY2021–22 under the revised Academic Program Review Guide. Each review proceeded through self-study, external review, Faculty Council evaluation, and development of an improvement action plan, demonstrating that the redesigned process could be implemented across multiple programs and produce documented priorities for follow-up. KBOCC submitted the completed reviews, action plans, and revised guide in its January 2023 Interim Monitoring Report. HLC determined that no additional monitoring was required, closing the required follow-up while placing responsibility on KBOCC to sustain the review cycle.

Liberal Studies (AY 2022–23)

The [Liberal Studies review](#), completed in AY2022–23, identified workload concentrated in a single full-time position, insufficient distinction among four degree emphases, and declining Criminal Justice enrollment. Faculty Council recommended clearer program identities, stronger mission alignment, broader Criminal Justice preparation, and additional staffing capacity. These findings informed the phaseout of the Liberal Studies A.A. and the Fall 2024 introduction of a standalone General Studies A.A. and Psychology A.S., along with redesign of the Criminal Justice certificate. The review therefore provided evidence for substantive curricular and structural change, rather than simply documenting existing conditions.

Anishinaabe Studies (AY 2022–23)

The Anishinaabe Studies Department also completed its [program review](#) in AY2022-23. Faculty Council rated Facilities and Institutional Support as Exemplary/Excellent, noting that enhancements, particularly to the art program, had increased enrollment and program growth. For Anishinaabe Culture, Faculty Council recommended development of an introductory course emphasizing Indigenous knowledge and creation of a clearer "Indigenous Liberal Studies" departmental identity. The standalone Anishinaabe Art A.A., launched in Fall 2024, is a direct outcome of this review and the restructuring it catalyzed. Enrollment in the Anishinaabe Studies A.A. grew 62.5% between Fall 2021 and Fall 2024, with the new Anishinaabe Art A.A. adding additional degree pathway capacity.

Environmental Science (AY 2023–24)

Environmental Science completed its second [comprehensive review](#) in AY2023–24, becoming the first department to complete two full cycles. External reviewers affirmed the program’s mission centrality, cultural integration, student research, internships, mentorship, retention, and completion. The resulting Action Plan established specific steps related to transfer articulation, KBIC Natural Resources Department internships and co-instruction, capstone prerequisites, course redesign, and certificate-level assessment. Several curricular changes appeared in the Fall 2024 catalog, demonstrating a direct connection among external review, faculty action, and documented program improvement.

General Education (AY 2024–25)

The General Education Department completed its first [comprehensive review](#) in AY2024–25, covering the six-year period from 2018 through 2024. The self-study was submitted December 19, 2024, followed by a virtual external review on January 17, 2025, involving four external reviewers and forums with the Department Chair, Dean of Academic Affairs, faculty chairs, alumni, and students. Faculty Council approved the review on April 14, 2025, and the Board of Regents acted on the General Education Program Review on May 12, 2025.

External reviewers identified as primary strengths the meaningful integration of Anishinaabe culture across the general education curriculum, including use of storytelling, the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and community-informed practices. High-impact practices — HyFlex course delivery, the Computational Math Lab, Remarkable Tablets, guided pathways, and developmental education redesign — were commended as strong contributors to student engagement. Faculty Council evaluated the review against the criteria of Respect, Relevance, Reciprocal Relationships, and Responsibility, approving all as sufficiently addressed. Student feedback identified a need for more daytime and in-person course options. Faculty Council carried this evidence into its review by recommending expanded scheduling and modality options for Composition courses, demonstrating a direct connection between student input, program review findings, and an identified instructional improvement.

The [Action Plan](#) covers 2025–2028 and includes: redesigning the capstone experience for clearer alignment with general education learning outcomes; strengthening writing and citation instruction across the curriculum; expanding cultural competency training for all instructional staff including adjuncts; advancing equitable access through flexible delivery and career-aligned pathways; and improving graduate outcomes data collection. The review also surfaced an institutional sustainability concern: many of the department's high-impact instructional innovations were grant-funded and are no longer financially supported. This finding is now on record visible to the institution and to the Board as a resource allocation priority for the next planning cycle.

Business and Early Childhood Education (AY 2025-26)

[Business](#) and [Early Childhood Education](#) completed their next scheduled comprehensive reviews in AY2025–26, providing direct evidence that program review had become a recurring

institutional process rather than a one-time response to monitoring. External reviewers affirmed both departments' culturally grounded curricula, relational student support, and responsiveness to community and workforce needs. Business priorities include strengthening assessment and capstone pathways, clarifying credential and transfer pathways, and documenting experiential learning and employment outcomes. Early Childhood Education priorities include strengthening staffing sustainability, assessment feedback, employer and alumni engagement, program pathways, and hybrid and online access. Following Faculty Council [approval of both reviews](#) and their 2026–30 Action Plans, the Business Administration and Early Childhood Education reports were presented to and accepted by the Board of Regents on [May 11, 2026](#), completing the programs' second cycle under the revised process.

Reviews in Progress and Scheduled

Health Science and Certified Nursing Assistant programs began comprehensive reviews in Spring 2026. External review meetings were conducted in late May and early June. The College is synthesizing external reviewer findings, and the programs are developing Action Plans to complete the process in Fall 2026.

These reviews are timely, as Nursing-related enrollment expands. Health Science enrollment increased 200% from Fall 2021 to Fall 2024, while the Nursing A.D.N., launched with 10 students in Fall 2024, enrolled 16 students by Spring 2025. Applying KBOCC's structured, externally informed process during this growth helps ensure that academic quality, cultural grounding, student needs, and institutional capacity remain aligned.

Anishinaabe Studies is scheduled to begin its next comprehensive review in Fall 2026, consistent with the four-year cycle. Together, the completed, continuing, and scheduled reviews demonstrate that program review has become a recurring institutional process. KBOCC continues to strengthen community and workforce participation through external reviewers, Tribal partners, workforce information, and program advisory structures where appropriate.

Sources

- 2025 Gen Ed Program Review Overview-2
- Academic Program Review Guide Approved 8.12.2024
- Academic Program Review Guide Revised FINAL APPROVED 6.14.2021
- APR Guide Program Review Criteria
- Assessment Handbook Approved
- ECE APR Fall 2025
- BS APR Fall 2025
- AS APR Spring 2023
- LS APR Spring 2023
- GE APR Spring 2025
- ES APR Spring 2024
- APR Master Schedule Spring 2026

- Strategic Plan 2020-2025
- BOR 2026-05-11 Minutes
- FC Minutes 4.27.2026
- ES progress report 5-20-25
- KBOCC Academic Program Review Guide_Revised_FINAL APPROVED 6.14.2021

3.G. Student Success Outcomes

The institution's student success outcomes demonstrate continuous improvement, taking into account the student populations it serves and benchmarks that reference peer institutions.

Argument

Defining and Measuring Student Success

KBOCC defines student success as holistic, culturally grounded, and connected to students' individual and community aspirations. A student who completes a credential, transfers to a four-year institution, secures employment with the KBIC or in the regional workforce, returns after a stop-out, or deepens their connection to Anishinaabe language and lifeways is a student who succeeded. In May 2025, the Student Success Council formalized the following institutional definition:

KBOCC students are successful when they embrace Anishinaabe values, feel a sense of belonging, and are empowered to grow and achieve their personal goals to benefit themselves, their community, and future generations. Along their journeys, students develop as resilient and balanced individuals prepared to share their knowledge and traditions.

KBOCC serves a predominantly Native, nontraditional student population on the L'Anse Indian Reservation and surrounding communities. Most are first-generation college attendees, balancing employment and family responsibilities with coursework. Stop-out and return are characteristic of this community. A student who pauses and returns is not a failure; they are a student whose institution remained accessible when they were ready. Standard federal metrics were not designed to capture this reality. KBOCC interprets its outcomes accordingly, using a layered data framework that no single federal source can provide: IPEDS reporting benchmarked against a peer group of 34 tribal colleges and universities (TCUs); AIHEC AIMS annual reporting; Postsecondary Data Partnership (PDP) disaggregated analysis through Achieving the Dream (ATD); National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker for verified transfer outcomes beginning in 2026; and Lightcast Analyst and Alumni Pathways for graduate employment and career outcome tracking. Student achievement data is publicly available and regularly updated on KBOCC's Institutional Data and Reports [webpage](#), consistent with the College's value of Debwewin (truth).

HLC Monitoring Context

KBOCC's recent HLC monitoring history reflects both responsible management of growth and improving student outcomes. Non-Financial Indicator reviews related to enrollment and awards growth in 2023, 2024, and 2025 resulted in no additional follow-up. By the 2026 Institutional Update, three-year growth had moderated to 35.1% for degree- and certificate-seeking headcount and 50.0% for awards, both below applicable monitoring thresholds.

In 2026, KBOCC exceeded HLC's Tribal Institution peer medians on all three monitored student success outcomes: first-year retention is 70%, compared with a 49.42% peer median; the 150% graduation rate is 38%, compared with 17.67%; and the eight-year Completion and Transfer Rate is 54.4%, compared with 34.60%. KBOCC is not subject to a Student Success Improvement Plan. The College continues to monitor these outcomes alongside enrollment composition, dual-credit growth, instructional capacity, and the key enrollment indicators (KEIs) established through its [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#).

The Student Success Council reviewed the HLC student-success monitoring framework, applicable Tribal Institution peer benchmarks, and KBOCC's multi-year retention, graduation, and completion-and-transfer trends as part of its student-success monitoring and SEM planning. This review helped establish a shared understanding of both the College's historical risks and its subsequent progress.

External Benchmarking

KBOCC supplements internal trend analysis and HLC student success monitoring with external peer comparisons. The annual [IPEDS Data Feedback Report](#) compares key institutional measures with a peer cohort of TCUs. Through the Postsecondary Data Partnership, the College can use [dashboards to benchmark](#) enrollment, early momentum, retention, and completion against Tribal Colleges broadly and, where appropriate, two-year TCUs specifically. AIHEC dashboards developed from AKIS/AIMS reporting provide additional comparisons across filterable TCU peer groups. These sources help KBOCC interpret its outcomes within a mission-relevant context and identify areas warranting further review. Given the College's small cohorts, peer comparisons are considered alongside multiyear trends and disaggregated institutional data rather than used as stand-alone judgments of performance.

Enrollment Context

Student-success outcomes must be interpreted alongside changes in the size and composition of KBOCC's student body. Total 12-month unduplicated headcount increased from 134 in AY2021–22 to 313 in AY2024–25, while full-time equivalent enrollment grew from 62 to 145. Full-time degree- or certificate-seeking enrollment reached 73 in AY2024–25, the highest level in five years. Continuing and returning credential-seeking students also increased substantially, from 15 in AY2020–21 to 137 in AY2024–25. This growth indicates that more students are maintaining or renewing their connection with KBOCC, including students whose educational pathways may include periods of stop-out and return. Although this measure is not itself a retention or persistence rate, it provides important context for interpreting the formal retention, persistence, and completion outcomes presented below.

Retention, Persistence, and Completion

KBOCC's retention and completion outcomes show improvement across multiple measures. For the Fall 2024 cohort, full-time retention reached 75%, part-time retention 67%, and overall

retention 70% which is the highest overall rate in the last five years and an increase from 52% for the preceding cohort. At 70%, KBOCC's overall retention rate also exceeds the TCU peer median of 49.46%. The simultaneous improvement in full- and part-time retention is particularly meaningful given the College's predominantly nontraditional student population and historically greater variability among small cohorts.

These gains follow deliberate investments in retention infrastructure. By recommendation of the Student Success Council, KBOCC implemented the Jenzabar Retention module in Spring 2025 and adopted its first [Early Alert Policy](#) in Fall 2025. The first cycle generated 59 alerts for 34 students, with 47% faculty participation and a 49% resolution rate. Emergency aid, MiLEAP-funded persistence resources, and expanded holistic advising provide additional support. Through the adopted [SEM Plan](#), KBOCC will monitor persistence more broadly through fall-to-fall and fall-to-spring retention, credit completion, gateway-course completion, and average time to completion.

KBOCC conferred 29 credentials to 26 students in AY2024–25, including 15 associate degrees—the highest associate-degree total in the five-year period. The IPEDS 150% graduation rate for the Fall 2022 cohort reached 38%, up from 9% for the 2020 cohort and above the TCU peer median of 17.7%. The adjusted cohort included eight students, so KBOCC interprets this rate alongside total completions and retention trends. The eight-year Completion and Transfer Rate for the 2017–18 cohort was 54.4%, compared with 13.5% for the preceding cohort and a TCU peer median of 34.6%. Together, these measures demonstrate a positive trajectory, while underscoring the importance of monitoring larger and more recent cohorts through the [SEM Plan's](#) leading indicators.

Graduate Outcomes: Employment and Transfer

KBOCC tracks graduation, transfer, and employment because they provide important evidence of educational opportunity and institutional effectiveness. The College does not, however, treat these conventional outcomes as the sole or defining measures of success. KBOCC's student-affirmed definition centers Mino-Bimaadiziwin (the good life) including belonging, personal purpose, cultural vitality, and contributions to family, community, Tribal Nations, and future generations. Graduate outcomes are therefore examined through both conventional measures and evidence of how graduates give back through their work, leadership, service, and relationships.

Institution-wide alumni surveys provide an early foundation for this approach. The [2021 Alumni Survey](#), with 24 responses, found strong perceptions of preparation in critical thinking, teamwork, communication, disciplinary knowledge, and working with people from different backgrounds, while identifying technology, workforce preparation, and transfer readiness as areas for continued attention. The [2023 Alumni Survey](#), with 25 responses including 18 graduates, expanded the inquiry to employment and community outcomes. Of 22 respondents reporting employment status, 59% were employed full-time; among 18 answering questions about job alignment, 72% worked in the same or a related field. The survey also documented volunteer service, Tribal and community participation, and leadership. Because both surveys used small, voluntary samples, KBOCC treats their findings as directional rather than representative rates.

Graduate exit interviews and surveys provide complementary evidence at completion. OIE collected 15 interviews and 13 surveys in [AY2024–25](#) and 19 interviews and 11 surveys in [AY2025–26](#). In AY2025–26, 95% of interview participants described their KBOCC experience positively or very positively. Survey respondents anticipated multiple pathways: nine planned to work in their field, seven to continue their education, and five to serve a Tribal community. Participants identified faculty relationships, cultural integration, individualized attention, and wraparound services as strengths, and transfer guidance, career preparation, pathway clarity, and capstone preparation as opportunities for improvement. These findings describe graduates' experiences and intentions but do not substitute for follow-up evidence of realized outcomes.

To strengthen that follow-up, the Student Success Council Data Team redesigned the [Graduate Outcomes Survey](#) in Spring 2026 as a culturally grounded, cohort-based assessment. Informed by KBOCC's participation in a TCU Cultural Metrics Workshop hosted by the American Indian College Fund, the framework applies Mino-Bimaadiziwin across five domains: economic stability and career pathways; continued education and lifelong learning; personal well-being and purpose; cultural vitality and identity; and community contribution and nation building. The mixed-methods survey targets credential completers approximately one and three years after completion and captures outcomes that administrative and commercial sources cannot fully reflect, including caregiving, mentoring, cultural connection, community leadership, and formal and informal ways of giving back.

KBOCC administered the redesigned [survey](#) in August 2026. OIE and the Data Team are analyzing responses and preparing a report; therefore, preliminary findings are not presented here. Results will establish baselines and support recurring reporting for SEM indicators related to full-time employment, employment in Native communities, and work and service that contributes to community well-being.

Beginning in 2026, National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker provides verified transfer-enrollment information, and KBOCC is exploring Lightcast Alumni Pathways for employment, industry, earnings, and geographic data. Program-level evidence adds further context: ECE alumni surveys document employment while identifying opportunities to strengthen field alignment, and Environmental Science program review evidence documents internships, employer engagement, transfer, and partnership with the KBIC Natural Resources Department. Together, institutional records, graduate voice, external data, and program-specific employment, transfer, licensure, and certification outcomes provide a layered approach consistent with KBOCC's broader understanding of student success.

A Multi-Level System for Student Success

A significant development in KBOCC's approach to student success since the 2020 evaluation is the construction of a more coherent, multi-level institutional system for defining, measuring, and improving outcomes. It operates at three connected levels, each reinforcing the others.

Student Success Council and SEM Plan Governance

Established in Spring 2024 and formally institutionalized through Faculty Council-approved [bylaws](#) in June 2024, the cross-functional Student Success Council coordinates KBOCC's student-success work through three workgroups: Marketing, Engagement and Outreach; Retention and Completion; and Data Team. This structure responds to the 2020 peer-review finding that the prior retention plan lacked active use and cross-departmental ownership.

The Student Success Council developed KBOCC's inaugural [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#), *Strengthening the Lodge Around Every Learner*, which the Board of Regents adopted on September 14, 2026. Aligned with RISE, the plan establishes four goals and six strategies spanning access, belonging, academic momentum, completion, post-KBOCC transitions, and institutional infrastructure. It also formalizes Key Enrollment Indicators addressing enrollment, retention, credit and gateway completion, time to completion, 200% graduation, transfer, employment, and contribution to Native communities. Because the SEM and RISE plans were approved immediately before the Assurance Argument lock date, KBOCC does not attribute previously achieved outcomes to their implementation. The Student Success Council workgroups will now develop operational work plans specifying activities, responsibilities, timelines, resources, and measures. Sustained implementation and periodic review will provide evidence of the plans' effectiveness over the next three years.

Evidence-Informed SEM Development

The [SEM Plan](#) was developed through structured review of multiple forms of student-success evidence. During the 2025 planning process, the Student Success Council examined enrollment composition, Native-student representation, credit completion, retention and persistence, graduation, credential completion, transfer, and available employment information through a Student Success Data Walk. The presentation identified the sources and limitations of each measure, including when recent institutional figures were preliminary and when transfer and employment estimates relied on personal knowledge, rather than verified reporting systems.

The Council also reviewed the [Fall 2024 SENSE](#) and [Spring 2025 CCSSE](#) results, including response rates and respondent characteristics. The surveys identified relational support, early connections, faculty-student relationships, and collaborative learning as strengths, while pointing to academic challenge, use of tutoring and skill-development resources, holistic support awareness, career counseling, and AI literacy as opportunities for attention. The Council connected these findings with initiatives already underway or planned, including the enhanced early alert system, expanded Writing Center outreach, writing intensive course development, the Teaching and Learning initiative, and clearer AI guidance. It also identified deeper analysis, workgroup strategy development, and integration with SEM monitoring as next steps. Thus, the surveys function as leading and diagnostic indicators within KBOCC's student-success system rather than as direct measures of retention or completion.

Locally developed student surveys provide complementary evidence about students' experiences and priorities. The [Spring 2026 Student Voice Survey Summary](#), based on responses from 33 enrolled students, found that 85% felt respected and valued always or most of the time and 82% indicated that KBOCC's definition of student success reflected their experience very or extremely well. Students identified faculty and staff relationships, small class sizes, advising,

tutoring, emergency aid, food resources, mental health resources, and cultural integration as institutional strengths. They also identified housing, food access, caregiving responsibilities, transportation, mental health, flexible scheduling, and clearer information about available supports as continuing priorities. The findings were organized for Executive Team review and provide direct input relevant to Student Success Council deliberations, SEM implementation and review, Student Services assessment, and Student Government priorities.

Institutional Data Infrastructure

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) provides the data infrastructure supporting the Student Success Council, [SEM Plan](#), Key Enrollment Indicators, and emerging Institutional Effectiveness Framework. The Student Success Council Data Team establishes baselines and targets and [spotlights](#) one KEI during designated monthly meetings according to an planned [KEI review schedule](#). OIE also coordinates KBOCC's use of the Postsecondary Data Partnership, StudentTracker, Lightcast, AIHEC AIMS, and other institutional data sources and maintains the public Institutional Data and Reports webpage. Together, these resources allow KBOCC to examine current leading indicators alongside longer-term federal outcomes.

Department-level Assessment

As previously discussed in 3.D., Student Services completed its first [division-wide unit-assessment cycle](#) in AY2025–26. Initial assessment plans appropriately emphasized operational measures, service expectations, and baseline data while building experience with outcomes assessment. Findings are being used to strengthen measures and align AY2026–27 unit assessment with the adopted [SEM Plan](#). For example, [Admissions](#) established baseline measures for application processing, enrollment yield, and outreach effectiveness and identified the need to better connect outreach activities with subsequent inquiries, applications, and enrollment. KBOCC does not attribute existing outcomes to the newly adopted [SEM Plan](#); rather, the plan provides the shared direction, measures, responsibilities, and review processes through which the next phase of improvement will be coordinated and evaluated.

KBOCC understands student success as more than fall-to-fall enrollment. It includes cultural grounding, belonging, completion, transfer, employment, community contribution, and the ability to return after stopping out. Recent outcomes provide evidence of meaningful progress, while KBOCC recognizes continuing areas for development, including direct assessment of the College Learning Goals, certificate program assessment reporting, post-completion tracking, and stronger connections between unit operations and measurable student outcomes. The adopted [SEM Plan](#) and emerging Institutional Effectiveness Framework establish the structures through which KBOCC will coordinate, assess, and improve this work over the next planning period.

Sources

- KBOCC Website Capture - Institutional Data & Reports

- SSC Bylaws Approved 6.4.24
- SS Assessment Planning & Reporting 2025-26 Admissions
- KBOCC Strategic Enrollment Management Plan 2026-2029
- Early Alert Policy
- 2026 Student Voice Survey Summary_public
- 2021 Alumni Survey_Preliminary Results
- 2026 Graduate Outcomes Survey Instrument & Phone Outreach Script
- CCSSE 2025 Executive Summary
- Exit Feedback Summary 2024-25
- Exit Feedback Summary 2025-26
- Exit Interview & Survey Summary 2022-23
- SENSE 2024 Executive Summary
- SS Assessment Plan Outcomes Matrix 2025-26
- IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2025
- PDP Native Retention Benchmarking
- 2023 Alumni Survey Summary Report
- SSC KEI Spotlights 2026
- SSC KEI Review & Facilitation Schedule

Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

Argument

KBOCC provides rigorous, culturally grounded, mission-aligned education through approved curricula, qualified faculty, shared governance, learning supports, assessment, program review, and an increasingly coordinated student success system. During the review period, the College strengthened assessment, restored and refined program review, expanded student success infrastructure, and improved the use of evidence in academic and operational decisions.

Planting seeds for seven generations means ensuring that learning remains rigorous, relevant, and accessible to those who will carry knowledge forward. The evidence demonstrates responsibility for educational quality across programs, learning environments, support services, delivery formats, and locations, while showing sustained attention to stronger learning and outcomes for current and future learners.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning enable it to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational programs, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

4.A Effective Administrative Structures

The institution's administrative structures are effective and facilitate collaborative processes such as shared governance; data-informed decision making; and engagement with internal and external constituencies as appropriate.

Argument

KBOCC has strengthened its administrative structures, planning processes, and institutional coordination since the previous comprehensive evaluation. As a small rural Tribal College, its effectiveness depends on integrated leadership, collaborative governance, and shared responsibility responsive to its mission, community priorities, student needs, and long-term sustainability. Effectiveness in this context includes operational efficiency, cultural stewardship, relational accountability, responsiveness to community voice, and sustainability for future generations. These principles are reflected in administrative organization, planning, governance, and institutional decision-making.

Across the review period, KBOCC established the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), strengthened assessment and planning cycles, expanded data capacity, clarified governance responsibilities, restored program review, and increased coordination among Academic Affairs, Student Services, Finance, and institutional assessment. Although several systems remain in development, these actions demonstrate intentional organizational improvement and increasingly coordinated institutional-effectiveness practices.

Administrative Structure and Institutional Leadership

KBOCC maintains an administrative structure that supports institutional operations, academic quality, student services, fiscal oversight, and mission fulfillment. Governance authority is vested in the Board of Regents, which provides fiduciary oversight, policy approval, strategic direction, and presidential hiring, evaluation, and termination. The Board operates in alignment with the College's mission and Tribal charter responsibilities while maintaining institutional autonomy over academic and operational matters.

The President reports to the Board and oversees implementation of Board policy, institutional priorities, and daily operations. Because of KBOCC's size, administrators frequently collaborate

across functions and adapt to changing enrollment, staffing, grant, student support, and community needs. This flexibility was particularly important during leadership transitions, vacancies, post-pandemic recovery, and restructuring. Continuity was supported through shared leadership, cross-training, Executive Team communication, and cross-divisional bodies such as the Student Success Council. Written procedures, workflows, committee charges and records, and shared electronic repositories have also strengthened institutional documentation. Examples include annual budget and budget-modification workflows; bylaws or charges for Faculty Council, the Student Success Council, the Assessment Committee, and the Finance Committee; and shared repositories for procedures, meeting records, and accreditation evidence.

In December 2025, following a [national search](#) conducted through ACCT Search Services, the College welcomed President Melissa Kiesewetter. The [search process](#) included campus forums through which faculty, staff, students, and community members reviewed finalists and provided feedback incorporated into the Board's final selection decision. President Kiesewetter brought directly mission-aligned experience in tribal education leadership, state educational partnership development, and higher education student affairs administration, strengthening the College's executive leadership capacity at a critical stage in its institutional development.

Following the transition, President Kiesewetter led a comprehensive review of the College's administrative structure. This review identified a significant operational vulnerability common to many small institutions: a wide concentration of operational and community-facing functions reporting directly to the President without sufficient division-level leadership infrastructure. Facilities, accounting, sponsored programs, institutional effectiveness, human resources, land grant operations, community programs, and external partnerships all required increasing levels of coordination and supervisory oversight, as institutional activity expanded.

The Board approved a [revised organizational structure](#) in January 2026 establishing four primary administrative divisions reporting to the President: Academic Affairs, Student Services, Campus Operations, and Community Programs. Campus Operations consolidated oversight of facilities, accounting, sponsored programs, human resources, information technology, and institutional effectiveness. Community Programs brought together land grant programming, early learning, strategic communications, and external partnerships. The reorganization distributed supervisory responsibility, clarified reporting relationships, and strengthened cross-divisional communication, accountability, and strategic coordination. It also better aligned leadership capacity with KBOCC's growing operational and community responsibilities and its mission to uplift learners while promoting Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways.

During the review period, KBOCC also completed a significant operational transition through the consolidation of all institutional activity onto the Wabanung Campus in L'Anse, Michigan following the [closure of the Niiwin Akeaa campus](#) in Baraga in June 2023. The College coordinated the transition with HLC, the U.S. Department of Education, and relevant state regulatory agencies. All instructional programs and student services were transitioned without displacing enrolled students. Consolidation to a single campus has strengthened operational efficiency, centralized student services and instructional support, and focused institutional resources within the primary community the College serves.

The College continues to refine role clarity, reporting structures, and institutional procedures as organizational capacity grows. Recent work to strengthen policy alignment, document workflows, centralize institutional records, and formalize committee charges demonstrate an evolving administrative structure, increasingly focused on long-term sustainability and operational consistency.

Shared Governance: Collaborative Decision-Making

KBOCC's shared governance integrates Board oversight, faculty expertise, administrative leadership, staff and student perspectives, cultural knowledge, and community engagement. It operates within KBIC's sovereign authority, the Board's governing and fiduciary authority, and the administrative authority delegated to the President. Councils and committees provide structured opportunities for informed participation before decisions are made.

This approach reflects both higher education governance practices and Anishinaabe relational values emphasizing collective responsibility, respectful dialogue, consultation, and accountability to community relationships. Traditional Anishinaabe governance also provides cultural context for recognizing differentiated but interconnected responsibilities, broad participation, consensus-seeking when appropriate, and consideration of community well-being across generations. These principles complement, but do not alter, authority established through the Charter, Board Bylaws, policies, and academic and administrative responsibilities.

Institutional decisions move through coordinated, role-appropriate channels that connect faculty expertise, cultural knowledge, administrative leadership, and Board authorization. Shared governance does not mean that every participant decides every matter. It means that those affected by or knowledgeable about an issue have meaningful opportunities to contribute, that recommendations are considered by the appropriate decision-maker, and that decisions and their rationale are communicated back through the governance structure.

Shared governance remains an evolving area of institutional development. KBOCC is strengthening committee documentation, role clarity, communication, and formal processes. A [draft Shared Governance Handbook](#) inventories councils and committees and is intended, through further review and development, to establish common expectations for charges, agendas, minutes, decision documentation, communication, and centralized records. Existing bylaws, charges, and meeting records document current practices.

The Board of Regents actively supports institutional effectiveness through review of strategic priorities, enrollment trends, financial conditions, assessment developments, and organizational planning initiatives. During [Phase I](#) of the 2026–2031 strategic planning process, the Board led the review and refinement of the College's [mission and vision statements](#) using stakeholder engagement findings gathered through [institutional surveys](#) and [campus forums](#). The [resulting mission and vision statements](#) reaffirm the institution's identity as a tribal land grant college committed to holistic education, cultural continuity, and intergenerational community wellbeing.

Building on that work, the Board adopted the [RISE Strategic Plan 2030–31](#) and the [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan 2026–2029](#) on September 14, 2026. The RISE plan defines

governance and implementation responsibilities for the Board, President and Executive Team, division leaders, faculty and staff, data stewards, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The SEM Plan similarly assigns coordination to the Student Success Council while preserving established academic, administrative, budgetary, and governance authority.

These governance processes demonstrate increasing institutional coordination and shared accountability across operational, academic, financial, and planning functions. Decisions of institutional consequence, including organizational restructuring, strategic planning priorities, academic initiatives, budgeting decisions, and assessment development, move through established governance and administrative processes rather than relying on unilateral decision-making.

Committees Support Cross-Functional Institutional Coordination

KBOCC maintains standing committees, councils, and operational working groups that support institutional governance, planning, assessment, student success initiatives, operational coordination, and continuous improvement processes. These groups provide structured opportunities for faculty, staff, administrators, and leadership to participate in institutional governance and operational decision-making, according to their knowledge and responsibilities.

[Faculty Council](#) serves as the primary faculty governance body and plays a central role in curriculum review, academic policy recommendations, assessment planning, and instructional quality. Faculty Council [meeting records](#) document faculty deliberation and action on curriculum, academic requirements, assessment processes, and other matters within the faculty's academic responsibilities. Curriculum proposals and academic changes move through these faculty-led processes before proceeding to the appropriate level of institutional approval.

As discussed throughout Criterion 3, the [Student Success Council](#) coordinates enrollment management, persistence initiatives, student success planning, and Key Enrollment Indicator (KEI) review cycles. [Meeting records](#) demonstrate cross-divisional participation in strategic enrollment management, student persistence and completion initiatives, student support coordination, and review of institutional data. The Council's workgroups and Data Team extend this participation by developing and implementing strategies across the student journey. The Council also coordinates implementation of the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan while established academic, administrative, financial, and Board authorities remain in place.

As discussed in 3.E, [Assessment Committee](#) provides institution-wide coordination of student learning and operational assessment. Its [meeting records](#) document review of assessment expectations, College Learning Goals, assessment findings, and institutional guidance, including the committee's approval of the [Assessment Handbook](#) and [Institutional Assessment Plan for College Learning Goals](#). These records demonstrate how faculty and staff expertise informs institutional assessment practices and continuous improvement.

The College re-engaged the [Finance Committee](#) in 2026 to strengthen institutional communication and shared understanding regarding budgeting, financial planning, and long-term resource stewardship. The available [meeting records](#) document the committee's developing role in reviewing budget information, considering institutional needs, and supporting recommendations within the College's established financial authority.

The Anishinaabe Advisory Committee provides guidance concerning cultural integration, language, community relationships, cultural protocols, and the alignment of institutional practices with Anishinaabe values. Representative [meeting records](#) demonstrate how cultural knowledge and employee perspectives inform College programs, activities, communications, and institutional initiatives.

KBOCC also uses time-limited, cross-functional working groups for major institutional initiatives. During portions of the review period, the accreditation and strategic planning working groups included overlapping membership, which helped connect accreditation preparation, assessment, strategic planning, and operational perspectives during leadership transition, staffing vacancies, and organizational restructuring. These groups coordinated work, gathered input, and developed recommendations; decisions and approvals remained with the Board, administration, faculty, or standing councils and committees according to their established responsibilities.

Together, these records demonstrate that shared governance at KBOCC is an active, role-appropriate process through which participants exchange information, deliberate, develop recommendations, and make decisions within their assigned responsibilities. Documentation practices currently vary among governance bodies. As an initial step toward greater consistency, KBOCC has developed a [draft Shared Governance Handbook](#) that inventories the College's councils and committees and brings existing information about their purposes, membership, and practices into one resource. As the handbook is further reviewed and developed, it is intended to establish common expectations for committee charges, agendas, minutes, decision documentation, communication, and centralized record retention.

External Networks and Partnerships Strengthen Institutional Capacity

KBOCC extends its institutional capacity through mission-aligned associations, funding partners, professional networks, and regional educational partnerships. These external organizations do not participate in the College's governance or institutional decision-making. Rather, they provide information, expertise, advocacy, professional learning, funding, and collaborative opportunities that help KBOCC fulfill its responsibilities as a Tribal College and regional higher education provider.

Membership in the [Michigan Community College Association \(MCCA\)](#) provides access to leadership development, statewide policy information, professional learning, peer collaboration, and shared resources relevant to Michigan community colleges.

The [American Indian Higher Education Consortium](#) (AIHEC) provides a national voice for Tribal Colleges and Universities through policy advocacy, research, data initiatives, professional collaboration, and attention to the distinctive roles of Tribally controlled institutions. Support from the American Indian College Fund further strengthens KBOCC through grants, student support, professional development, technical assistance, and institutional capacity-building initiatives aligned with the missions of Tribal Colleges.

Regional educational partnerships also extend the College's ability to serve students and communities. Collaboration with organizations such as the Copper Country Intermediate School District supports coordination with regional schools and the development of educational pathways, including dual enrollment, early college, career and technical education, and transition to postsecondary study. Additional partnerships with KBIC departments, higher education institutions, employers, and community organizations are discussed elsewhere in relation to mission fulfillment, educational programs, student success, and public service.

Expanding Data-Informed Decision-making Capacity

Alongside governance and administrative restructuring, KBOCC has significantly expanded its institutional effectiveness and data-informed planning capacity. Since 2020, the institution has made deliberate investments in systems, staffing, and organizational structures designed to improve data capacity, planning integration, and continuous improvement processes.

Participation in Achieving the Dream, Cultivating Native Student Success, and AIHEC's Cangleska Student Success Initiative reinforced the need for stronger institutional research infrastructure, more systematic use of student-success data, and improved integration between planning and operational decision-making.

The Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT), administered through ATD in [2019](#) and [2022](#), identified institutional research staffing and data infrastructure as persistent institutional gaps. The Institutional Transformation Assessment (ITA), completed through CSSI in [2024](#) and re-administered in [2026](#), reinforced these findings and emphasized the importance of dedicated institutional research capacity to sustain ongoing student success and planning initiatives.

In response, KBOCC established the OIE in 2024. Within OIE are a full-time Director of Enrollment Management and Institutional Effectiveness, the Assessment and Curriculum Coordinator, and a newly added full-time Institutional Research Analyst. The Research Analyst is responsible for enrollment reporting, student outcome analysis, benchmarking participation, and institutional reporting. The College also expanded its use of institutional data tools through participation in the Postsecondary Data Partnership (PDP) and implementation of Lightcast labor-market and alumni pathway analysis systems.

Board adoption of the [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#) further formalized the Student Success Council's role as the coordinating body for enrollment and student success planning. Supported by its Data Team and strategy workgroups, the Council oversees a defined Key Enrollment Indicator review cycle and is beginning to translate the plan's strategies into operational work plans. The [KEI process](#) establishes a structured annual review cycle with

designated reporting timelines, equity-focused framing questions, and action expectations tied to enrollment, persistence, and student success indicators.

The OIE also supports institutional coordination by managing participation in national benchmarking initiatives, maintaining institutional reporting infrastructure, supporting assessment and program review processes, and providing data analysis used in enrollment management, budgeting, and strategic planning. Institutional data are increasingly used not simply for compliance reporting, but as operational tools supporting institutional decision-making and continuous improvement.

Sources

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- AAC Meetings 2025-2026

4.B Resource Base and Sustainability

The institution's financial and personnel resources effectively support its current operations. The institution's financial management balances short-term needs with long-term commitments and ensures its ongoing sustainability.

Argument

Resources in Service of the Mission

As a tribally chartered land grant institution, KBOCC operates within a funding environment structurally distinct from most HLC member institutions. The College does not receive operational funding from the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Tribal Council. Instead, its resource base is built on federal institutional grants and operational support, competitive grants across multiple agencies, tuition and fee revenue, and targeted support from the American Indian College Fund and Michigan state programs. The College's Board-approved [FY2026–27 general-fund operating budget](#) is \$1,821,243; restricted grant-funded activities are budgeted and monitored separately. KBOCC manages these resources as an integrated portfolio intended to sustain current operations while building the academic, personnel, technology, and facilities capacity required for long-term mission fulfillment.

The central financial story of the review period is one of increasing resilience. KBOCC has expanded the number and purposes of its external funding relationships, maintained balanced operating budgets, strengthened reserves and net position, and directed substantial resources to instruction, academic support, student support, and institutional infrastructure. This progress has occurred while the College continued to keep access and affordability central to its mission to support and uplift all learners and promote Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways.

Revenue Composition and Diversification

KBOCC monitors both its current revenue composition and changes in its funding mix over time. The [FY2025 audited financial statements](#) report \$8.84 million in governmental-fund revenue. Federal intergovernmental revenue represented \$5.79 million, or 65.4%; charges for services contributed \$1.65 million, or 18.7%; and other intergovernmental sources contributed \$1.16 million, or 13.1%. Indirect cost recovery and other revenue accounted for the remaining 2.8%. This audited snapshot reflects the importance of federal support to Tribal Colleges while also documenting meaningful revenue from services and other governmental sources.

The College's funding diversification analysis provides a longer view. From FY2018–19 through FY2023–24, federal grants and contracts ranged from 42% to 79% of annual support. After representing 76% in FY2022–23, federal support declined to 42% in FY2023–24, when nonfederal grants accounted for 22%, scholarships for 19%, and tuition, fees, and books for 13%. The FY2024–25 budget projected a mix of 46% federal grants and contracts, 23% tuition, fees,

and books, 13% scholarships, and 10% nonfederal grants. The final year in this analysis is budgeted/projected rather than audited actual. Taken together, the trend and the FY2025 audit show that federal funding remains central but is supplemented by a broader range of governmental, philanthropic, student-related, and institutionally generated resources.

KBOCC further reduces concentration risk by maintaining awards across multiple agencies and purposes. The [May 2026 grant portfolio](#) includes support from the Bureau of Indian Education, U.S. Department of Education, Health Resources and Services Administration, USDA/NIFA, NASA and AIHEC, Michigan programs, the American Indian College Fund, and regional and philanthropic partners. These awards support operations, academic and workforce programs, student basic needs, institutional capacity, facilities, research, cultural preservation, and community programming. The College therefore is not dependent on a single award, agency, or program purpose even though federal funding remains its largest overall category.

Several multi-year awards illustrate the scale and strategic breadth of this portfolio. Title III Part A and Part F awards support institutional capacity, student services, program review, professional development, library and wellness resources, technology, and facilities. A four-year, \$4 million HRSA Nursing Workforce Expansion award supports Nursing personnel, equipment, participant assistance, preceptors, and instructional infrastructure. A \$997,872 MiLEAP Go Big award supports laboratory and collaborative-classroom renovations, while a \$400,000 MiLEAP capacity award supports student meals, the food pantry, laptops, and retention technology. The American Indian College Fund supports institutional effectiveness, student success, faculty development, emergency aid, transfer, and cultural preservation. USDA/NIFA and AIHEC/NASA awards support Native food pathways, environmental and GIS research, and student research participation. The [Office of Sponsored Programs](#) coordinates proposal review, award initiation, compliance, reporting, and budget monitoring so that external resources are aligned with institutional mission and strategic priorities.

Tuition and fees provide an additional recurring source of support. Tuition and fee rates are [approved by the Board of Regents](#) as part of the institutional budget process and published in the College Catalog and on the KBOCC website. In addition to tuition, students pay per credit fees supporting specific institutional functions including technology, student life, and related services. KBOCC balances the need for recurring revenue with its commitment to affordability and access. Students may draw on federal Title IV aid, BIE student assistance, Tribal scholarships, Michigan Reconnect, the Michigan Tuition Incentive Program, American Indian College Fund scholarships, and other aid. The resource model therefore considers both gross tuition revenue and students' ability to enroll and persist without excessive financial barriers. The current tuition rate for 2026-27 is \$190 per credit hour, which is lower than the median tuition rate of the five nearby Michigan community colleges of \$270 per credit hour. A review of regional community and Tribal College tuition demonstrates that this rate remains comparatively affordable. The applicable published rates for Baraga County residents at five nearby Michigan community colleges range from \$221 to \$291 per credit or contact hour, with a median of \$270. KBOCC's rate is therefore below the lowest of these rates and significantly below the regional Michigan median. KBOCC thus balances the need for recurring tuition revenue with its mission-centered commitment to affordability and regional access.

KBOCC also generates revenue through mission-supporting service operations. The FY2026–27 budget projects \$100,000 from childcare, \$35,500 from bookstore operations, \$229,750 from cafeteria and food-service operations, and \$200 from the fitness center, totaling \$365,450. These activities diversify revenue and provide services connected to student access, learning, wellness, and campus and community life. The bookstore supplies textbooks and learning resources; early-learning operations help address childcare barriers; food service supports students and early-learning programs; and the fitness center supports student and community wellness. KBOCC evaluates these operations not solely as commercial enterprises but in relation to affordability, access, operating cost, and mission contribution.

Current Budget and Mission-Focused Allocation

The Board-approved [FY2026–27 general fund](#) budget balances \$1,821,243 in projected revenues with an equal amount of planned expenditures. Projected revenue includes tuition and student fees, indirect-cost recovery, internal cost-allocation-plan revenue, and institutionally generated service revenue. Restricted grants are budgeted and monitored separately through the Office of Sponsored Programs, allowing KBOCC to distinguish recurring general-fund operations from time-limited sponsored activities.

Wages and fringe benefits total \$1,054,185, approximately 58% of the general-fund budget, reflecting the personnel-intensive nature of instruction and student support. Budgeted expenditures for instructional departments and programs total \$686,325. When Academic Affairs, Student Services, and Bookstore expenditures are included, \$961,608 or approximately 53% of the total general-fund budget, directly supports instruction, academic support, student support, and access to learning resources. When OIE and Community Programs are also included as mission-supporting functions and the separately operated Kitchen and Ojibwa Early Learning Center are excluded, these functions account for approximately 68% of core operating expenditures.

Financial Management, Controls, and Audited Results

KBOCC's budget and financial management processes are governed by the [Accounting Procedures Manual](#), the [OSP Procedures Manual](#), and the [Annual Budget Process](#). The annual cycle begins in March with standardized departmental requests covering personnel, operations, program delivery, and emerging needs. The [Finance Committee](#) compares requests with the prior-year budget, projects available revenue, and prioritizes salaries and benefits, instructional and operational supplies, and other essential costs. Preliminary allocations are reviewed by the appropriate Executive Team member before submission to the Board of Regents for final approval. After approval, department leaders receive budget-orientation meetings, and department heads and Executive Team members receive monthly budget-to-actual reports for ongoing monitoring.

The [Finance Committee Charter](#) formalizes the Committee's responsibility to monitor the annual budget and financial performance, review financial reports and major revenue trends, oversee the annual audit and investments, and make recommendations to the Board. The Committee [agendas](#)

[and minutes](#) demonstrate these responsibilities in practice during development of the FY2026–27 budget. The Committee established the departmental budget calendar, reviewed revenue projections and enrollment assumptions, incorporated strategic goals into departmental requests, developed the square-footage basis for internal cost allocation, identified the costs included in the allocation, prepared budget-modification and purchasing forms, and scheduled employee training following Board approval. These records show an iterative budget process connecting financial assumptions, operating needs, institutional priorities, internal controls, and implementation support.

The [budget modification process](#) extends these controls throughout the fiscal year. Departments requesting additional funds or a redistribution must submit a written justification, document efforts to absorb the expense within the approved budget, and obtain the appropriate executive approval. The Finance Committee evaluates necessity, urgency, strategic alignment, available funds, and applicable restrictions and issues a documented decision within five business days. Approved changes are incorporated into official budget records and tracked for accurate reporting.

Grant budgets follow a [parallel control structure](#) through the Office of Sponsored Programs. Before submission, proposed awards are reviewed for mission and strategic alignment, risk, and institutional commitments and require presidential approval. Upon award, the OSP Director prepares a Grant Initiation Form and Accounting establishes the appropriate fund and account structure in Jenzabar. Grant expenditures are monitored against approved budgets and applicable award requirements. Material budget changes require agency approval when applicable, and federally funded expenditures follow 2 CFR 200 cost principles. Institutional purchasing controls include approval thresholds, competitive Governance records demonstrate that these financial processes culminate in formal Board oversight.

KBOCC undergoes an annual independent financial and compliance audit. The most recent completed [audit](#), for the year ended June 30, 2025, resulted in unmodified opinions on the College's financial statements and its compliance with major federal programs. The auditors identified no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting or federal program compliance, no material noncompliance, and no financial statement or federal award findings or questioned costs. The Board receives and reviews audit results, and financial management practices and policies are updated as necessary in response to auditor recommendations.

At June 30, 2025, KBOCC reported total net position of \$6.56 million, including \$1.19 million in unrestricted net position, and an ending General Fund balance of \$1.41 million. Net position increased by \$1.05 million during FY2025 after restatement of the beginning balance to implement GASB Statement No. 101. These results demonstrate that the College maintains resources to support current operations while continuing to strengthen its capacity for future commitments.

Governance records demonstrate that these financial processes culminate in formal Board oversight. The Board received and acted on the FY2024–25 independent audit in [January 2026](#) and approved the FY2026–27 institutional budgets in [June 2026](#). During the same period, it

approved revisions to accounting, procurement, and disbursement controls and acted on investment and retirement-plan matters. These actions demonstrate that the Board's assigned fiduciary responsibilities are carried out through documented review and formal action.

Six-Year Composite Financial Index (CFI) Trend

KBOCC's Composite Financial Index (CFI) has improved consistently across all six reporting years shown below.

Data Period	Primary Reserve	Net Operating Revenue	Return on Net Assets	Viability	Total CFI Score
FY2019-20	0.13	-0.40	-0.19	3.50	3.04
FY2020-21	0.16	0.08	0.40	3.50	4.14
FY2021-22	0.16	0.17	2.00	3.50	5.83
FY2022-23	0.24	0.76	1.92	3.50	6.42
FY2023-24	0.30	1.00	1.69	3.50	6.50
FY2024-25	0.39	1.00	1.90	3.50	6.79

The total CFI increased from 3.04 in FY2019–20 to 6.79 in FY2024–25. Over the same period, the Primary Reserve ratio grew from 0.13 to 0.39, Net Operating Revenue improved from a negative result to 1.00, Return on Net Assets improved from -0.19 to 1.90, and Viability remained at 3.50. The FY2024-25 total CFI of 6.79 exceeds both the HLC public institution threshold of 1.1 designating Above the Zone and the HLC-reported average CFI for public institutions of 5.28 in 2025. More important than any single-year result is the consistent trajectory that KBOCC has strengthened reserves, operating performance, and net assets across the review period without recurring Tribal Council operating support.

Facilities and Technology Capacity

KBOCC's facilities portfolio includes the Wabanung Campus, which serves as the primary academic and administrative campus; the Arts and Agriculture Center in Pelkie which houses KBOCC's land grant programming; and the Migiziinsag and Ojibwa Early Learning Center facilities supporting early learning and family services. The former Niiwin Akeaa campus in

Baraga was closed in June 2023 as academic and administrative operations were consolidated at Wabanung.

In 2024, two MiLEAP grants totaling \$1.4 million funded STEM lab renovations at the Wabanung Campus. The [Go Big Grant](#) converted a former computer lab into dedicated chemistry and biology lab space and transformed a third classroom into a STEM collaborative space now serving the Nursing clinical program. These renovations addressed a documented need: students completing take-home lab kits during COVID-19 sought on-campus collaborative lab experience once restrictions lifted but lacked adequate safe space. The renovated spaces now support laboratory and collaborative learning across general education, science, and Nursing courses and substantially expand the number of students able to complete hands-on work on campus. MiLEAP funding also supported student success infrastructure, including food pantry expansion, free meals, and laptop and technology access programs, directly addressing material barriers to enrollment stability.

The Arts and Agriculture Center at Pelkie, acquired in 2016, houses outdoor learning spaces including a hoop house, learning gardens, a fruit orchard, an apiary, and a small maple tree stand developed through USDA NIFA grants. These spaces support academic coursework and community workshops and embody the Native Food Pathways grant work in a literal sense; investment in what future generations will inherit.

In July 2026, KBOCC received a [draft Facilities Master Plan](#) evaluating site, architectural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, accessibility, and life-safety conditions across its four-facility portfolio. The assessment organizes recommended projects into short-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities, giving the College a structured basis for preventive maintenance, capital budgeting, accessibility improvements, and lifecycle replacement. The assessment found that the Wabanung Campus generally remains in good condition as a result of ongoing maintenance and investment, while identifying phased needs related to pavement, roofing, HVAC and controls, energy efficiency, and ADA accessibility. The early learning facilities and Arts and Agriculture Center similarly received building-specific recommendations that can now be integrated into capital and grant planning.

Energy stewardship and facilities infrastructure investments at the Wabanung Campus have produced measurable, documented results across the review period. KBOCC has undertaken a multi-year facilities renovation in partnership with Johnson Controls, including substantial replacement of overhead air handling units (AHUs) throughout the Wabanung Campus building. These mechanical upgrades have improved building systems reliability, indoor air quality, and energy performance across the facility. In 2023, KBOCC contracted for the electrical installation of a 98.1 kW roof mounted solar array at the Wabanung Campus. The system was activated in late November 2024 and generated \$2,925.46 in total cost savings over the first four months of operation (December 2024 through March 2025), representing a 15% reduction in energy costs and an 11% reduction in consumption compared to the same period the prior year. Monthly savings ranged from 10% in January 2025 to 25% in March 2025, achieved despite utility rate increases and significantly colder temperatures during the comparison period. Prior investments in LED lighting installation and energy efficient roofing have further reduced operating costs. A

pending Indigenous Earth Fund solar grant (\$45,000) would extend renewable energy investment to the Outdoor Environmental Learning Center.

Human Resources

KBOCC's personnel practices reflect a deliberate commitment to developing talent from within the community it serves. The [Employee Handbook](#) provides paid educational leave, of four hours per week, for full-time employees pursuing coursework during working hours, conference attendance support through documented professional development plans, and reimbursement for tuition, fees, and related educational expenses subject to supervisor approval. Professional development plans are maintained and updated annually for all employees.

Across current staff, multiple employees in professional and leadership roles, including positions in student services, admissions, cultural programming, community education, and accounting, are KBOCC graduates who pursued further education and returned to serve the institution. In several cases, employees have advanced their credentials while working at KBOCC and moved into progressively higher roles. This pattern reflects a staffing philosophy aligned with the College's mission in which investment in student success produces a pipeline of credentialed professionals who are culturally grounded, community connected and prepared to serve the institution, and the people it was created to serve.

In Fall 2024, KBOCC reported 16.3 full-time equivalent instructional staff, a 14% increase from 14.3 FTE in Fall 2023 and a 19% increase from Fall 2021. Two additional full-time faculty members have been hired in Health Science and Nursing since Fall 2024. KBOCC's most recently reported IPEDS student-to-faculty ratio, reported in Spring 2026, was 8:1, compared with 6:1 in the prior year. The College continues to monitor the relationship among enrollment growth, course demand, instructional workload, and faculty capacity. Since 2022, Human Resources functions have been led by a full-time HR Director, a position previously held part time, strengthening institutional capacity for recruiting, hiring, and retention. All sponsored programs involving personnel follow documented time and effort reporting procedures through the OSP, ensuring grant funded positions are properly tracked and auditable.

Taken together, targeted hiring, internal employee development, cross-training, and managed-service partnerships provide capacity for current operations. The College continues to monitor workload, vacancies, succession needs, and grant-supported positions as active personnel-sustainability considerations.

Professional Development and Institution-Wide Training

KBOCC treats employee development as an investment in its personnel capacity and long-term institutional sustainability. The College's [Professional Development Policy](#) provides a framework for employees to strengthen job-related skills, pursue additional education, and prepare for increased responsibilities within the institution. Role-specific professional development for faculty and staff directly supporting students is discussed in Core Component

3.C; this section focuses on the institution-wide structures, resources, and opportunities available across the College.

The [Annual Faculty and Staff Training Plan](#) establishes a recurring mandatory training cycle for all faculty and staff. Following the winter semester, required training is assigned through Vector Solutions' higher education learning management system, generally in May or early summer, and is due within the first two weeks of the fall semester. Vector LMS provides a centralized mechanism for assigning courses, communicating expectations, monitoring employee progress, and maintaining completion records rather than relying on individual departments to administer and document required training separately.

The annual curriculum addresses institutional responsibilities shared across employee roles. Training covers student protection and safety; Title IX, Clery Act, and mandatory-reporting responsibilities; sexual-harassment and hazing prevention; FERPA and student privacy; cybersecurity and data protection; ethical conduct; workplace drug and alcohol expectations; occupational safety; and practices that foster campus belonging and community. This recurring structure supports institutional compliance and risk management while reinforcing expectations for a safe, ethical, respectful, and student-centered learning and working environment.

Professional development and training are supported through multiple complementary sources. Employees may request support through the annual institutional and departmental budget process, while Title III, the American Indian College Fund, and other grants provide additional resources for conferences, training, and employee development. These layered funding sources allow KBOCC to respond to institutional and individual development needs without relying on a single funding stream.

The College's [Professional Development Plan form](#) complements the annual mandatory training cycle by documenting employees' prior-year development activities, planned activities, anticipated funding sources, and expected benefit to KBOCC. Plans are updated annually, and supporting documentation such as transcripts, grade reports, certifications, and training records is maintained as appropriate. Together, individual professional development plans and centralized mandatory training records provide a more consistent and auditable record of the College's investment in employee capacity.

KBOCC also supports longer-term employee development through paid educational leave and tuition assistance. Full-time employees may receive up to four hours per week of paid educational leave to attend coursework during working hours and additional release time for study when coursework occurs outside normal working hours. Employees not otherwise eligible for financial aid may enroll in one tuition-free KBOCC course per semester. The policy also extends educational leave to eligible Native employees participating in approved Ojibwemowin credentialing and immersion programs. These opportunities support KBOCC's "grow your own" approach by helping employees advance their education while strengthening the culturally grounded workforce needed to sustain the College's mission.

Technology Infrastructure and Resources

KBOCC sustains its technology infrastructure through institutional investment and a [managed-services partnership with Regional Educational Media Center 1 \(REMC-1\)](#), a regional educational technology service provider. Since the previous comprehensive evaluation, the College has moved from a limited shared-device environment to a one-to-one student laptop program, a modern learning-management system, upgraded classroom technology, and dedicated technical support. These investments help ensure that students and employees have reliable access to the technology necessary for teaching, learning, communication, and institutional operations.

The 2026–27 REMC1 SupportNet agreement provides three days of on-site service each week, a business-hours help desk, management of up to 300 College Windows devices, staff and student email and identity management, software inventory and patch management, classroom-technology assistance, and 24-hour monitoring of critical network and server services. The annual contract amount is \$93,640. This partnership gives an institution of KBOCC's size access to specialized infrastructure, cybersecurity, systems-management, and user-support capacity that would be difficult to reproduce through limited internal staffing.

KBOCC now operates a 1-to-1 laptop program, ensuring every enrolled student has access to a device for coursework. Laptops are loaned to students, with a pathway to ownership: students who complete defined requirements outlined in their device contract earn permanent ownership of the device. This model both removes a concrete barrier to student success and creates a structured incentive for engagement, an approach consistent with the College's holistic, student-centered mission.

In Fall 2023, KBOCC transitioned to Canvas as its learning management system, replacing the Jenzabar-based MYKBOCC portal that had served as the LMS during the 2020 review period. Canvas provides a more robust and widely adopted platform for course delivery, assignment management, faculty-student communication, and online course hosting. The transition was supported by a deliberate faculty onboarding process that included a series of training sessions led by Canvas, recorded tutorials, and ongoing help resources to ensure instructors could use the platform effectively. Canvas adoption continues to grow across the College's course offerings, supporting both on-campus instruction and the College's capacity to deliver distance education to students across the region.

KBOCC uses Jenzabar as its student information system, supporting registration, student records, degree audit, financial aid and billing, advising, and employee HR and payroll functions. The MYKBOCC web portal, built on the Jenzabar platform, provides students real-time access to their academic progress and allows advisors to monitor advisee degree completion in real time. Jenzabar training has been supported through professional development funding, including staff attendance at Jenzabar-hosted training.

In 2023, KBOCC completed the installation of BenQ Smart Boards in all classrooms at the Wabanung Campus and the Pelkie Arts and Agriculture Center. This represents a full replacement of the projector-and-screen model that was in place during the 2020 review. The rollout was accompanied by a dedicated training session, with follow-up support for one-on-one assistance and troubleshooting. Smart boards expand instructional capability across every

classroom, supporting interactive, multimedia, and distance-capable instruction in a way that aligns with the College's commitment to providing a high-quality learning environment for its students.

KBOCC recognizes cybersecurity as an institutional priority and is actively working to formalize its cybersecurity policy in partnership with REMC-1 and AIHEC. This work draws on shared regional and TCU expertise appropriate to the College's size and resource context; formal policy development remains underway.

Planning for Sustainability in a Variable Revenue Environment

KBOCC distinguishes recurring operations from time-limited sponsored activities and considers continuing institutional obligations before accepting grant-funded commitments. This is especially important for personnel positions, technology, and student supports initially developed through external awards. As major grants approach expiration—including the Cultivating Native Student Success grant in June 2028—institutional leadership reviews which activities should transition to another allowable funding source, be incorporated into the general fund, be scaled to available resources, or conclude. This staged review allows KBOCC to use grants to build institutional capacity without treating temporary awards as permanent unrestricted revenue. Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) operational funding is based directly on Indian student count (ISC) and adjusts with enrollment fluctuation. The Finance Committee addresses revenue variability through the annual budget process, with line items adjusted across grants and the operational budget as needed. The OSP requires agency pre-approval for any material grant budget modifications. The Finance Committee continues to evaluate options for formalizing a reserve fund policy and target as part of the College's commitment to building long-term financial resilience.

OIE's institutional research function supports revenue and capacity planning by providing systematic enrollment data for budget assumptions and enrollment-management decisions. Recent enrollment growth has expanded opportunity while also increasing demands on staffing, space, technology, and student services. Following Board adoption of the [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#) on September 14, 2026, the Student Success Council will use its defined Key Enrollment Indicator calendar and strategy workgroups to translate enrollment evidence into operational work plans and resource needs. Because the plan is newly adopted, its contribution to future enrollment stability will be evaluated through implementation rather than assumed.

Sources

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4.C Planning for Quality Improvement

The institution engages in systematic strategic planning for quality improvement. It relies on data, integrating its insights from enrollment forecasts, financial capacity, student learning assessment, institutional operations and the external environment.

Argument

Seven Generation Stewardship as Planning Framework

KBOCC grounds planning in the Anishinaabe responsibility to consider how decisions made today will affect future generations. This principle is reflected in the College's mission to support and uplift learners while promoting Anishinaabe culture, language, and lifeways and in its vision of an intergenerational center of educational excellence and innovation. It provides a culturally grounded frame for balancing immediate needs with long-term obligations to learners, community, culture, and institutional sustainability.

While governance authority and fiduciary responsibility reside with the Board of Regents, as described in 2.C., institutional planning for quality improvement is carried out through administrative leadership and shared governance processes authorized by the Board and grounded in institutional data.

The College acknowledges that its planning infrastructure is evolving. Historically, planning was more episodic, reflecting capacity constraints common to small rural tribal colleges. Since 2020, KBOCC has taken deliberate steps to build a more continuous, data-informed, and integrated planning cycle. The establishment of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) in 2024 is a significant structural investment in that trajectory. KBOCC presents its planning not as a mature, fully developed system, but as an institution actively and demonstrably strengthening that system.

2020-2025 Strategic Plan

The Board-adopted [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#) established seven operating objectives: academic program quality, institution-wide assessment, student services and retention, intellectual capital, administrative capacity, community outreach, and learning resources. Progress was revisited during the plan period, including discussion at the July 2024 Board retreat, and KBOCC completed a close-out review in 2026. The review documented accomplishments including completion of program review for seven academic units; establishment of OIE and the Institutional Research Analyst position; creation of the Student Success Council; formal adoption of the Assessment Committee Charge; and strengthened faculty credentialing and dual-enrollment oversight.

The plan also revealed a known limitation: although goals and performance measures were identified, the connection among assessment findings, resource allocation, documented action, and institutional reporting was not consistently systematic. This finding became an important starting point for the 2026–2031 planning cycle and directly informed RISE’s emphasis on connected planning, defined progress signposts, annual institutional review, and communication of results. This honest institutional self-assessment reflects a more mature and transparent planning culture.

2026-2031 Strategic Planning Process

KBOCC developed the [RISE Strategic Plan 2030–31](#) through a participatory, evidence-informed process grounded in its role as a Tribal land grant institution. The process began in 2023 and continued across a period of presidential transition and institutional reorganization. Phase I brought together a December 2023 KBIC Elder Forum; a [stakeholder survey](#) with 112 responses from learners, alumni, employees, Regents, community members, employers, and others connected to KBOCC; a June 2024 [community partner forum](#) involving 22 representatives; a Board-led [mission and vision refresh](#); and a regional landscape scan and [SOAR analysis](#). These sources emphasized cultural vitality, holistic learner success, strong relationships, responsible growth, institutional capacity, and responsiveness to changing learner and community needs.

The [Phase I findings and preliminary strategic direction](#) were preserved during the leadership transition, and the Board confirmed the preliminary direction in November 2025. Under new leadership in 2026, the Executive Team and KBOCC’s four divisions reviewed the findings against current enrollment, workforce, facilities, technology, financial, and operational conditions. This work refined the direction into four strategic priorities, supporting goals, and progress signposts. The Board of Regents adopted the completed RISE Strategic Plan on September 14, 2026.

[RISE](#) begins with KBOCC’s mission and values and establishes three Foundational Commitments—Cultural Vitality; Thriving People and Collective Well-Being; and Relational Communication and Shared Understanding—that shape implementation and assessment across four priorities: Holistic Learner Success, Relationship-Centered Engagement, Sustainable Systems and Stewardship, and Mission-Aligned Innovation and Responsiveness. The progress signposts include both leading and outcome indicators so KBOCC can monitor the institutional conditions it is building, as well as longer-term results experienced by learners, employees, and communities.

During the same period, KBOCC completed its inaugural [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#), *Strengthening the Lodge Around Every Learner*, which the Board also adopted on September 14, 2026. The SEM Plan translates KBOCC’s broader strategic direction into coordinated goals, strategies, measures, and governance structures spanning access, enrollment, belonging, academic momentum, completion, transition, and student-ready systems. KBOCC also advanced a [Facilities Master Plan](#) to a substantive draft. That plan remains under development and will require further institutional review, alignment with RISE, and formal action before adoption.

Completing these processes through presidential transition, institutional reorganization, staff turnover, and vacancies, nevertheless demonstrates the College's capacity to preserve evidence and institutional priorities across disruption and bring complex cross-institutional work to formal decision. The next phase will assign ownership, align institution-level plans, develop division, unit, and SEM operational work plans, connect resource decisions with adopted priorities, and document progress through annual review.

External Environment Scanning

The SOAR process incorporated a formal [landscape scan](#) identifying the external forces shaping KBOCC's future. Key findings include the national decline in traditional-age learners, with the local population remaining small, rural, and aging; rising employer demand for skills-based credentials in healthcare, education, business, natural resources, and skilled trades; persistent broadband and technology infrastructure gaps across tribal and rural areas; and heightened HLC expectations for assessment-planning alignment and continuous improvement documentation. Approximately 16–19% of Baraga County identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native, and dual enrollment growth signals a younger incoming student population, both conditions that shape program planning and resource allocation.

Stakeholder survey and forum data reinforced specific priorities: workforce-aligned programs, expanded flexible delivery, cultural revitalization leadership, expanded partnerships with KBIC and local schools, and student housing and technology infrastructure. The [June 2024 forum](#) surfaced critical needs including loss of elder knowledge, transportation barriers, and the importance of embedding Anishinaabe studies throughout all programming. These external inputs directly shaped the adopted RISE priorities, goals, and progress signposts and will continue to inform annual planning, budget prioritization, program development, facilities planning, and adjustments made through implementation.

KBOCC's environmental scanning and planning efforts are also informed through participation in statewide and tribal higher education organizations, including the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). These memberships provide access to professional development, policy updates, peer collaboration, sector benchmarking, and emerging practices related to student success, workforce development, enrollment management, and institutional effectiveness. Participation in these organizations strengthens KBOCC's ability to evaluate external trends, while adapting those insights within a tribally grounded institutional context.

Integration of Institutional and Operational Planning

KBOCC's strategic plan serves as the institution's overarching framework for translating its mission and vision into priorities, goals, and measures of progress. Institution-level plans address particular areas of work within that framework, while division and unit plans translate institutional goals into specific responsibilities, activities, timelines, resource needs, and measures. For example, the Board-approved [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#) advances the College's commitments related to learner access, belonging, persistence, completion, and

post-college pathways. The developing [Facilities Master Plan](#) addresses the physical capacity, accessibility, sustainability, and infrastructure needed to support KBOCC's mission and strategic direction. Other academic, assessment, technology, financial, and operational planning processes similarly support particular dimensions of the strategic plan rather than functioning as separate institutional directions.

Because the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan and draft Facilities Master Plan were developed concurrently with the institutional strategic plan, KBOCC will conduct a documented alignment review as implementation begins. The review will identify how each plan supports the adopted strategic goals, where responsibilities and measures intersect, and whether gaps or competing commitments require adjustment. Division and unit operational plans will then identify their contributions to the strategic goals and inform annual resource requests. Through the emerging Institutional Effectiveness Framework, KBOCC will review progress, assessment findings, operational results, and resource implications together, helping ensure that institutional plans remain mission-driven, mutually reinforcing, and responsive to evidence.

The Institutional Effectiveness Framework: Integrating Planning, Assessment, and Budget

OIE is finalizing an Institutional Effectiveness Framework designed to make the integration of planning, assessment, budgeting, and documented action operational rather than aspirational. The framework organizes institutional accountability around three connected outcome types: student learning outcomes, student success outcomes, and operational outcomes. Student learning outcomes are examined through the Assessment Committee and the assessment and academic program review processes, documented in Criterion 3. Student success outcomes are monitored through the Student Success Council, the adopted SEM Plan, and its Key Enrollment Indicator review cycle. Operational outcomes will be addressed through division and unit planning and assessment.

The framework will also provide the structure for annual review of RISE progress signposts, SEM Key Enrollment Indicators, implementation milestones, assessment findings, stakeholder feedback, external conditions, and resource needs. A companion RISE KPI monitoring guide will define each progress signpost's purpose, type, population, baseline, target, data source, reporting schedule, and responsible data owner. Because institution-level KPI monitoring remains a developing practice, KBOCC will examine the usefulness of its measures and refine definitions, targets, collection methods, and supporting evidence as its capacity matures.

The framework is being designed around the principle that resources follow strategy and that strategy is informed by evidence. As the framework is implemented, program reviews, assessment findings, enrollment analyses, stakeholder feedback, student-success data, and operational findings will inform curricular redesign, staffing priorities, student-support interventions, facilities investments, technology needs, and resource allocation. Divisions and units will connect documented needs and findings with budget requests, while the Finance Committee, President, and Board carry out their respective responsibilities within the annual budget and governance processes.

Together, these efforts form an emerging connected planning architecture. [RISE](#) establishes KBOCC's institution-wide direction; the [SEM Plan](#) translates that direction across the student journey; and the draft [Facilities Master Plan](#) identifies the physical infrastructure and capital priorities needed to support learning, community engagement, and responsible growth. As the Facilities Master Plan is finalized, KBOCC will review its recommendations for alignment with RISE, institutional capacity, and available resources. Assessment, academic program review, division and unit planning, and the annual budget process provide additional pathways for carrying institutional priorities into operational work. The Institutional Effectiveness Framework will bring evidence from these processes together for annual reflection, budgeting, documented action, and communication of progress.

Planning Driven by Data

KBOCC's use of institutional data to inform planning is documented across the review period and reflects a consistent pattern: evidence of a problem, gap, or opportunity leads to institutional review and a specific response. That pattern is traceable across program structure, instructional design, assessment practice, student support, staffing, and infrastructure investment.

Gateway Course & Developmental Education Redesign

The 2017 adoption of the Carnegie math curriculum followed multiple assessment cycles in which the Assessment Committee documented poor completion rates and excessive course repetition in the prior algebra sequence. That evidence preceded and justified the curricular change, a direct example of assessment informing instructional design.

The [General Education Academic Program Review](#), completed in AY2024-25 ([Faculty Council approval](#), [Board of Regents approval](#)), provides the most current data informing ongoing redesign work. Key findings included: Gen Ed core course success rates averaged 72% across the review period, with DFW rates remaining elevated in high-enrollment gateway courses — EN202 at 36%, MA 103 at 35%, and LS 133 at 35%. The APR also revealed a persistent gap between freshman and sophomore success in Gen Ed courses: freshmen succeeded at 55% while sophomores succeeded at 79%, a 24-point differential. For a student body where 43% of enrollment in any given term is freshmen, and where 67% attend part-time, this gap is not incidental. It reflects the reality of who KBOCC serves: students balancing work, family, and community obligations who encounter gateway course barriers in their first year that disproportionately determine whether they persist. Ensuring gateway courses function as momentum builders rather than exit points is both a student success imperative and a mission obligation.

The [General Education APR](#) also prompted broader refinement of general education assessment during AY2025–26. Before this work, general education results were compiled through biennial reports for 2020–2022 and 2022–2024, with annual reporting expected beginning in AY2024–25. No separate general education assessment report was completed for AY2024–25 or AY2025–26 while the College conducted the program review and redesigned the assessment process. The refinement work is clarifying ownership, measures, reporting expectations, and the

relationship among course, general education, program, and college-level assessment. The [Assessment Handbook](#), approved by consensus of the Assessment Committee in September 2026, documents this connected assessment architecture, while implementation and evidence from the [redesigned general education cycle](#) remain forthcoming.

This data, combined with Michigan state legislation directing institutions away from standalone developmental education and toward corequisite models, prompted KBOCC to undertake a comprehensive redesign of its developmental and gateway course offerings. KBOCC eliminated Accuplacer-based placement testing and transitioned to direct placement into college-level courses with concurrent academic support. Students who need additional foundational support in math are placed into MA103 Quantitative Literacy with the concurrent MA097 Math Support course (2 credits), rather than into a prerequisite developmental sequence that delays college-level progress. A parallel corequisite support model has been implemented in English. Standalone developmental math and composition courses have been revised or eliminated accordingly.

This redesign is informed by multiple data sources: Early Alert data, course success and completion rates, placement and enrollment trends, and faculty, advisor, and student support staff input. The model is designed to allow students to complete required English and math sequences within their first academic year directly targeting the freshman success gap the APR identified. Gateway Course Completion Rate is tracked as KEI 3.1, reviewed each February by the Student Success Council with explicit equity-gap framing questions. The February review structure ensures the corequisite model is evaluated not just for aggregate completion rates, but for whether it is closing the gap between first-year and continuing students and whether targeted academic support is reaching the students who need it most.

Reorganization of Liberal Studies

The reorganization of the Liberal Studies department into standalone General Studies and Psychology degree programs resulted directly from the [2022-23 program review](#). That review documented insufficient differentiation among degree emphases, a workload concentrated unsustainably on a single Department Chair, and declining Criminal Justice enrollment, with no viable demand-side recovery. In response, KBOCC phased out the Liberal Studies A.A. and its Criminal Justice emphasis, launched a standalone Psychology A.S. in the Human Studies Department (approved 2024), and redesignated the foundational pathway as General Studies A.A. beginning Fall 2024. No new students are admitted to Criminal Justice, due to documented lack of demand. The outcome is measurable: Psychology enrolled 14 students in Fall 2024 and 24 by Spring 2025, one of the largest programs within two semesters of launch, while the restructured Human Studies area grew 77.8% since Fall 2021. Planning responded to evidence; program structure followed.

Institutional Infrastructure Investment

KBOCC's data and planning infrastructure developed through a cumulative sequence of evidence and institutional response. Through Achieving the Dream (ATD), ICAT results in [2019](#) and [2022](#) identified persistent gaps in institutional research staffing, data infrastructure, disaggregation, and timely use of findings. The Cultivating Native Student Success initiative supported creation of the Student Success Council and a cross-functional data process, while the [2024](#) and [2026](#) Institutional Transformation Assessments completed through CSSI confirmed that dedicated institutional research capacity remained necessary.

The [2020–2025 Strategic Plan](#) established seven operating objectives and review of implementation shows progress across several of these objectives. Formal academic program review and strengthened assessment processes advanced Objective 2; expanded student success coordination advanced Objective 3; faculty development and increased faculty capacity advanced Objective 4; and improvements involving Canvas, Jenzabar, student laptops, classroom technology, and learning spaces advanced Objectives 5 and 7. The creation of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and addition of an Institutional Research Analyst further strengthened the assessment and administrative capacity needed to sustain this work, although those specific structures were not named in the original plan. Together, these actions show that KBOCC implemented plan commitments, while adapting its institutional structures as needs and opportunities became clearer.

Capacity Planning and Financial Variability

The Finance Committee reviews changes in operational costs and grant revenues annually, as part of the budget process. Federal funding variability is a known and planned-for constraint in the tribal college context. The College's adaptive capacity has been demonstrated concretely: when COVID-19 threatened student completion, the Environmental Science Department secured a \$10,000 grant from the Association of American Geographers to purchase 20 HP laptops for students. Funding from the American Indian College Fund supported eleven students facing Spring 2020 completion barriers, all of whom completed the semester. Emergency supports originally deployed during COVID — expanded Canvas use, 24/7 virtual tutoring, emergency financial aid, one-to-one laptop distribution — have since been institutionalized through MiLEAP student success funding, which has also supported lab renovations, the food pantry, and expanded free meals programming.

Faculty capacity has grown in alignment with planning commitments. Two additional full-time faculty members joined Health Science and Nursing, advancing two connected commitments in the [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#): Objective 1's exploration and development of Health Sciences and Nursing curricula and Objective 4's emphasis on expanding full-time faculty capacity.

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- KBOCC Strategic Plan 2030-31 Board Approved 09142026
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Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning enable it to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational programs, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Argument

KBOCC has substantially strengthened governance, financial stewardship, planning, and institutional effectiveness during the review period. Improved financial performance, expanded data and assessment infrastructure, stronger administrative coordination, and more systematic oversight demonstrate increasing organizational capacity. Governance, budgeting, assessment, and strategic planning are increasingly aligned with institutional priorities and mission-centered decision-making.

For KBOCC, planting seeds for seven generations defines sustainability: stewarding resources, relationships, knowledge, and institutional capacity so educational opportunity and cultural continuity endure. Financial stewardship, governance modernization, enrollment planning, facilities planning, and institutional effectiveness therefore function as interconnected responsibilities rather than isolated operations. Although several systems continue to mature, the evidence shows stronger capacity to connect plans with resources, respond to changing conditions, and learn from results. These foundations position KBOCC to sustain its mission, serve its community, and make present decisions with future generations in view.

Sources

There are no sources.