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# *An Institutional History of Northland Community and Technical College*

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*Compiled by Jack Haymond and Sherry Lindquist*



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## **Introduction**

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Northland Community and Technical College has been in existence in one form or other since 1949, when the Minnesota State Board of Education approved an area vocational school for Thief River Falls. The school would later move to its present location and merge with two other institutions of higher learning: first with Thief River Falls State Junior College and later with the East Grand Forks campus of Northwest Technical College, to form Northland Community and Technical College. Each institution brought a long history of serving the needs of area students and employers, and with the advent of online education, expanding its reach far beyond the Red River Valley and northwestern Minnesota. The history of each institution is described in the pages that follow, and readers who are interested in the roots of community and technical college education can satisfy their curiosity in [Appendix A](#).

## **A Brief History of Vocational and Community College Education in Minnesota**

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### **Beginnings**

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Near the close of World War II, Minnesota enacted legislation to provide funds for public, post-secondary institutions that would offer free vocational education not previously available to students at the state's four-year institutions or at the University of Minnesota (Kinzler, 2002). The seeds for this legislation were sown before World War II, however, when one of the key leaders in the earlier battle to enact the Smith-Hughes Act, Charles Prosser, moved to Minnesota to accept a position as the founding director of one of the premier trade schools in [Table of Contents](#)

the nation, the Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System [MnSCU], 1995).<sup>1</sup>

Prosser took charge of a well-endowed private institute, for Dunwoody received the bulk of its revenue from the estate of William Hood Dunwoody, a former flourmill executive. Prosser remained at Dunwoody until his retirement in 1945 and had a profound influence on vocational education long afterwards. During the summers, Prosser often taught education courses at Colorado State University in Ft. Collins, and many of the early leaders in vocational education in Minnesota had been his students there (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995). At the time of Prosser's retirement in 1945, many of his students were ready to take their places as leaders in the movement to offer large-scale vocational training to returning veterans as well as others in the state.

### [Supporting Legislation](#)

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Two pieces of federal legislation combined to make post-secondary vocational education more attractive in Minnesota. One was the G.I. Bill of Rights, which provided tuition for veterans based on their years of service. Another piece of legislation was the George-Barden Act (discussed earlier), which not only provided an increase in the level of federal funding (from \$14 million to \$29 million), but also gave states more flexibility on how the funds

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<sup>1</sup> Authors' note: Prosser, along with John Wright and Layton Hawkins wrote the seminal study of vocational schools prior to 1960, which was used as a source for this research.

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could be spent (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995). George-Barden funds could be used to pay the salaries of state vocational directors and counselors and to purchase or rent equipment and supplies for vocational education. The provision for renting or purchasing equipment was especially beneficial, as many pieces of specialized vocational equipment were in short supply in the years immediately after World War II.

At the state level, legislation to create Area Vocational Technical Schools was introduced in the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1945.<sup>2</sup> Following a study conducted by the University of Minnesota, legislative leaders reached two conclusions: first, that distance had proven to be a considerable barrier for students outside of the metropolitan Minneapolis-St. Paul area who sought further education in a vocational trade, and second, that vocational students would have more success in their chosen fields if they had finished high school prior to beginning vocational training (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995). The final version of Minnesota Statute 120.36 created a series of Area Vocational Technical Institute districts under the authority of sponsoring local school districts (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995).

Under the new law, local school districts were able to petition the Minnesota State Board of Education and Vocational Education to have their school district designated as an area vocational technical institute site. Funding was distributed as per-pupil funds in the same fashion as K-12 funds, and local districts could pass bonding bills for additional funds as needed

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<sup>2</sup> One of the original supporters of the bill was Senator Dalquist of Thief River Falls, which is where the “northern” campus of Northland Community and Technical College is located

(Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995). The first district in Minnesota to make such a request was Mankato, which opened its doors to students in 1947 (Kinzler, 2002; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995). Thief River Falls would not be far behind.

## **Thief River Falls Area Vocational School**

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### **Beginnings**

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Northland started humbly enough in 1949 as the Thief River Falls Area Vocational School, temporarily housed in Lincoln High School. Students could choose from four programs: carpentry, automotive mechanics, practical nursing or welding. In its first year of operation, the Thief River Falls Area Vocational School consisted of 18 students. Clarence W. Pope filled the position as first director of the school, which would see the first of many name changes, as it became, by state mandate, Thief River Falls Area Vocational Technical Institute.

### **Thief River Falls Area Vocational Technical Institute**

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### **Growth**

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Discipline offerings would gradually increase with time. An electronics program was added in 1954. Three years later, majors in business accounting, cosmetology and auto body joined the curriculum, followed by aviation mechanics in 1958 and sales and marketing in 1960.

With the increase in program offerings and enrollment, the school began experiencing growth problems, leading to the construction of a vocational wing for the high school in 1957-

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1958, but it soon became obvious that this was only a temporary solution. In 1964, the school board authorized the purchase of 57 acres for a permanent vocational school site, not far from the confluence of the Thief River and Red Lake rivers. This location had, until 1904, been part of the Red Lake Native American Reservation. Forty Native American families had occupied the location where the future college would be built.

It should be noted that lands near “the Point,” where the two rivers meet, has not been built up, in great part because of its former location as a dance ground and possible burial site. A recent archeological dig (done in consultation with and approval of the Red Lake Nation Tribe) revealed a rich array of Native American habitation for several millennia prior to the arrival of Anglos.

Having purchased the land, the school district turned its attention to the campus itself, passing a bond issue in 1966 to finance construction just east of the Thief River on Highway One, for easy access. A dedication ceremony was held on September 27, 1968. The additional space would allow agricultural mechanics, agricultural business, farm operation and management, and radio and TV broadcasting programs to be added to the curriculum and attract even more students to the Thief River Falls Area Vocational School. It was impossible to move all of the programs at once, however, and it was not until 1979 that the last of the school’s programs moved from Lincoln High School to the present location. By then, the school would be sharing space with its new neighbor and eventual partner, Thief River Falls State Junior College.

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## Moving Towards Merger

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The winds of change began blowing in 1987, when the Minnesota state legislature mandated a name change. All area vocational technical institutes became technical institutes, but change did not end there. By 1989, the State Board of Technical Institutes became the State Board of Technical Colleges, so Thief River Falls Technical Institute became Thief River Falls Technical College, and more changes were coming. Control of the colleges was moved from the local school boards to separate regional governing boards, which themselves underwent statewide reorganization in 1992 through a series of mergers. Just as Northland Community College would become part of the Clearwater Community College Region, the technical college was now part of a multi-campus college with five other northern Minnesota vocational colleges—the birth of Northwest Technical College, or “the Six Pack” as it became known. The “Six Pack” began operating on July 1, 1992, with campuses in Thief River Falls, East Grand Forks, Bemidji, Detroit Lakes, Moorhead, and Wadena, but the biggest merger was yet to come, and when it did, it would finally unite the two Thief River Falls colleges into a single entity, under the governance of a new statewide entity—the Minnesota State College and University system (MnSCU), described later in [Northland Community and Technical College—version 1.0](#).

## Student Life

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Until 1978 the Thief River Falls Vocational Technical Institute students paid for books and low-cost fees but no tuition.

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## Thief River Falls State Junior College

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### Beginnings

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Educators and community members began discussing the possibility of providing a liberal arts education for students in northwestern Minnesota in 1952. The Thief River Falls school district began to consider developing a junior college for both local and regional needs, in part due to the efforts of Mr. Lokken, a Newfolden resident, and University of Minnesota representatives, who conducted surveys and recommended that Thief River Falls be established as the "geographically centered location" to serve the higher educational needs of northwestern Minnesota at the junior college level.

Dr. A. E. Jacobson, a Thief River Falls dentist, led the drive for a junior college both locally and at the state level, with the board of education and the state legislature. By 1956, Dr. Jacobson was able to call a meeting of Minnesota Junior College deans. A Junior College Action Committee was established at the Fergus Falls session. This committee advocated for state support of junior colleges on a similar basis to that given to high schools. Dr. Jacobson spearheaded a request to the state legislature for community college construction funds. This first request was turned down in the 1957 session of the legislature for financial reasons, but two years later, the Educational Committee of the State Senate recommended that community colleges receive comparable support as that enjoyed by state four-year colleges. A funding bill to this effect was passed by the 1961 legislature. Another two years would pass before a local committee would meet with the chancellor of the Minnesota Junior College Program for recognition of a local college. Chancellor Dr. Phillip Helland requested and received the

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necessary recognition that northwestern Minnesota would be funded as part of the state junior college system.

The necessary funding initially included faculty and staffing salaries and funding for classroom space at Lincoln High School, which would once again open its doors for higher education, while the new junior college took its place in the state funding line for a permanent facility.

## [Growth](#)

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Thief River Falls State Junior College first opened for classes on Monday, September 27, 1965. The college consisted of 162 students, all of whom were freshmen during the initial year. Not surprisingly, the initial curriculum reflected this reality. The winter quarter showed a six-student gain. Forty-seven northwestern communities were represented at the college. Most of the students were a combination of recent high school graduates, college transfers, and "stop-out" students from other institutions, the majority enrolling as full time students (only two students registered as "part time"). Few students came from families with parents having college backgrounds, and few of these students would have been able to attend college were it not for this new college in the "remote" northwestern corner of Minnesota.

Full-time personnel included a librarian, a secretary, six full-time instructors, and eight part-time instructors. Administration consisted of one full-time Dean, Victor Charles. Full-time instructors included faculty for mathematics, physics, English, political science, history and biology. Part-time faculty worked in chemistry, English, art history, choir, basketball coaching,

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and women's and men's physical education. Most of the part-time faculty had previously been part of the Lincoln High School teaching staff.

Defining the school's purpose for the community, the Dean was to note that winter: "The purpose of a junior college is to provide: (1) The first two years of a baccalaureate program, (2) general education, (3) technical education programs, (4) adult education, and (5) guidance and counseling to assist students in selecting the appropriate education programs."

The new community college offered a limited liberal arts program and supported a varsity basketball program and a college choir. A scholarship funding drive in Thief River Falls resulted in over \$1000 being raised the first year. Neighboring communities and area groups contributed almost \$2000 in other student aid as well.

The college's initial physical facilities were located in seven rooms of the rented third floor in Thief River Falls' Lincoln High School. The college and high school shared space, including a laboratory, art room, music room, lockers and common cafeteria. Because of the limited physical facilities, the first registration resulted in frequent disappointments concerning closed classes. Men outnumbered women in the entering class by almost two to one.

By the fall quarter of 1966, the curriculum expanded to include sophomore classes. These offerings included business, economics, foreign language, general accounting, psychology, public health, social and physical science, and speech. As the curriculum expanded, so did the student body, leading the Thief River Falls City Council to offer the use of the old city public library building that had just been vacated after the construction of a new public library facility. Starting in the fall of 1966, the college library occupied the upper floor of the old

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building and a student center was located in the basement, which also housed the college bookstore and the counselor's office.

The college held its first commencement exercises in June 1967. Sixty-four students received degrees and diplomas. The ceremony was held in the Lincoln High School auditorium. This first class would be the only members of the college to receive their diploma from Thief River Falls State Junior College. Three weeks later, on July 1, 1967, the school officially became Northland State Junior College.

### [Northland State Junior College](#)

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Plans for a permanent home for Northland State Junior College began to take form during the fall of 1967. The Minnesota legislature appropriated money, and the State Junior College Board allocated \$350,000 for the construction of classroom buildings. The 40-acre site was deliberately sited west of the Thief River Falls Area Vocational School, which was then under construction. The idea propounded by educators and the local community was to maximize cooperation between these two educational institutions, cooperation that would be formally recognized later when the two institutions merged.

The permanent structure was intended to accommodate 400 students by 1969, with plans drawn to accommodate future expansion. The plans for the building also included provisions for an activity building, with an auditorium, gymnasium and lockers, which would be constructed during the 1969-1970 school year at an additional cost of \$350,000. Additional teaching facilities were planned for 1973. This would bring the building's capacity to 800

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students, as enrollment grew. The school did not provide housing, however. The rationale was that housing should be left to private individuals or corporations.

Though the first phase of the construction of a permanent facility had been completed in 1969, the second phase would not begin until the fall of 1970, when \$682,000 was allotted for Northland's expansion. Funding was appropriated for construction of an activities building, a fine arts building, landscaping, and resurfacing roads and parking areas.

The completion of the second phase was marked as dedication day (September 17, 1971). It was noted in the *Thief River Falls Times* at the time that Northland's educational philosophy was based on the concept that "higher education should be made available to all persons who can profit from instruction." The open door policy of the college was reiterated in the college's mission:

In accordance with the state law and the expression of the state junior college board, the college aims to provide educational opportunity for students: (1) who seek to transfer to four-year colleges and universities; (2) who seek occupational and semi-professional training designed to prepare students for employment; (3) who seek general education for cultural enrichment and self-improvement; (4) who seek continuing adult education through the community service programs.

With the completion of the new building, a new name seemed inevitable, and in August 1973, Northland State Junior College became Northland Community College, as a result of the Jerome Hughes Bill in the state legislature. The name change stressed the college's

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commitment to the community and its desire to serve the area's citizens, a commitment it demonstrated with its new Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program in the spring of 1976.

## [Northland Community College](#)

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Northland Community College's ADN program was designed as an associate degree for the registered nursing program, in conjunction with the practical nursing degree programs at the University of North Dakota, Thief River Falls AVTI, East Grand Forks AVTI, Crookston Technical College, and Bemidji AVTI. Students graduating from those respective practical nursing programs would continue thereafter at Northland to pursue their ADN degree.

The road was not always smooth for Northland Community College, however, as faculty walked out on strike in the spring of 1979, joining their colleagues statewide. The reasons for the disagreement stemmed from the breakdown in contract negotiations, with state officials refusing to submit the agreement to arbitration. In the end, Community College Chancellor Phillip Helland sympathized with faculty: "I believe that there was no alternative for the faculty when the chips were down in this case. I think that the settlement is better than could have been achieved without the strike or by arbitration, and that the system can survive and be stronger because of it."

Indeed, Northland Community College continued to thrive, and in 1987, the Minnesota legislature appropriated \$3 million for further facilities expansion. Over the next two years, the funding was increased to \$3.7 million for remodeling and expansion. The library was doubled in size, new administrative offices were built, a new bookstore was added, and a new student services area was constructed along with three classrooms.

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At the time of the 1988-1989 expansion, the library had also dramatically changed in other ways as well. Gone was the traditional card catalog, now obsolete, replaced by a computerized database. PALS (Program for Automated Library Service) as the database became known, had been developed by the Minnesota State University System. Students and faculty could now access not only Northland library materials but also the resources of 48 other libraries in Minnesota and North Dakota, including the other community colleges, universities, and state agency libraries.

Technology did not stop at the library door, however. During winter quarter of the following year, an Interactive Television (ITV) system was added to the Northland facilities. This ITV system acted as the connecting link to two separate interactive television systems--the Northwest Education Link and the Minnesota Moose Country Telecommunications System. The system allowed a Northland instructor to offer a course to up to three of the five remote sites simultaneously, as well as serving on-campus students. Sites were located in Badger, Greenbush, Middle River, Karlstad, and Lancaster. This system was also shared by fiber optic routing with Northland's neighbors at the technical college just across the commons.

## Student Life

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Student Life was important to the college from its inception. One of the first student life activities was the student newspaper, which debuted in January 1966. This news publication began under the unusual title of ***Mourning Star***. The paper's logo was that of a weeping five-pointed star. This melancholy title was quickly changed to the present name of ***Northern Light*** with volume 1, number 2.

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Students would have appreciated efforts to keep education affordable. Following the Minnesota tradition of keeping costs as low as possible, tuition and fees were nominal, such as outlined in the 1967-1968 catalog, with residents paying only \$5.00 per credit hour, while non-residents paid \$8.00. Textbooks and supplies were estimated at approximately \$30.00 per quarter. Fees were also reasonable, ranging from no fee for five credits or fewer to only \$10.00 for nine credits or more. Thus, the total student costs per quarter for a 15-credit load was only \$115 for residents, \$160 for non-residents.

In addition to participating on athletic teams, students were able to take advantage of numerous clubs and other activities on campus. Students hosted a television show, an offshoot of the Northland Radio Club's earlier radio show. The 25-minute weekly radio show included interviews, news, music, and school events reporting. The presentation was taped at radio station KTRF and titled "Northland On the Air." The television show contained the same material and format as the radio presentation and was simultaneously telecast on Channel 3, cable TV. Students were also able to join the honor society, Phi Theta Kappa, beginning in the spring of 1969. This academic honorary required a 3.75 grade point average for student eligibility. The arts were not neglected either, with the college's first art show being offered to the public in May 1968 at the Soo Line Depot in Thief River Falls.

Multicultural activities also began emerging, beginning with Indian Awareness Week during the 1972-1973 academic year. This effort at cultural sensitivity was the beginning of a tradition of honoring ethnic diversity that has been expanded to include African Americans, Women, and Hispanics, among other groups. Multicultural retention became an increasing part

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of the Northland concept with the advent of Indian Student Services in 1986. In a demonstration of early cooperation, the college newspaper, *Northern Light*, reported on September 26, 1986, that "both Northland Community College and Thief River Falls AVTI will unite efforts...to organize an active new Indian Student Organization. The club will be responsible for the promotion of cultural awareness on the NCC and TRF AVTI campuses." Native American students not only had the opportunity to attend Northland in Thief River Falls, but also to enroll in classes as part of an outreach program located on the Red Lake Reservation.

Students' academic needs outside of the classroom were also important considerations, leading to the establishment of a study skills center in 1990-91, developed by utilizing an existing room refurbished with generic materials. A student tutorial system was designed in conjunction with financial aids and work-study assistance. Student tutors, supervised by Dian Johnson, worked one-on-one with fellow students. Several faculty members also volunteered to assist students. The result was a non-threatening and easily accessible resource through which students could teach other students. All of this was done at a time of falling budgets and rising enrollments.

One aspect of student life that plagued early students was a lack of on-campus student housing. Rental space, then as now, was at a premium. Northland students were often self-supporting and their budgets quite slender, much like today's students. An attempt was made to develop student housing in 1978 in the form of "Oakland Hall Dormitory," a former nursing

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home in the Oakland Park area, across town. This attempt was a joint venture between the Thief River Falls Area Vocational Technical Institute and Northland Community College.

Though Northland did not formally operate the facility, Oakland Hall served as housing for not only Northland students, but also their peers at the nearby Area Vocational Technical Institute. The conversion from a nursing home was made possible with funds from several sources, including the Hartz Foundation. The building was renovated with new plumbing and new electrical facilities, with a capacity of 54 students. Double and single rooms were located on two floors--women on the first floor and men on the second. The arrangement proved to be only a temporary one, however. The building's operating cost and remote location was not convenient for the college, so it was abandoned.

## [Accreditation](#)

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The college began its accreditation process with a May 1966 visit by an evaluation team from the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (NCA) for the purposes of accreditation. Examination of the facilities, interviews with staff, students and faculty were made.

It was also during this time that Northland received full transfer recognition, an important step in its bid to be recognized as an educational leader in northwestern Minnesota. Members of NCA's Committee on Institutional Relationships visited the campus in December 1967. The committee members evaluated Northland in course content, academic rigor, and the quality of instruction. With transfer recognition granted, Northland's final step toward full

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accreditation was to gain regional accreditation from the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges.

By April 1970, Northland had cleared the first hurdle toward full NCA accreditation. This was in the form of correspondence status bestowed. The self-study process was completed in the winter of 1975, and the visitation team met during the spring of 1976. The result of their visit was final accreditation in the summer of 1976. The school had come a long way from its humble beginnings in a local high school, mirroring what was happening just fifty miles down the road in East Grand Forks.

## **East Grand Forks Area Vocational Technical Institute**

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### **Beginnings**

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In 1969, the East Grand Forks School Board took its first step towards offering vocational education when it opened the Red River Valley High School Cooperative Center in a remodeled bowling facility (Kinzler, 2002). Shortly thereafter, in 1971, members of the school board requested that their school district be designated as a vocational site, in order to offer secondary and post-secondary education. The request was granted, and the school became the 33rd vocational site in the state of Minnesota (Kinzler, 2002).

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## Growth

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### Red River Valley High School Cooperative Center: 1969-1971

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In recognition of the need to provide education and training to students who were not planning to attend college, the East Grand Forks Public School Board decided to create a vocational center near the high school site. District employee Russ Beier was chosen to oversee the development of vocational classes for area high school students at a school that became known as the Red River Valley High School Cooperative Center. Beier, who might accurately be referred to as the “father of vocational education” in East Grand Forks and for whom a prestigious scholarship at the school is now named, was charged with developing a program that would serve not only public and parochial high school students in East Grand Forks, but also students in the nearby towns of Alvarado, Oslo, and Fisher (Soule, n.d., p. 355). In 1970, Alvarado withdrew from the cooperative, but the former bowling center continued to be filled to capacity, as high school graduates began entering in 1971.

### Area Vocational Technical Institute (AVTI): 1971-1987

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With its new designation as an area vocational technical institute district, the East Grand Forks school board had to find a space to house its post-secondary students, and decision was made to offer post-secondary programs in welding, business and office, nurse assistant, and auto mechanics in the same building with secondary students and at other rented locations around the city (Kinzler, 2002; Soule, n.d.). Although the new students attended classes at the Red River Valley Cooperative Center, their diplomas and certificates were issued under the

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name of the post-secondary institution: Area Vocational Technical Institute (Northwest Technical College, n.d.). This institute continued in rented quarters until January 22, 1973, when faculty, staff, and students moved into their new building, an 80,000 square foot facility situated on over 100 acres, less than a mile down the road (*Welcome to the East Grand Forks Technical College: 1991*).

The philosophy of the Area Vocational Technical Institute was included in its 1978-79 catalog. It was the earliest recorded form of a “mission statement.” Because of its significance, it is reprinted here in full:

The East Grand Forks Area Vocational-Technical Institute is a public educational institution dedicated to the philosophy of providing a vocational-technical education with a curricula designed to meet the educational needs of post high school, special needs, and adult students. Students attain a level of competency commensurate with their needs. The Institute supports the philosophy that there is dignity in work and value in individual growth and learning. (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] General Catalog: 1978-79, p. 2*)

Certainly Charles Richards, of Columbia University, would have applauded this mission statement, attesting as it did to the value of manual labor in much the same terms as he did in his letter to President Franklin Roosevelt, noted earlier.

In addition to the philosophy, the catalog also listed six objectives for students, including preparation for work, advanced training for those currently employed, opportunities to

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broaden their cultural background, and preparation for life as “participating and contributing members of society” (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] General Catalog: 1978-79, p. 2*).

Students in the mid 1970s could choose from over 25 programs (see [Appendix B](#) for a representative list), and they also had access to a part time psychologist and a social worker at the school. The students’ physical well being was equally important, and the school sponsored intramural teams as well as a basketball team that played in the city league and traveled to play teams at other vocational-technical institutes (*Welcome to the East Grand Forks Technical College: 1991*). Students could take part in a number of other extra-curricular activities, including the Student Senate, a school newspaper and yearbook, a club for veterans, and convocations, which were educational and cultural programs initiated by students (*Landings 1978: AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Yearbook*).

The institute’s support for student activities is evidenced by the inclusion of a statement in its 1976-1977 student handbook: “It is the philosophy of the Institute that student activities are an important part of a total education” (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Student Handbook: 1976-77, p. 13*). Activities depicted in the 1978 year book included Christmas parties (with students, faculty, and staff pictured receiving gifts), Halloween costume and pumpkin decorating contests, and students lined up to help sandbag along the Red River as it threatened to flood once again (*Landings 1978: AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Yearbook*).

During the flood fight in 1979, the AVTI served as the headquarters for firefighters, National Guard troops, and other emergency management officials. Classes were cancelled while students, faculty, and staff helped to fill sandbags and build dikes. In a strange twist of fate, the

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school would serve much the same purpose in 1997, when the entire communities of East Grand Forks and Grand Forks, North Dakota were evacuated due to flooding.

When students graduated from AVTI, they could look forward with confidence to a job in the field in which they had trained. An abbreviated form of a placement report from 1978 appears in [Appendix C](#), showing high rates of placement. If a student wanted to transfer to another vocational institution or to a four-year college, there were already procedures outlined for the process as early as 1978, with the caveat that students could not assume the receiving institution, particularly if it were a college or university, would accept the clock-hour courses in place of credit-based courses (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] General Catalog: 1978-79*).

The faculty selected to teach at the college were all licensed instructors whose qualifications satisfied the Minnesota State Board of Education. When the school started, there were only four faculty members: Dick Bonlie in Welding , Maxine Thompson in Business, and Bill Cummings and Pearl Fischer in Nurse Assisting, but by 1991 that number had grown to 45 full time faculty and 20 part time faculty (*Welcome to the East Grand Forks Technical College: 1991*). By 2003, just before the college joined with partners in Thief River Falls, there were over 60 full time faculty and more than 20 part time faculty members (*Northwest Technical College 2002-2003 catalog*) on the East Grand Forks campus.

It should be noted that many faculty and staff members served the institution for a number of years. Anyone reviewing faculty photographs from the 1978 yearbook would notice that of the 42 full time faculty members pictured in the yearbook, 16 of them were still

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teaching at the institution 25 years later. Many administrators and staff members also had long tenures at the college. For example, the assistant librarian had been with the institution for over 20 years, while the bookstore manager and the vice president's administrative assistant have both been with the college for almost 30 years. Russ Beier, the institution's first director, served from 1971 to 1983 and was succeeded upon his death by Thomas Seymour, who served for three months before being replaced by an interim director, Judith Neppel, a surgical technician instructor at the campus, while a permanent replacement was sought (Northwest Technical College, n.d.). In 1984, Gerald Folstrom became the director and served until 1992 as director. He continued as campus dean from 1992 to 1998. Folstrom would be the last director of the school as a vocational institute. The person selected as his replacement would not be the director of a vocational institute, but the president of a college.

At this point, however, the institution was still a vocational school and closely tied to area businesses and industries. This connection could be seen in the way in which students were evaluated. Faculty members used a numerical scale to measure students' progress in their skill areas and an alphabetical scale for students' interpersonal development. The skills portion was evaluated based on a system ranging from "6" ("Performs task/competency with exceptional ability") to "1" ("Cannot perform task/competency satisfactorily") (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Student Handbook: 1976-77*). The interpersonal skills evaluated included dependability, cooperation, leadership, and adaptability. Students received ratings of "O" for Outstanding, "S" for Satisfactory, or "N" for Needs Improvement. The letter-grade

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system was not used at the institution until it adopted a credit-based system in 1989, at which time the interpersonal ratings were discontinued (Kinzler, 2002).

The competency and interpersonal skills ratings became part of the student's permanent record, which had to be signed by the student during a conference. This record was forwarded to future employers much like a transcript (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Student Handbook: 1976-77*). Attendance was also documented in the record. Evaluations were conducted every four weeks, and if a student received consistently low scores in either competency or interpersonal skills, she or he would be asked to meet with the instructor, as well as with the Student Services Coordinator, to discuss the student's future at the institution (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] General Catalog: 1978-79*).

The AVTI was governed by the six-member local school board that reported to the Minnesota State Department of Education, the agency that also licensed all of the instructors at the school (Northwest Technical College, n.d.). Between 1971 and 1978, the school did not charge tuition to Minnesota residents aged 18-21, although students were expected to pay for books, uniforms, and supplies (Kinzler, 2002). If a resident over age 21 wanted to attend the school, he or she paid \$2 per instructional day, and non-residents paid \$5. All fees were payable monthly (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Student Handbook: 1976-77*). Senior citizens who were 62 or older were encouraged to attend classes free if there was space available (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Student Handbook: 1976-77*).

Programs were designed around clock hours, rather than credits, and students attended school Monday through Friday for six hours daily in their chosen program. This system bore

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some striking similarities to practice of apprenticeship, with students studying for a period of time each day under a master. In addition, Bill Cummings, one of the original instructors at the school, noted in a personal interview that instructors were also expected to teach the basic skills a student would need in reading, writing, and math to be successful in the profession, much like the guild masters in colonial times.

A student interested in a clerical certificate spent 180 days in the program, while a student in home furnishing sales spent 420 hours, 60 of which were spent in an internship (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] student handbook: 1976-77*). Most programs had some form of internship requirement.

The programs were successful, as was evident shortly after the school moved to its present location. By 1974, only one year after its dedication, the building was already over its capacity of 175 students, as enrollment jumped to 211 students (*Welcome to the East Grand Forks Technical College: 1991*). The original plans called for a “Phase 1” site to be built, with Phase 2 to be considered as enrollment dictated. Scarcely was the paint dry on the sign in the front of the \$2.85 million building when faculty and administrators went back to the school board to request Phase 2 (*Welcome to the East Grand Forks Technical College: 1991*).

The Phase 2 addition proposed by Director Russ Beier would add over 17,000 square feet to the building, at an estimated cost of \$500,000 (*Welcome to the East Grand Forks Technical College: 1991*). The addition would house classrooms, laboratories, an expanded cafeteria, and a lounge. Beier and his administrative team made their case to the school board and the state, and in 1976, the addition was completed (Kinzler, 2002). In 1984, the school was

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enlarged again. The addition, dedicated to Russ Beier, included 32,000 square feet, added at a cost of \$3.6 million (*Welcome to the East Grand Forks Technical College: 1991*). The college now had a mechanic shop, a library, and a commons area for students, with a separate truck-driving multi-purpose building (Kinzler, 2002). Enrollment continued to climb, reaching 519 by 1986, growing to 855 by 1990, (*Welcome to the East Grand Forks Technical College: 1991*) and exceeding 1400 in 2003.

The cost of adding space to existing technical institutes across the state may have been one of the reasons the legislature began to look at charging tuition. Beginning in 1978, all Minnesota and North Dakota residents under 62 would have to pay \$40 per month for classes (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Student Handbook: 1976-77*). Non-resident students would pay \$100 per month. The newly created financial aid office began serving students who were looking for ways to fund their education. One popular scholarship was the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board's scholarship, which would pay up to 75% of a student's tuition (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] General Catalog: 1978-79*).

The institution remained under the control of the local school board, but in 1983, the state established the State Board of Vocational Technical Institutes to oversee the technical institutes in the state, shifting the responsibility from the Minnesota State Department of Education (Kinzler, 2002). One of the state board's first tasks was to study how student services and administrative efficiency could be improved with mergers between nearby vocational schools (Kinzler, 2002). Although the initial study focused on four schools in the southwestern portion of the state, the results forced changes throughout the state of Minnesota. Other

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vocational institutes were required to merge if they fell into certain enrollment and geographic proximity categories (Kinzler, 2002; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995).

The state board completed its study and issued its report in 1985. Members of the state legislature moved to create vocational technical districts with distinct governing boards, which would have authority over operations, funding, construction, and contract negotiations with bargaining units. This effectively ended any local control over technical colleges by school boards (Kinzler, 2002; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995), and the Area Vocational Technical Institute in East Grand Forks became East Grand Forks Technical Institute.

#### [East Grand Forks Technical Institute: 1987-1989](#)

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The history of East Grand Forks Technical Institute is a brief one, as the institute existed for only two years before its name was changed again by legislation on July 1, 1989. While only one word would be changed in the name, it was a significant one: from “institute” to “college.”

#### [East Grand Forks Technical College: 1989-1992](#)

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The fall of 1989 was just another school year for many students in Minnesota, but students, faculty, and community members driving down Highway 220 in East Grand Forks noticed a change in the sign out front. In August, the school officially became East Grand Forks Technical College. Legislation to change the name was intended to more accurately reflect the mission and quality of the programs offered at technical institutes statewide (Kinzler, 2002). The name of the state board was changed to the State Board of Technical Colleges, and the director of the board became the “chancellor” (Kinzler, 2002). A more immediate change for

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faculty, students, and administrators, however, was the change from clock-hour delivery to credit-based delivery, as the college adopted the quarter system (Kinzler, 2002). Although the credit rates for 1989 were not available, the rates charged during the 1992-1994 school years were as follows: \$35.95 per credit for Minnesota residents, \$44.95 per credit for students claiming tuition reciprocity, and \$71.90 for non-resident students (*Northwest Technical College: 1992-1994 catalog*).

Students, faculty, and staff would all be affected by the next sweeping change on the horizon, when the state legislature moved to replace the existing vocational technical districts in 1991 with the current governing body, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU). This entity was charged with the monumental task of integrating three separate systems: state universities outside of the University of Minnesota system, community colleges, and technical colleges. The legislature allotted four years for the completion of the task (Kinzler, 2002). However, East Grand Forks Technical College employees were more focused on a much more immediate task, a merger with five other campuses spread throughout western Minnesota.

### [Northwest Technical College: 1992-2003](#)

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After its experience in negotiating transfer and remote course-offering agreements with the University of Minnesota—Crookston and Thief River Falls Technical College, the school was prepared to embark on a more ambitious partnership with technical colleges in Bemidji, Detroit Lakes, Moorhead, Thief River Falls, and Wadena, creating Northwest Technical College. The

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“Six Pack,” as the college came to be known, would be headed by its new president, Dr. Ray Cross, in 1992.

While negotiations continued, the school building continued to grow, and health and science laboratories were added in 1992 (Kinzler, 2002). These additions would accommodate more students and more programs, particularly health programs, which required larger laboratory facilities. In 1983, students could choose from 29 programs in four major areas (Agriculture, Business, Health, and Trades), but by 1992, the number of programs had grown to 47, and the number of major areas had grown to include Electronics Technology, Management, Marketing, and Personal Services. As noted earlier, the health area in particular grew significantly, and students could pursue careers in over 20 fields in 1992 (*Northwest Technical College: 1992-1994 catalog*) compared to only 10 in 1978 (*AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] General Catalog: 1978-79*). A summary of some of the programs offered during the 2002-2003 academic year appears in [Appendix D](#). Another change to the building involved the addition of outlet strips and small, grey boxes in various classrooms throughout the building, and the appearance of desktop computers in two large classrooms in the building. The school was wired for network access, and new students at the East Grand Forks campus were soon required to lease laptop computers from the school, at a cost of \$500 per semester. (*Northwest Technical College: 1992-1994 catalog*). The costs of attending the school had risen considerably

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from the \$2 per day in 1978, to a rate of \$85 per credit hour for residents in 2002 (*Northwest Technical College catalog 2002-2003*).<sup>3</sup>

The laptop requirement would threaten the newly-formed alliance between the six campuses of Northwest Technical College, as faculty and administrators at the remaining campuses chose not to incorporate the technology to the same extent as the East Grand Forks campus. Nevertheless, in 1994, the college adopted a laptop computer policy, with varying technology requirements for different campuses (Kinzler, 2002). The majority of students on the East Grand Forks campus faced an additional expense not shared by their counterparts in the rest of the “Six Pack.” On the remaining five campuses, desktop computer laboratories were added to accommodate technology needs, although students were not required to use computers to complete assignments in the majority of their classes. Faculty at all campuses had access to laptops or desktop computers as they chose.

Although the laptop policy was not the sole cause, concerns about how technology would be used on each campus contributed to the change from the “Six Pack” to the “Five Pack” in 1995. On June 30, 1995, the Thief River Falls campus formally withdrew from Northwest Technical College to partner with Northland Community College, also located in Thief River Falls. The combined institutions in Thief River Falls adopted the name of Northland Community and Technical College (Kinzler, 2002). During the same week, a massive merger

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<sup>3</sup> After completing the calculations, the reader will see the scope of this increase. Students attending the school full time in 1978 paid \$360 for a nine month, 180 day course. Students attending full time (assuming a 15-credit load) in 2002 would pay \$2550 for nine months of instruction.

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took place as the legislature acted on the recommendations from MnSCU, as noted earlier. On July 1, 1995, all public higher education institutions in Minnesota that were not part of the University of Minnesota system became members of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU) (Kinzler, 2002; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995). At present, there are 36 colleges in MnSCU, located on 53 campuses (Kinzler, 2002).

Northwest Technical College was now governed by a 15-member MnSCU board of trustees, appointed by the governor (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, n.d.). One trustee was selected from each of Minnesota's eight legislative districts; four trustees were selected at large, and one student trustee was selected from a community college, a technical college, and a state university. Student representatives served two-year terms while the remaining trustees served six-year terms. The board was charged with selecting a chancellor for the MnSCU system and had oversight in the areas of system planning, academic programs, fiscal management, personnel, admissions requirements, tuition and fees, and policies and procedures (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Systems, n.d.).

## Diversity

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Northwest Technical College students who might have served as representatives to the board would have come from a relatively diverse campus. The student population in East Grand Forks was representative of students across Minnesota. Statistics compiled by the MnSCU office for the year 2000 are illustrative. During this time period, Minnesota was less diverse than the nation as a whole, with non-Caucasians in 2000 accounting for less than 11% of the state's population. Although minority representation in the state had increased from the 7%

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figure in 1990, it still lagged behind national levels (Minnesota State College and Universities System, 2002). The fastest growing minority group in Minnesota was the Hispanic population, reflecting national trends (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 2002).

At Northwest Technical College, minorities were represented at greater levels in the college than they were generally in northwestern Minnesota. A 1994 study conducted by Northwest Technical College determined that the following minority groups were represented at the college: Black/Non-Hispanic, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic. The statistical representation appears in [Appendix E](#), but it is worth noting here that Hispanic students were represented in the college at twice the rate they were in the general population, and American Indians composed the highest percentage of all minority groups, representing 5% of the total enrollment (*Northwest Technical College Minority Student Services Plan Narrative*, 1994). It is also worth noting that the East Grand Forks campus had the largest number of minority students enrolled, although it was not the largest campus at the time of the study.

### [Affordability and Accreditation](#)

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One statistic of particular interest was the ability of students to pay for their higher education. The state of Minnesota went from sixth nation-wide on overall affordability in 2000 to third in 2002 (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 2002). The affordability was surely one of the reasons the college grew, and in East Grand Forks, the college once again expanded, adding two classrooms, along with additional faculty office space in 1995, which brought the building to its present size, at least until the 2008-2009 construction project is complete (Kinzler, 2002). Another landmark for the school came in August 1995, when the five [Table of Contents](#)

campuses of Northwest Technical College received their first accreditation, for five years, from the Higher Learning Commission's North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, which reaccredited the institution for 10 years in 2000 (Kinzler, 2002).

### [Chancellor's Study on Occupational and Technical Education](#)

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In August 2001, Northwest Technical College participated in a state-wide study commissioned by the Chancellor's office at MnSCU to review concerns that had been expressed within the system, from legislators, and from community members about the quality of what was now referred to as occupational and technical education (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 2002). One area of concern that the researchers investigated was the replacement of clock-hour instruction with credit-based instruction. Another concern was the integration of general education courses into technical college curriculums and the potential conflict over how those courses might transfer within the MnSCU system. This concern represented an ongoing issue with vocational education, a concern raised by critics of Benjamin Franklin's "English School," by Robert Hutchins and others in the 1940s, and most recently by those responding to the NAVE report in 2003.

In addressing these concerns, the Chancellor's office collected internal, interview, and survey data from within the MnSCU system, as well as seeking similar data from other state systems. The researchers identified stakeholders within the state: students, faculty, administrators, state legislators, members of the Office of the Chancellor's staff, and community members.

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Researchers concluded that students at technical colleges rated their educational experience higher than students at other colleges, but the researchers also noted strong divisions between community college and technical college faculty about the academic rigor of general education courses offered at technical colleges. These same reservations would later surface in merger talks between Northland Community and Technical College in Thief River Falls and Northwest Technical College, as faculty at the Thief River Falls campus were initially reluctant to consider a proposed associate's degree program in East Grand Forks, advocating instead for the continuation of separate academic standards committees and faculty senate organizations on the two campuses. (The associate's degree program in liberal arts was later approved for the East Grand Forks campus, and college-wide academic standards and governance committees became the norm.)

The researchers in the MnSCU study found that these reservations were tied to transfer issues. The study revealed that faculty linked transferability of a course to quality of a course: "If a course does not transfer, the instructor believed that the other institution viewed it as not good enough, rather than just different from their requirements" (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 2002). This perception of inferiority on the part of technical colleges, argued against so strongly by John Dewey (see earlier discussion) was noted by researchers, who said faculty at the technical colleges believed they were "less valued by the Office of the Chancellor, the legislature, and their system colleagues than the faculties of the community colleges and state universities" (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 2002).

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Other findings of the study which impacted Northwest Technical College included administrative, legislative, and industry concerns. Administrators noted that the increased number of required general education courses would either lengthen the time required to complete technical programs or reduce the technical content of those programs. However, the overall benefits of general education courses for students and employers were widely acknowledged. Legislators believed the technical colleges were not producing graduates quickly enough to satisfy the needs of employers in their districts, echoing the sentiments of business owners from the time of the Industrial Revolution through World War II, as noted earlier. An area of particular concern for legislators was for workers of lower ability, who might not be able to handle the academic rigors of some general education or highly technical courses, but nonetheless needed workforce training. This issue would resonate with many faculty in the trades and technical divisions at Northwest Technical College and their counterparts at the Thief River Falls Technical College.

The views of employers were of particular interest to researchers. Like legislators, employers wanted the colleges to design programs that could be adapted to train a larger number of workers in less time. The employers' assessments of the graduates, however, were significantly more negative than the assessments of any other participants in the study. Since these were the people who hired occupational and technical education graduates, their opinion in this area could be considered significant, so it is included here in full from the MnSCU (2002) report:

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The employers who participated in interviews were generally less positive than students, faculty, and administrators within the system about the quality of graduates, although much of their concern had to do with youth attitudes and societal changes, and several employers expressed their belief that the quality of graduates had improved in recent years. Many employers spoke of attitudes they saw in young high school graduates. It was felt that students arrived at college with poor academic skills, and colleges were constantly playing catch-up. The college was not blamed for this situation, rather society in general. The new state standards for high school graduates seemed to be improving the technical college graduates' academic skills.

Employers did give kudos to MnSCU in one area: the customized training services offered by the technical colleges. Like the Mechanics' Institutes inspired by Benjamin Franklin, the Center for Outreach and Innovation's services were highly valued by employers. Researchers in the MnSCU study noted that employers who had contracted with technical colleges for the training were "extremely satisfied with the process" (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 2002). It is worth noting that employees reported significant satisfaction as well: "Employers reported that not only were trainees pleased with this situation, they were asking to have 'graduation' exercises, with family and community members present, on the premises" (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 2002).

### **Goodbye to the Five Pack**

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While MnSCU researchers were gathering their data, the faculty and staff members of Northwest Technical College were beginning to discuss concerns amongst themselves about the [Table of Contents](#)

administrative model being used to govern the campuses. Of particular concern was the location of the administrative offices in Perham, Minnesota. The majority of the administrative team, including President Ron Swanson, who had succeeded Dr. Cross, had been concentrated in Perham, a city in which the college had no campus. While the centralization of administrative offices served the administrative team well, faculty and staff on the outlying campuses began to feel isolated from their administrators. A number of other issues related to management styles and decisions made about program closures led the faculty to initiate a vote of no confidence during the Spring Semester 2002. The Chancellor's office then acted to remove Dr. Swanson and begin a study of the existing administrative structure of the college.

The result of the study was a recommendation that the college be split into a series of colleges along geographic boundaries. A one-year period of reorganization took place during the 2002-2003 academic year, during which the five campuses began to develop new relationships with their future partners. The Bemidji campus would continue to be known as Northwest Technical College, but it would be under the direction of the president of Bemidji State University. The three campuses in the southern part of the state, Detroit Lakes, Moorhead, and Wadena, merged with Fergus Falls Community College to form Minnesota State Community and Technical College. The East Grand Forks campus was reunited with its former "Six Pack" partner in Thief River Falls, as Northland Community and Technical College.

The turmoil surrounding the dismissal of Dr. Swanson and the reorganization of the college did not have a negative effect on enrollment, however. The East Grand Forks campus opened its doors at the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year to its largest class ever, with

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over 1400 students enrolled, representing a 14% growth in enrollment over the previous year. While administrative and faculty issues would need to be addressed, in particular the desire of the East Grand Forks campus to offer its own associate's degree in liberal arts, faculty and staff at both campuses appeared eager to begin those discussions, with a number committees being formed to review specific areas of concern. The spirit of cooperation was perhaps best embodied in the slogan chosen by a bi-partisan committee for new college's website: "Building futures...together." They would be building on the efforts already underway in Thief River Falls between two co-located institutions.

## **Northland Community and Technical College—version 1.0**

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### **Beginnings**

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While they may not have realized it at the time, the two institutions sharing space in Thief River Falls along Highway One began moving towards a merger in late 1978, when a new food services area and common space was proposed to link the two schools. The total project was estimated at \$2.3 million. Constructing the food services/commons area between the two institutions served the dual purpose of: a) allowing dual use for both the AVTI and NCC, and b) physically linking both the institutions for easier joint projects and crossover utilization.

Though separate educational entities, their futures were about to become even more intertwined. The Chancellor of the Minnesota Community College system, Dr. Phillip Helland, and the State Commissioner of K-12 Education, Howard B. Casmeay, both met in Thief River Falls to discuss the two institutions' futures. With community approval, it was decided that the long

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term financial and educational interests of both institutions would best be served by being physically connected rather than remaining “near neighbors.” This philosophy was put into practice with the construction appropriation designed to accommodate new programs and add space for existing programs, linking the two buildings into one contiguous complex.

The bonds between the two institutions were strengthened further in the winter of 1979, when Northland extended athletic eligibility to technical college students, with the provision that they be full time students in good academic standing, with health insurance coverage. The fee for participation for students at both institutions was only \$25.00 per quarter, well within the budget of most college students at the time.

### The “Clearwater” Concept

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While still separate from its building partner academically, Northland was pursuing consolidation efforts with other colleges in the region by 1983. Along with Fergus Falls Community College and Brainerd Community College, Northland became part of the new “Clearwater” concept, patterned after the Iron Range and Arrowhead Community College.

Under the Clearwater Community College Region concept, the three community colleges would reduce administrative costs by having a single president instead of three. The president would now serve as the chief executive officer on all three campuses. Day-to-day management would be left to a provost and a vice provost.

The three colleges selected to become part of Clearwater were chosen because of their smaller size and relative similarity in enrollment. At that time, Northland had an enrollment of 595, Fergus Falls posted a 597 total, and 594 students were enrolled at Brainerd. Chancellor

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Helland indicated that the almost equal enrollment of the three colleges was an advantage in that "none of the schools is so big that it looks like it's taking over the others." The first president of Clearwater was Alex Easton, followed by Sally Ihne. By the time the two Thief River Falls institutions were combined as Northland Community and Technical College, Dr. Orley Gunderson became the president.

In 1993, the state of Minnesota went even further, directing co-located community and technical colleges to develop plans for integrating their administrative and student services, which led the Thief River Falls campus of Northwest Technical College and neighboring Northland Community College to create a joint task force, becoming one of the earliest MnSCU institutions to do so.

## Growth

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Before officially joining forces as a single college, the two Thief River Falls institutions had to bid farewell to their former partners, Northwest Technical College and the Clearwater Community College Region. On December 29, 1993, the completed consolidation plan was submitted to Chancellor Jay Noreen and the appropriate boards. By the time those boards would be reconstituted as MnSCU, they would approve the merger, establishing Northland Community and Technical College on July 1, 1995, with Dr. Orley Gunderson serving as its first president.

The new institution faced major challenges, including the daunting task of consolidating administrative, faculty and staff portions of the college into a single unit, a task made even more complex because of the various bargaining units involved. Faculty at the technical college

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were represented by United Technical College Educators, while their colleagues in the community college were represented by the Minnesota Community College Faculty Association. Fortunately, the unions themselves saw the benefit in merging, as they joined to become Minnesota State College Faculty.

Along with faculty contracts, program offerings also needed to be merged. Several of the community college's liberal arts programs, such as criminal justice and business administration, were reassigned as technical programs. Individual courses were affected as well, with technical mathematics courses being reassigned as liberal arts courses. All of these changes meant shifts in faculty assignments, and the college worked diligently to insure faculty had the appropriate credentials to teach in their newly created areas, as outlined by the state.

Just two years after merging as a single college, faculty and staff at Northland had an opportunity to demonstrate how well they could work together, when the nearby communities of East Grand Forks, MN, and Grand Forks, ND, were stricken by historic flooding in the spring of 1997. The staff, administration and faculty of NCTC pitched in, on their own time, to help those in much need in the stricken Red River Valley. One specific emergency arose when the East Grand Forks Good Samaritan Nursing Home was flooded out. This left these special needs residents without shelter. The president and employees volunteered to utilize the college as home to the patients of Good Samaritan for as long as necessary. With full cooperation of the students and with many changes necessary to accommodate the nursing home patients, the vast majority of the displaced Good Samaritan patients were cared for in the college for five weeks.

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Faculty, staff, and administrators faced another major change in 1998, when the state mandated curricular change from quarter credit hours to semester credit hours. A great deal of effort was expended to make the necessary alterations and credit weight adjustments to ensure transferability and sustainability of college programs, involving cooperation on all sides. This spirit of cooperation no doubt influenced evaluators from the North Central Association of the Higher Learning Commission, who granted the new institution a full ten-year accreditation in 2000.

The college also began to expand beyond Thief River Falls, beginning in Roseau, during the 2000-2001 academic year. Courses in communication, coordination, leadership, psychology, and supervision were offered in the former Roseau courthouse. Students attending the Roseau campus could pursue an Associate of Arts degree, offered over a four-year cycle. The site drew students from Roseau, as well as the surrounding communities of Badger, Baudette, and others. As enrollment grew, the satellite campus moved from the former courthouse building to the newly constructed City Center in October 2006. This enhanced facility offered an Interactive Television (ITV) system and computer laboratory. An office for a Farm Business Management instructor was also included. By this time, the college had expanded even further, to include one of the technical college's former partners from East Grand Forks, under the Northland banner.

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### Beginnings

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On January 23, 2003, the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System approved the reorganization of Northwest Technical College's five campuses into mergers with other closely located colleges. On July 1, 2003, the combined campuses in Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks began to operate as one college under the direction of Northland's president, Dr. Orley Gunderson, who had once served as an assistant director under Russ Beier during the East Grand Forks AVTI years. The position of Provost was created, and Kent Hanson assumed that role on the East Grand Forks campus. People driving past the campus would once again see a new sign at the entrance to the college, but students entering the building would notice few changes, other than the fact that the campus seemed more crowded than ever, and the parking lot was overflowing with cars.

In response to student demand, the former technical college in East Grand Forks began expanding its liberal arts offerings from the previous general education courses offered to support technical programs. Initially, these courses were available only in the late afternoon and evening hours, but demand eventually expanded liberal arts offerings to morning and early afternoon hours as well, mirroring many of the courses offered to students at the Thief River Falls campus and making ITV courses possible on both campuses.

The combined campuses were able to demonstrate their commitment to the merger and to student success when the Higher Learning Commission returned to Northland in 2005 in

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response to a Request for Change submitted after the 2003 merger. The commission approved Northland's request, setting the stage for its reaccreditation in 2010 as a combined college.

During this time, Northland's leadership shifted from long-time president, Dr. Orley Gunderson, to an interim president, Dr. James Davis, and finally to its current president, Dr. Anne Temte.

Continuing in its tradition of actively recruiting Native Americans, Northland continued to extend educational opportunities by establishing nursing programs on the White Earth Indian Reservation. In 2005, NCTC received a grant to assist underrepresented students in transitioning to health careers. Northland's strategy was multifaceted. Native Americans are among the most under-represented in both the availability of health care to any American minority and numbers of their minority group involved in indigenous health care providers. The Director of Associate Degree nursing, Sue Field, headed the effort at Northland, working cooperatively with the White Earth Tribal and Community College (WETCC) to provide general education courses and physical facilities directly on the reservation. NCTC worked closely with WETCC in providing books, financial aid and enacting the registration program. Courses and training were brought directly to students or as closely as possible on the reservation. The courses themselves were redesigned to include a culturally sensitive nursing curriculum, and students also have the option to complete a significant number of their courses online.

To encourage students to consider the program and to assist them financially, Northland offered the first course (nurse assistant) at no cost. The college also hired a Native American retention specialist and tutors to provide a strong base of support for students. This program,

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sometimes referred to as the Mahnommen site, has been successful, although the school is actively seeking funding to replace the grant that will expire in 2010. Northland is committed to the success of the program and its students.

The success of military veterans returning to school was also a concern for the college, a concern demonstrated by the establishment of Veterans' Centers at both campuses, with funding made possible through a 2006 mandate from the Minnesota state legislature, under the Higher Education Veteran's Programs act. Northland's Veterans' Centers are supported by a regional coordinator as well as by student work-study personnel who are veterans themselves.

Another venue for students, online education, also began to be developed around this time. In 2006, the college received approval from Minnesota Online for its Institutional Change Request to offer online degrees, taking advantage of its burgeoning online course inventory, developed in cooperation with the Distance Minnesota consortium partners. The offerings included all degrees and programs of the combined college. The review team noted the strength of the cross-functional team that assisted in the writing request with no caveats.

The economic impact of Northland's online and on campus presence was the subject of a study done in May 2007 by Wilder Research of St. Paul, MN. The present economies and ultimate futures of both East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls are much intertwined with the college. Using financial data from the 2005-2006 fiscal year, it was revealed that in East Grand Forks, 539 jobs are generated by the college and \$38,492,609 added to this Red River Valley community. The Thief River Falls campus had an estimated impact of 427 jobs and \$30,527,066

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per year on this northwestern Minnesota town. Other results revealed that 62.5% of full-time students and 70.8% of part-time students of East Grand Forks hold jobs in the community. For Thief River Falls students, the totals were even higher: 78.6% of full-time students and 75% of part-time students held jobs in and around Thief River Falls. Full-time students on both campuses worked an average of 23 hours per week, while part-time students worked an average of 28 hours a week. This amounted to an equivalent of 969 full-time workers.

The future, of course, in this age of increasing needs for education is difficult to estimate. Suffice to say, however, that without the college, both small communities in a sparsely populated area of agricultural Minnesota would face devastating impacts at multiple levels, without Northland's continued presence in the region. Nonetheless, the college continues to be optimistic, looking forward to many opportunities to build futures together, with students, employers, and communities.

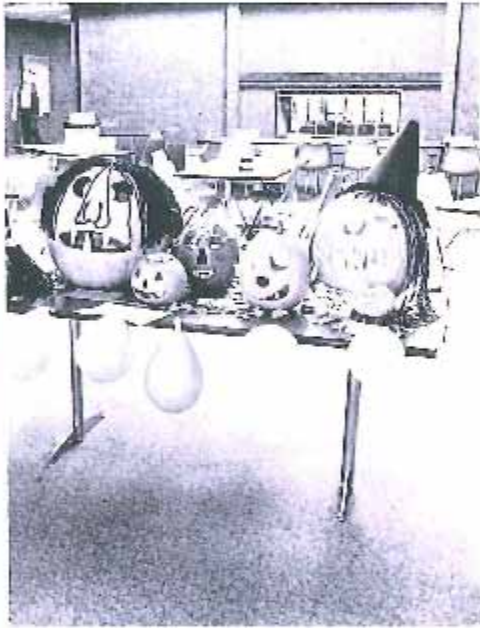
## **Yearbook Memories from East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls**

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Images on the following pages (ten from East Grand Forks and ten from Thief River Falls) are from archived yearbooks available at each campus library. If your curiosity is piqued, feel free to contact a librarian for more details!

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## Activities



Halloween



Winning pumpkin!



"Requirements give true freedom of choice." - Jim Kuttner, Credit & Finance Instructor



"A vocational education seldom hurts a man if he is willing to learn a little something after he graduates." - Craig Lanning, Parts Service Instructor



"Whenever you feel you've reached the point of perfection in anything, take a good look around and start anew." - Craig J. Lewis, Medical Laboratory Assistant Instructor



"Imagination is more important than knowledge." - Ken Mella, Farm Management & Operations Instructor



"Always laugh when you can, it's cheap medicine." - Mary Jo Moonson, Financial Secretary



"Happy are those who dream great dreams and are willing to pay the price to make them come true." - Judy Neppel, Surgical Technician Instructor



"When all else fails - follow directions." - Dee Olson, Financial Aids Secretary



"It's human to make a mistake, but when the error wears out before the pencil, you're in trouble!" - Lloyd A. Petri, Special Needs Coordinator



"Put your brain in gear before you put your mouth in motion." - Mark Rohr, General Construction Instructor



"Life is a gift; success is not." - Karen Bolstad, Business Manager



"There is nothing more frightening than ignorance in action." - Dick Penlie, Welding Instructor



Always do a little more than you're expected to do if you want to get ahead." - Paul Bry, Welding Instructor



Craig Larson



"Mechanics are not born, they are made."  
JOHN J. STEINKE, Truck Mechanics  
Instructor



"Life is what we decide to make of it."  
SUSAN OLSON, Secretary-Non-  
Shorthand Instructor



"One today is worth two  
tomorrow."  
GAREN CARVEAU, Business and  
Office Occupations Coordinator



"Always laugh when you can-it's  
cheap medicine."  
WILLIAM CUMMINGS, Emergency  
Medical Technician Instructor

Credit & Finance II



Health Occupation





Russ Bier--Director



Winner of the Pie Eating Contest



"Love at first bite!"



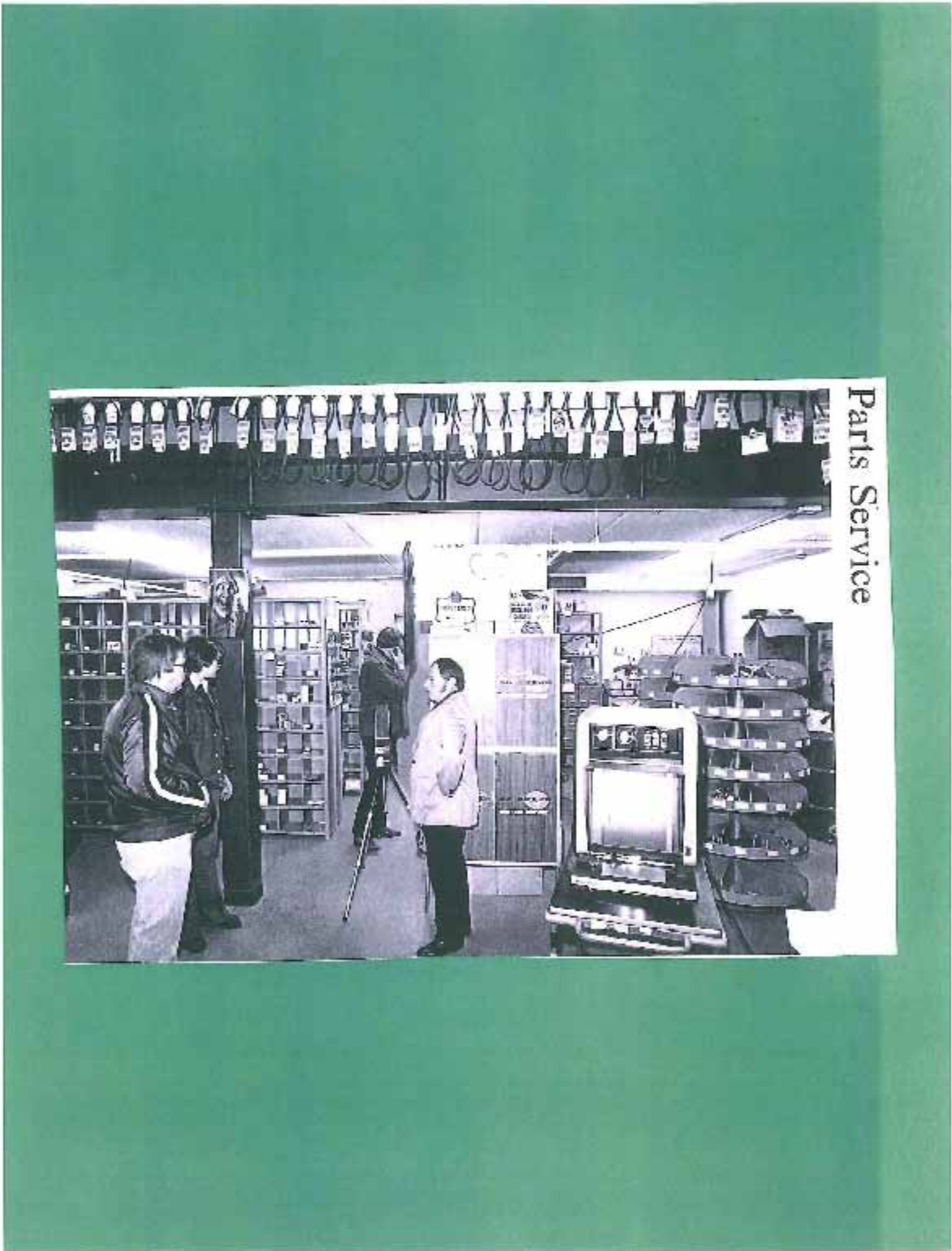


Russ Ecker  
Director



Olcy Gunderson  
Assistant Director





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"For when the one great  
Scorer comes to write  
against you, he me he  
made not that you won  
at last, but how you  
played the game." -  
Granddad Rice - (a) Rao  
Staus, Medical  
Secretary Instructor



"Mechanics are not  
born, they are made."  
- John J. Stehlik,  
Truck Mechanic  
Instructor



"Never put off till  
tomorrow what you can  
do today." - Maxine  
Thompson, Secre-  
tary/Shopboard Instruct-  
or



"One machine can do  
the work of fifty  
ordinary men. No  
machine can do the  
work of one extra-  
ordinary man." -  
Donald Wierina, Farm  
Tractor Instructor



Dale Neppel  
Student Services Coordinator



The AVTI Vets Club was formed to provide a variety of activities and services for the military veterans in the student body. Although not organized until late in the 1979-80 school year, the Vets Club members were active in several areas. Several members attended a Veteran's Awareness workshop at the University of North Dakota. Vets were active in pursuing reciprocity for North Dakota students with visiting legislators. The AVTI Vets also hosted an afternoon informational session on V.A. programs and forms.



## PRESIDENT CHARLES

President Victor Charles enjoys working with students, faculty, and staff, and their role in the college's increasing involvement in the educational and cultural services for the citizens of northwestern Minnesota. Active within his profession, he is President of the Minnesota Junior College Association and is listed in Who's Who in American Education. Within the community he is Co-chairman of the Steering Committee for Total Community Development, President of the Shrine Club, and a member of the Rotary Club. His chief interest, however, is the NSJC students.



LEFT TO RIGHT: President Victor Charles; Mr. Robert Flynn, Thief River Falls, Vice Chairman; Mrs. Joel Olson, Roseton, Member; Dr. A. E. Jacobson, Thief River Falls, Chairman; Mr. Loren Jorgensen, Argyle, Member; Mrs. Glen Tass, Trail, Member; Mrs. Mille Larson, Oklee, Secretary; Dr. Crin Reich, Thief River Falls, Member.

Advisory Committee members at monthly meetings with the President, advise the college as to ways it can be responsive to the needs of the area. Appointed by the State Junior College Board, the members have been active in the junior college movement for several years.

The Entertainment Team traveled to many cities and towns during the 69-70 school year.

Variety was the high light of each performance. The acts included an acrobat, dance duo and vocal ensembles.

The musical directors were Mr. Solheim and Mr. Solsten. Entertainment Team advisor was Mrs. Burchill.



## ENTERTAINMENT



E  
A  
M





Cindy Alby, Bernard Miska, Janell Ness, Kay Dell Hemming.

## "AIRE OF NORTHLAND"

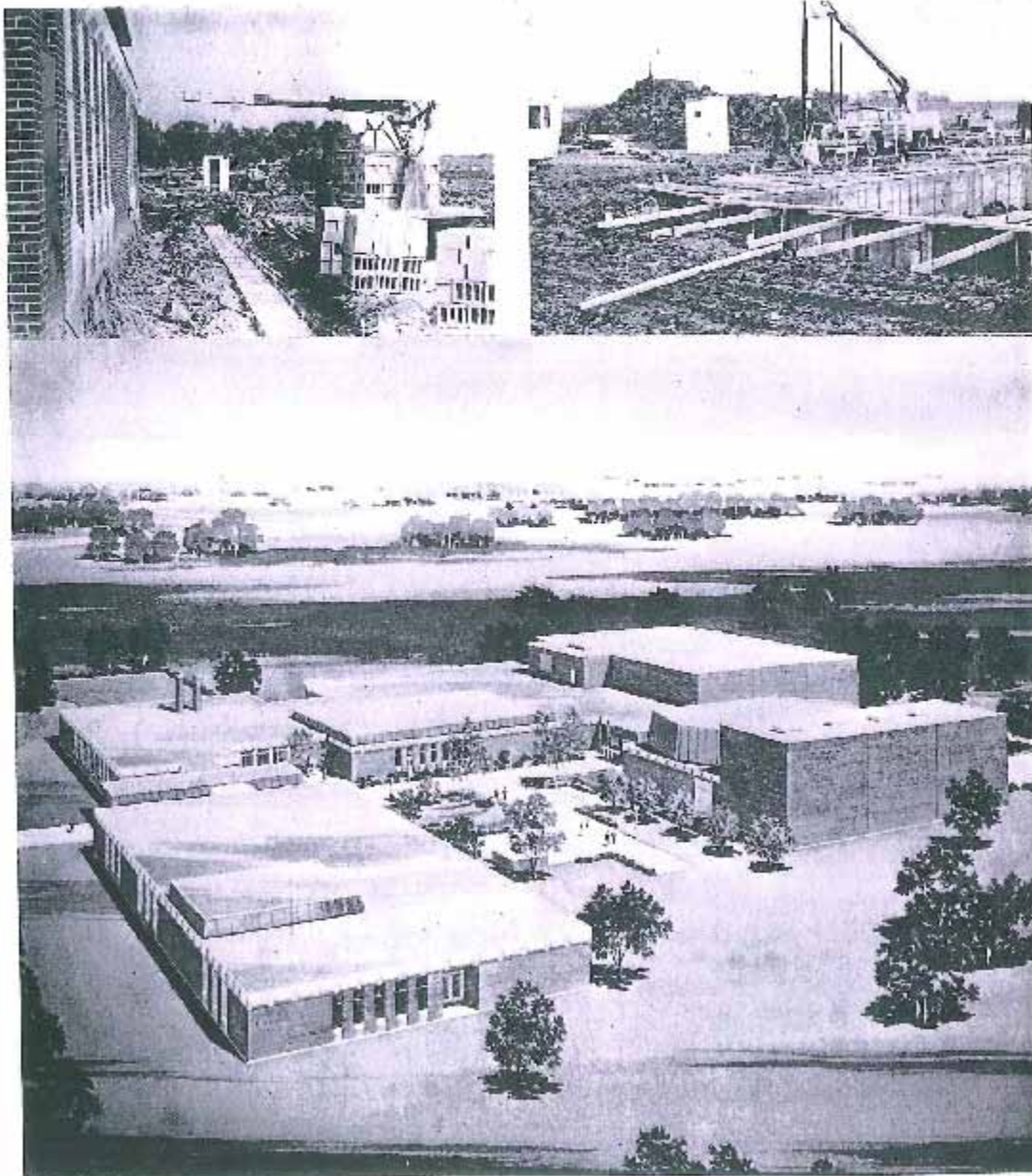


Northland's Radio-TV Club is under the direction of Mrs. Madelyn Burchill. Every Thursday evening the local radio station, KTRF, and television station, Cable 3, dedicates 25 minutes of its broadcast time to the college and its various activities. Bernard Miska is the announcer for "Aire of Northland" with Kay Dell Hemming, Barbara Morinville, and Cindy Alby as co-ordinators.



# EXPANSION is . . .

... building a new collegiate gymnasium and theater during the 1970-71 school year.





## Indian Awareness Week



NSIC held its first Indian Awareness Week under the direction of John Steidl. Films, panels, art displays, and a convocation emphasized the goal of the week's activities--to learn from Indians, not about them. Guest speakers included Mary Seegant, Paul Schultz, Carol Ann Hart, Roland Randal, Pat Needham, Byron Craver, and Anne Oliver. Northland students participating were Willie Benallou, Elveda Haden, Julie Thunder, and Randy Desjarlais.



## "RAIN MAKER"



"The Rain Maker," a romantic comedy set in the West at a time of severe drought, was the drama department's spring production of 1973. Direction was by Roger Vaughan.

The play was centered around a girl, Lizzie (Brenda Matheson), whose family is so worried about her becoming an old maid as they are about dying cattle. The girl is plain so her brothers Jim and Noah (Steve Ahmann and Bruce Anderson) try everything to get her married off but with no success.

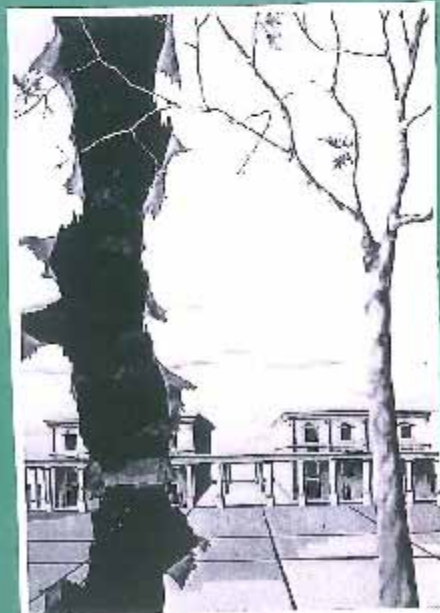
The dry heat continues when suddenly a man appears who calls himself a "rain maker." His name is Starbuck, played by Bruce Ueland. He promises to bring rain for \$100. The family doesn't believe him, but he impresses them enough, so the family gives their consent.

We then find the family banging on drums and yelling to the sky while the rain maker turns his magic on the girl, persuading her that she is a beautiful girl in her own way. She believes him as does her father who believes it will rain. The rain does finally come, as well as romance between the girl and the "rain maker."

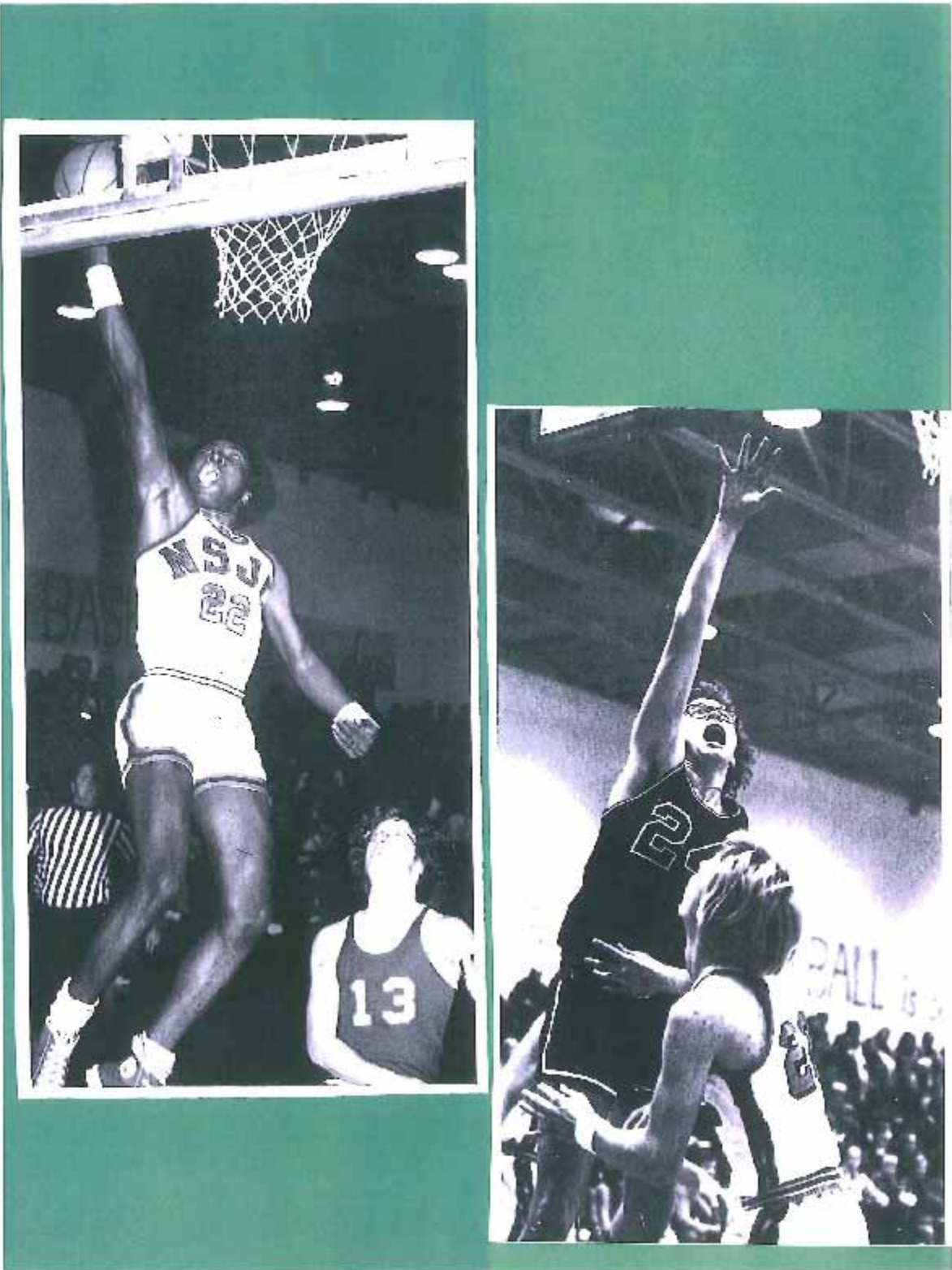
The cast of characters also included the Sheriff (Jim Pederson), and his deputy Pile (Roger Brown).



# ART AT NORTHLAND



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MR. CYRIL DICKSON  
Mathematics, Science, Chemistry  
B. A., University of Denver  
M. S. T., University of North Dakota



Dennis Bendicksen—Recorder



Walt Morehouse, Dennis  
Birkeman, Harold Pittelkow  
(Not pictured—Maintenance)

MRS. MAXINE THOMPSON  
Business  
B. S., Bemidji State College  
M. S., University of North Dakota



## Sno Daze



"Bad Boo" Beeson and Kurt Poes grading 1st cont.



## **Appendix A: A Brief History of Vocational, Technical, and Community College Education**

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### **Beginnings**

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Vocational education has existed in the United States since the first colonists came ashore in the 1600s. At that time, and for the next three hundred years, the system of apprenticeship served to train young men and women in a variety of occupations. During medieval times, apprenticeship through guild membership was the standard for obtaining vocational education, with a pupil usually rising to the level of master after seven years of learning. Since there were no established guilds in the colonies, a contract relationship called “an indenture” was established between pupil and master (McClure, et al, 1985). However, masters in Colonial America were also expected to teach their pupils the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic (McClure, et al, 1985). For those masters who felt unequal to the task, schools were established for apprentices, but they were generally private schools. For families who could not afford the tuition, apprenticeship was the only option to provide their children with an education (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985).

### **The Industrial Revolution and Benjamin Franklin**

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The advent of the Industrial Revolution heralded the end of the system of apprenticeship in America, just as it had in Europe. Manufacturing processes demanded a high degree of skill from many workers, and the apprenticeship system of one master with a few pupils simply could not fulfill the demands of employers (Hawkins, et al, 1951). The first large scale vocational

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effort was headed by Benjamin Franklin, who described his plans in a pamphlet published in 1749, *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania* (as cited in McClure, 1985).

Franklin desired an academy for youth that would equip them with the necessary tools for daily living (McClure, et al, 1985). The academy would be divided into English, Mathematics, and History divisions. Proposed courses included accounting, the history of commerce, and modern languages that merchants might use in the marketplace. Before the school was established, Franklin expanded his proposal to include an “English school” for boys, starting at age eight. These boys would undergo six years of training and education designed to equip them for a life in commerce. Franklin’s plan met with opposition, particularly from scholars who faulted the plan for its failure to include any study of Latin or the classics, crucial elements of curriculum in their estimation (McClure, et al, 1985). In response to this criticism, the academy was set up in 1751 with a Latin school and an English school, but as time passed, the Latin school dominated the curriculum, which should have come as no surprise, as the master of the Latin school was paid twice the salary of the English master (McClure, et al, 1985). Within a few short years, the school evolved into a preparatory school for college-bound young men, and Franklin’s dream of a school of commerce withered.

### [The Mechanics Institute and Lyceums](#)

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However, Franklin’s legacy lived on in the “Mechanic’s Institute” established in Philadelphia in 1824 (Geiger, 2000; Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). The institute, like others being established on the East coast at the time, focused on the further development of industrial skills for students who were already employed. Students attended evening classes in

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mathematics, the physical sciences, and languages, with specialized courses being taught upon request. McClure, et al (1985) noted that “instructors were required to lecture in a manner that would allow those of little education to understand the classes” (p. 18). However laudable the idea, the majority of students simply did not have the educational background necessary, and while the schools did not disappear completely, they did not spread widely beyond the East coast.

While Mechanic’s Institutes served urban students, those living in small towns and in rural America turned to the lyceums for education. Josiah Holbrook is generally acknowledged as the founder of this movement, having established his plan in 1826 (McClure, et al, 1985). Citizens of a rural community would organize a local lyceum, which could join with an organization at the state level, and the states had the option to become members of the national lyceum organization. By 1833, almost 1000 lyceums were operating in the United States, and national conventions were held annually between 1831 and 1839 (McClure, et al, 1951). The format for the lyceum was that of a meeting where interested workingmen could discuss such topics as mechanics, chemistry, botany, and mathematics, as well as subjects of a more cultural bent, such as history and politics (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). Although the movement dwindled after the 1830s, elements survived in the Chautauqua, a popular lecture series in the Midwest and other parts of the country (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985).

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## Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

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One of the first schools to successfully incorporate a vocational curriculum was Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). Its founder, Stephan Van Rensselaer, intended to found a school with applied science at the center of the curriculum (Geiger, 2000; McClure, et al, 1985). Students of the school would be expected to apply their knowledge to “the everyday problems that confronted the farmer and the workingman” (McClure, et al, 1985, p. 19). Graduates were also expected to disseminate their knowledge by giving lectures to farmers and workers in rural areas, although few ever did so. At RPI and elsewhere, the concerns of educators and business owners clashed then as they do now. Indeed, Daniel Coit Gilman, professor of geography at Yale’s Sheffield Scientific School, noted the need for skilled workers and institutes to train them in the nineteenth century: “[T]he country needs more skillful laborers [acquainted] with the natural laws underlying manufacturer’s processes; for them, industrial or trade schools are requisite—the more the better” (as quoted in Geiger, 2000, p. 161). One of the continuing dilemmas in vocational and technical schools would be this clash between educators and employers over curriculum. Educators wanted to broaden the minds of students in their institutions in addition to offering technical training, while business owners wanted better trained employees who could enter the workforce as quickly as possible. The debate over the place of general education requirements for vocational and technical school graduates continues to this day, although more employers and their future employees are beginning to see value in general education.

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## Liberal Arts and Technical Education

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Harvard president Charles Eliot would join this debate in the late nineteenth century, claiming that efforts of some colleges to offer both classical and scientific curriculums for their students were doomed to failure, because of the “incompatibility of the practical spirit with the literary spirit” (as quoted in Geiger, 2000, p. 165). However, as Geiger (2000) points out, Eliot did believe the scientific training had worth, and to that extent, Eliot proposed a merger between Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Under Eliot’s proposal, the entities would offer courses in a separate, but equal fashion, to interested students. Although the merger never took place, Harvard did eventually absorb the Lawrence School, appointing its faculty members as members of Harvard and eventually integrating the pure and practical sciences (Geiger, 2000).

Indeed, confusion over the mission of technical education, where its students would be drawn from and what standards it would adopt, characterized technical schools of the late nineteenth century, according to Geiger (2000). Graduation rates of less than 10% were not uncommon during this period as underprepared students struggled to cope with a conflicted curriculum. The path to “useful knowledge” would diverge radically near the end of the century, with some students continuing to follow the “shop culture” model used at Worcester Polytechnic County Free Institute of Industrial Science, spending more than 30 hours per week in a simulated machine shop, while other students turned to schools such as Cornell, following

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a more “collegiate” path devised by Robert Thurston, with two years of academic preparation followed by two years of theory and application (Geiger, 2000).

## Diversity in Community and Technical Education

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Besides the issue of where general education courses belonged in a technical education, another issue in vocational and technical education was how members of minority groups would be served. While members of minority groups had made some inroads in accessing traditional higher education, their numbers were not large. Business owners seeking trained employees were also becoming more willing to look beyond the traditional labor force to include minority applicants, and it is in this area that vocational education offered significant advantages to minorities. In the years after the Civil War, as the nation welcomed its new African American citizens, the need to provide these men and women with some job training beyond agricultural occupations was apparent. One of the first administrators to grapple with this problem was General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, former commanding officer of the Eighth Regiment of United States Colored Troops. As a senior administrator with the newly created Freedman’s Bureau in 1868, Armstrong established a boarding school for young freedmen in Hampton, Virginia (McClure, et al, 1985). Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute, was among Armstrong’s first students. Washington championed vocational education as the way up and out for former slaves, although he continued to clash with other African American intellectuals who felt that a liberal arts education was just as much a former slave’s right as any other citizen’s.

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Vocational education was also available for some women, but the education that was most likely to be offered to them was reflected in a 1910 report from the National Education Association (NEA). The report noted the two primary purposes for vocational education for young women (referred to as “girls” in the report). The first was to prepare them to be homemakers and to assume “the most sacred duties with an intelligent preparation” (Lazerson and Grubb, 1974, p. 115), which would lead to a healthier family, physically and morally. The other chief aim of vocational education for women, according to the NEA, was to train them for specific, “feminine” occupations. The report noted that “[t]he time is perhaps not far away when every girl will learn some specific kind of remunerative skilled work.... [But] this does not mean that married women will follow a vocation outside of the house, save in exceptional cases” (Lazerson and Grubb, 1974, p. 115).

However, there were women’s groups actively lobbying for more opportunities for the fairer sex in the late 1800s. A pioneer among these women was Lucinda Wyman Price, one of the leaders of the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union, headquartered in Boston (Hawkins, et al, 1951). Wyman Price opened her own vocational school for women with programs in retail sales. Hawkins, et al (1951) note that Wyman Price’s school was one of the first to offer training in what was becoming a rapidly growing occupation for women.

### **Curriculum Issues and the Federal Government**

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By the late 1800s, the chief debate surrounding vocational education was how it could be integrated into the newly emerging high school curriculum (McClure, et al, 1985). John Dewey advocated the learning by doing approach to education, and he feared what might happen if

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schools split into dual curriculums for their students, one following a traditional classical model of education and the other a vocational model (McClure, et al, 1985). One of Dewey's chief fears was that society would consider the vocational school curriculum and its graduates to be somehow inferior to graduates of the more traditional programs, "by fostering and strengthening class divisions, in school and out" (as quoted in Lazerson and Grub, 1974, p. 143). Dewey commented on the impracticality of a school district replicating administrative offices at two schools and the opportunities that might be lost with the revitalizing power for schools that he saw in "industrial education" (Lazerson and Grubb, 1974). Sadly, Dewey's concerns were not heeded, and most vocational education was relegated to separate schools. While graduates and employers continue to rate the education offered by the school as very satisfactory (see discussion of the [Chancellor's Study](#) in the section below on [East Grand Forks Area Vocational Technical Institute](#)), transfer issues still emerge with various admission representatives at colleges in the Midwest and elsewhere.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the federal government began to assume a more active role in education. With the success of the Morrill acts, the government looked for other ways to influence the course of events in vocational education. A significant feature of the Morrill acts was the need for research to be conducted that was practical in nature, to assist farmers and manufacturers to be more productive (Geiger, 2000; Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). However, the grants that established these research centers were not offered to secondary institutions. That would change, due in part to the efforts of Charles Richards of Columbia and James Haney of the New York City school system.

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At Columbia University, Richards, a professor of manual training, joined with Haney, director of art and manual training for the New York City School system, to establish the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). By November 1906, the two men had organized a conference in New York City that was attended by over 250 people from 20 states (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). It was at this meeting that the society was created. Within a year, the society had offices in 35 states, working to promote the value of vocational education through conventions, study committees, reports, and bulletins. In a letter dated May 24, 1907, to President Theodore Roosevelt, Richards set out the aims of the society, making a compelling case for vocational education that surely must have resonated with his contemporary, John Dewey:

We have been fond, as a nation, of speaking of the dignity of labor, meaning thereby manual labor. Personally I don't think that we begin to understand what a high place manual labor should take; and it never can take this high place unless it offers scope for the best type of man. We have tended to regard education as a matter of the head only, and the result is that a great many of our people, themselves the sons of men who worked with their hands, seem to think that they rise in the world if they get into a position where they do no hard manual work whatever; where their hands will grow soft, and their working clothes will be kept clean. Such a conception is both false and mischievous. (as quoted in Hawkins, et al, 1951, p. 69) [Author's note: the entirety of Richards' letter to Roosevelt is reprinted in Hawkins, et al, and worth reading both for its fervor and soundness of argument.]

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In an effort to gain public support for the aims of vocational education, the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education brought Dr. Georg Kerschensteiner, the well respected director of education for the Munich, Germany, schools, to the United States to lecture in selected cities in 1910 (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). As Kerschensteiner described the German system, Americans began to sense that their schools were inferior (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). The tour had the desired effect, as Americans now clamored to catch up and surpass the Germans. Indeed, this fear of German superiority is well documented. In a 1905 report from the National Association of Manufacturers, the Committee on Industrial Education reports:

The German technical and trade schools are at once the admiration and fear of all countries. In the world's race for commercial supremacy we must copy and improve upon the German method of education....Germany has every confidence that the returns from such investment have paid, and will pay, enormous dividends" (Lazerson and Grubb, 1974, p. 91).

The federal government began to address this issue in the coming years. In 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act was the first federal legislation that to provide funds for training of young adults in "useful work" on a large scale (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 1995; United States Department of Education, 2002). There were earlier efforts, including the proposed Pollard Bill of 1906 that attempted to appropriate funds to train secondary teachers at normal schools in the areas of agriculture, mechanical arts, and home economics, and others, including the Livingston Bill (1906), the Davis Bill (1907), and the Page Bills (1911 and 1912), all

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of which failed to garner enough support to pass (McClure, et al, 1985). McClure, et al, (1985) note that the National Education Association lobbied heavily against passage of many of these bills. The sponsors of the Smith-Hughes Bill, Hoke Smith and Dudley Hughes, both of Georgia, had been champions of vocational education for a considerable time (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). Smith had been a lawyer, publisher, governor, and finally a United States Senator from Georgia. Hughes had been a student at University of Georgia but never graduated. He worked as a farmer and was a partner in the Macon, Dublin, and Savannah Railroad. He had experience on a number of boards of education for normal schools and institutes of technology and served his state as a member of the House of Representatives.

The wrangling over provisions of the act matched the conflicts that had prevented passage of earlier efforts to obtain funds for vocational education, but eventually, the will of the people was made plain to Congress in a survey commissioned by the United States Chamber of Commerce (McClure, et al, 1985). Respondents were asked about their support for key provisions of the bill. With over 80% of them supporting passage of the bill, its future was secured, and the bill was signed into law on February 23, 1917 (McClure, et al, 1985).

Provisions of the act included a continuing appropriation for all states that chose to participate in vocational education (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). Allocations would be made in two categories: agricultural and industrial education. The allocations would be based on the state's proportion of residents in rural areas (for vocational funds) and in urban areas (for industrial funds) in comparison to the national population (McClure, et al, 1985). For states with small rural or urban populations, there was a guaranteed minimum amount that

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would be allocated. Monies distributed could be used to pay teachers, supervisors and directors, to pay for the training of teachers. States could choose not to participate in Smith-Hughes, but those who did elect to participate were bound to adhere to the auditing requirements for any funds disbursed (McClure, et al, 1985). Vocational and technical education took a giant leap forward, but nothing compared to what would happen during and after World War II.

## [World War II](#)

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The years surrounding World War II are significant ones in the study of vocational education. The legislation enacted at this time would lead the state of Minnesota to create vocational districts and allocate funding for students to pursue vocational education at the secondary and post secondary level. Although earlier legislation may have had some impact on the shaping of Northland Community and Technical College, legislation during this period had the most dramatic effect on state policy, particularly with the George-Barden Act, which will be discussed later. In the years leading up to World War II, manufacturers were pressing their representatives for assistance in getting more factory workers trained in less time. Heeding these calls, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed members to the President's Committee on Vocational Education in 1936. This committee was charged with reviewing current funding levels for vocational programs, examining the relationship between vocational education and general education, and determining what effect economic and social conditions might have on vocational education (McClure, et al, 1985).

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The committee completed its work in 1938 and concluded that the federal government should continue funding the program for students age 14 and older, with restrictions on “plant training” to prevent young people from being exploited by manufacturers. The committee also suggested that states be given more control over how funds were spent, as well as more control over how programs were administered and organized. Franklin Roosevelt thanked the committee for the report, but for the time being, nothing changed. However, six years after the report was issued, enrollment in vocational programs had grown by over 500%, totaling over 181,000 students who were being educated in over 1200 towns and cities nationwide (McClure, et al, 1985). The nation could not ignore the growth of vocational education nor the need to provide federal guidance and assistance.

As soldiers left the country to fight in Europe and the Pacific, they left behind their former employers, who were suddenly scrambling to fill the positions they had vacated. Employers faced two problems: first, finding employees who would be ready to go to work quickly, and second, understanding the effect of wartime regulations on the buying and selling of goods (McClure, et al, 1985). If this need arose today, an employer might pick up the phone and call Northland Community and Technical College’s Center for Outreach and Innovation, but no such agency existed then. Instead, the Vocational Education for National Defense (VEND) program was put into operation by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1940 and was responsible for training over 11 million workers during its existence, which ended shortly after the war (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). One of the men selected by Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, to act as a liaison between the federal Office of Education and the War

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Department in designing the VEND program was Layton Hawkins, an acknowledged expert in the history and development of vocational education.

The success of the VEND program in training employees in vocational centers was not lost on the federal government, although there were critics who thought that vocational education would be better provided by industry, rather than by public institutions. One of these critics was Robert Hutchins, chancellor of the University of Chicago, who represented a number of traditional educators who thought vocational training had little to do with education (McClure, et al, 1985). However, there was also a small, but growing group of vocational educators who began to argue not only for large-scale retraining for workers no longer needed in the defense industry, but also for training that included liberal arts education, to prepare the students for “life as well as for making a living” (McClure, et al, 1985, p. 97). It is interesting to note that this debate over the role of liberal arts in vocational education was taking place as far back as the 1940s and continues to be debated today in community and technical colleges.

### [The George-Barden Act](#)

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The legislation that galvanized the Minnesota legislature was the George-Barden Act. Introduced in Congress in 1944 to provide federal funds for states that wanted to enhance their vocational education, the act was debated over two sessions, finally passing in 1946, but not before the nation witnessed the battle between organized labor groups who opposed the bill and a host of manufacturers and retailers who supported it, all of whom came to Washington to testify (McClure, et al, 1985). The final version of the bill provided matching funds for states that agreed to offer vocational education in agriculture, home economics, and trades and

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industrial fields, with a special, albeit smaller allocation for distributive education programs offered on a part-time basis, primarily in the evenings (Hawkins, et al, 1951; McClure, et al, 1985). One notable feature of the act was the flexibility given to states in using the funds (McClure, et al, 1985), which must have heartened the members of Franklin Roosevelt's Committee on Vocational Education after the lack of action on their earlier proposal.

Including the George-Barden Act, Smith-Hughes has been reviewed and revised thirteen times (United States Department of Education, 2002). While a history of the legislation occurring between World War II and the present might be of interest to students of the political winds of change, the author has chosen to end the historical review at this point in the interests of brevity. However, some recent (2002) statistics from the United States Department of Education are worth considering before moving on: over 66% of all high school students in the United States do not complete a four-year degree, and fully 25% of all high school students in 2002 went directly to work from high school rather than enter a four-year institution (United States Department of Education, 2002).

At present, over 15,000 secondary schools offer vocational education, and there are over 9400 post-secondary vocational institutions, including community colleges, technical institutes, skill centers, and other public and private two- and four-year colleges (National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, 2003). According to the United States Office of Educational Research and Improvement, over 15 million students were enrolled in vocational or technical education as of fiscal year 2006 (United States Department of Education, 2008).

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## Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Act

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The current federal legislation governing vocational and technical education is the 1998 Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Act (referred to as Perkins III). One feature of the act is the provision for independent assessment of all vocational and technical education (United States Department of Education, 2002). The National Assessment of Vocational Education (NAVE) was created to perform the assessments. The organization's first report was issued in 2002, in anticipation of legislation reauthorizing the provisions of the Perkins Act. In a unique arrangement for a federal program, Perkins III funds are available to both secondary and post-secondary schools to improve programs, to provide equipment and supplies, and to supplement research (United States Department of Education, 2002).

The shape and focus of vocational education has changed significantly since the early 1900s, as noted in the NAVE report: "Evolving priorities clearly have moved federal support for vocational education toward fulfilling a broader set of objectives than training students for work in factories and on farms after high school, the original aim of federal vocational legislation at the turn of the 20th century" (United States Department of Education, 2002). One of the most far-reaching changes in Perkins III is the recognition of the need to include not only vocational and technical courses into the curriculum, but also general academic courses designed to enhance reading, writing, critical thinking, and computational skills (United States Department of Education, 2002). This recognition would not have surprised earlier vocational educators who had advocated for a liberal arts component in the 1940s, even as other

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educators such as University of Chicago's Robert Hutchins were claiming that vocational training had little if anything to do with education.

### [The State of Vocational and Technical Education](#)

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In its 2003 report, the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium cited three primary strengths of vocational and technical education: first, the development of applied learning techniques, which association members stated was the teaching method preferred by 75% of the population; second, the use of Tech Prep, where secondary and post-secondary institutions cooperate to provide students with four years of comprehensive and advanced technical training, resulting in a certificate or associate's degree; and third, the design of performance-based assessment tools to ensure future employers of the graduate's competence (National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, 2003). Students at Northland Community and Technical College have had access to this type of education for almost 60 years, beginning on October 11, 1949, when the Thief River Falls Area Vocational School was created.

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## Appendix B: Sample programs offered in 1976-1977

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(Taken from AVTI Student Handbook: 1976-77)

Program	Classroom Portion	Internship Portion
Clerical	180 days	
Credit and Finance	360 days	60 days
Fabrics and Fashion	180 days	60 days
Farm Equipment	180 days	60 days
Farm Tractor	384 days	60 days
Franchise Restaurant Op.	200 days	40 days
General Construction	180 days	60 days
Home Furnishing Sales	360 days	60 days
Practical Nursing	180 days	
Surgical Technician	60 days	135 days
Truck Driving	320 days	160 days
Truck Mechanics	360 days	60 days

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## **Appendix C: Sample Placement Statistics and Starting Salaries for Graduates in 1976-77**

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(Taken from *Landings 1978: AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institute] Yearbook*)

Note: The statistics were compiled in November 1977, which would be approximately five months after graduation.

Number of graduates: 286

Number of graduates who found work in their field: 220

Number of graduates who found work that was not in their field: 22

Number of graduates who reported that they were unavailable for work: 36

Number of graduates who reported that they were unemployed: 8

Average Monthly Salaries for Graduates in Selected Programs:

Parts: \$600

Secretarial with shorthand: \$495

Truck Mechanics: \$655

Practical Nursing: \$544

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## Appendix D: Sample programs offered in 2002-2003

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(Taken from *Northwest Technical College 2002-2003 catalog*)

Associate Accounting/Accounting Clerk	Administrative Assistant
Administrative Support-Bookkeeping	Architectural Technology
Auto Body Collision Technology	Automotive Machining Technology
Business Management/Ownership	Cardiovascular Technology-Invasive
Carpentry	Chef Training
Child Care and Education	Civil Engineering Technology
Clinical Laboratory Technology	Computer and Network Technology
Computer Programming	Construction Electricity
Dental Hygiene	Diesel Equipment Technology
Electrical Line Worker Technology	Electronic Communications
Esthetist	Farm Operations and Management
Fashion Marketing and Management	Financial/Credit Services Administration
Fire Technology	Graphic Design Technology
Heating, Ventilating, Air Conditioning	Legal Secretary
Marine Engine Technology	Mechanical CADD Design and Detailing
Medical Assisting	Occupational Therapy Assistant
Paramedicine	Pharmacy Technology
Practical Nursing	Respiratory Care
Surgical Technology	Welding Technology

## Appendix E: Summary of Minority Student Services Plan Narrative

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(Taken from *Northwest Technical College Minority Student Services Plan (1994)*)

As of February 10, 1994, Northwest Technical College reported the following statistics for its minority student population:

	College Population	Regional Population
Black/Non-Hispanic	1.0%	<1.0%
American Indian	5.0%	3.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.0%	<1.0%
Hispanic	2.0%	1.0%

The majority of minority students (57.2%) were enrolled in only six of the more than 60 program areas, with the highest concentration in the Administrative Support program. The report found that minorities were underrepresented in a number of program areas. Of the five campuses composing Northwest Technical College, the campus in East Grand Forks had the largest number of minority students, with 119 enrolled in 1992-1993.

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