Truck Driving

Planning 2004-2010
Service, Department, and Program Planning Form
Northland Community and Technical College
East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls, MN
Key reference http://www.aqip.org

Service, Department, or Program
Truck Driving

I. Mission (Answers these questions: Whom does your service, department, or program serve? What are its outcomes? Why does it exist?)

The mission of the Truck Driving Program is to prepare entry level CDL Truck Drivers for employment in the Trucking industry. Students not only earn a Commercial Drivers License but gain experience with a variety of transmissions, engines, trailers, and loads. They travel to Duluth, Minneapolis, and throughout the region practicing driving. Safety and compliance with State and Federal Law are emphasized throughout the semester.

II. Philosophy (Answers these questions: What are your service, department, or program values? What guides decisions made?)

Professionalism as a truck driver is integrated into every aspect of training throughout the semester. Pride in the task, equipment, and in self are encouraged and promoted. Integrity and compliance with the rules and regulations governing the trucking industry are paramount to the students becoming safe, productive drivers in the program and as employed drivers in industry. Students are presented with a variety of teaching methods and active learning is utilized continuously.

III. Description (Answers these questions: What is your service, department, or program history? What are its characteristics?)

The Truck Driving Program was started in 1974 in East Grand Forks before the present campus was built. The current Truck Driving shop was built and put into service in 1977. As an Area Vocational Technical Institute, all classes were program based. Students attended Truck Driving for six months, 30 hours per week. There were 5 class starts per year with three overlapping classes most of the time. Students of the 80’s ad 90’s received 7000 to 8000 miles of driving before graduating. The transition to a credit based system has taken place slowly and has not adapted as well as more traditional college courses. There are two starts per year. Students currently spend 14 hours in the vehicles and 7 hours in the classroom each week for 16 weeks. They leave with 800 to 1200 driving miles.

IV. Markets Served (Answers these questions: What geographic, demographic, site, or other qualities are sought or exist in the people served by the service, department, or program? Are there new markets to be served?)

Truck Driving students come from a wider area than many of the other programs. It is common for most students in a class to commute one to three hours per day to attend class. Most student are older than average with very few being immediately post High School. The average age is about 35 years. Many are being retrained because of underemployment or a desire to change from current work experience. Some students are spouses or adult children of former graduates of the program. There is a trend for non-traditional students moving into the Transportation area. It is also a field where those with a poor school history can be successful and move into a productive job with one semester of training.

V. Views of Partners (Answers these questions: What do advisory committees, colleagues, employers, universities, stakeholders, or customers think about your service, department, or program? What are possible additional linkages to these partners?)

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There are calls daily from employers looking for Graduates that they can hire as drivers. There is a balance of local and long distance jobs available. The demand is always for the exceptional worker and driver, yet there is a belief that the program can be shortened or speeded up to meet the immediate demand for a driver in their vehicle.

VI. Unique Attributes (Answers these questions: What sets your service, department, or program apart from others in the college and elsewhere? What unique attributes could be enhanced or shared? Why would any one choose your service, department, or program?)

The Truck Driving Program was rewritten in 2003 to deliver a quality training experience in one semester. More time is dedicated to yard and road driving and classroom time has been streamlined to deliver the essentials of safety, compliance, and mechanics of driving. Our program trains students to operate five different transmissions, and pull full weight as part of their training. We operate 48 and 53 foot trailers as well as twin trailers. Students learn to load and pull vans, reefers, and flatbed trailers. They travel to Minneapolis, Duluth, and throughout northern Minnesota. Students develop a sense of pride in their profession and a respect for the complexity of the occupation. The instructor’s experience comes from 15 years as a driver, owner-operator, trucking business owner, and from 16 years as a Truck Driving instructor, program director, and private school owner.

VII. Benchmark (Answers these questions: From what service, department, or program can your service, department, or program learn the most? What are current best practices for its processes and are these practices evident? What are your role models secrets for success?)

The Professional Truck Driver Institute is an accreditation organization that sets standards for Truck Driving Programs based on the Department of Transportation’s recommended standards for the industry. Our curriculum is structured along the same lines and emphasizes the criteria set forth in the Commercial Driver’s License Act of 1986. The instructor’s experience comes from program based, credit based, short and long term training in both public and private sectors. The program design represents a balance of the variables for delivery of instruction.

VIII. Strengths (Answers these questions: What should be preserved and nurtured? What should be foundational building blocks for riskier ventures? What could be shared with the greater college community?)

The program has a rich history of student success in the industry. This is evident by the former students that contact the school to enroll family members in the same program where they learned the profession. A diverse training prepares student for the many different styles of driving waiting for the graduate. The many hours of hands-on training that students receive is essential for a road ready driver. Our concentration on professionalism and safety is essential to placing quality drivers into industry.

Current program length is a balance between the short, concentrated private schools and the traditional full time program offered in the past by Minnesota Colleges. There is a desire for an even shorter program from some but the majority of students graduating say the program should be longer as there is still much to learn at the end of the semester.

IX. Weaknesses (Answers these questions: What needs to be fixed? What must be accommodated?)

The fleet of tractors and trailers is aging. Cutbacks in funding have led to less preventive maintenance which will mean higher repair costs in the future. Technology is changing so rapidly that we will need to upgrade equipment to be competitive with other programs and adequately prepare our students for their occupation.

The range area for students to practice backing and other yard skills is undersized and in a high traffic area. Students compete daily with illegally parked cars, delivery trucks, student and staff traffic through the range area. We have daily close calls with traffic in the yard and students must be hyper vigilant at all times. A proposal has been on the table for years for a dedicated range area apart from the open traffic area.
Truck Driving

know used. An off-road track for practicing shifting would eliminate a bottleneck for training prior to receiving the CDL. Currently an instructor must accompany each driver individually for all practice until the student is licensed. Rotating all students through this cycle allows each student 15 to 30 minutes per day for road training.

A shifting and driving simulator (costing between $25,000 and $75,000) would reduce wear and tear on trucks and allow more wheel time for students that need extra time to acquire the skill needed to shift and maneuver in traffic. It would also allow advanced students to train on engine and transmission types that we don’t have in our fleet.

Marketing for the Truck Driving Program has missed the mark. High School visits help for the future but do not generate any immediate students as the required age for intrastate driving is 21 with many companies requiring 23 as a minimum. We also draw from a wider area than the normal marketing done for the College. The website has not been user friendly for our program until recently. All this comes following a program shutdown and several years prior to that of substandard training which has hurt the local program reputation.

Most students come from surrounding communities and cannot find housing for less than a one year commitment. Commuting one or two hours daily in winter months has its own problems and students must be very committed to get to school under all conditions. A source of affordable student housing for one semester would be a definite asset to the program.
## Truck Driving

### Department/Discipline/Program/Service Area
Truck Driving

### A. Strategy
Use technology and a dedicated training facility to deliver comprehensive training to new and current drivers

#### 1. Goal
Provide students with current, efficient training in a safe environment

#### 2. Benchmark
(What’s/Who’s the best; what/who do we want to be like?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Tasks or Steps to Accomplish Goal</th>
<th>b. Success Measures</th>
<th>c. Staffing and Responsible Team or Person</th>
<th>d. Professional Development</th>
<th>e. Budget, Marketing and Other Resources</th>
<th>f. Facility, Equipment, and Technology</th>
<th>g. Partners and Stakeholders</th>
<th>h. Timeline and Priority</th>
<th>i. Processes To Be Examined</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive marketing strategy</td>
<td>Increase in inquiries, applications, enrollment</td>
<td>Jay and NCTC Marketing</td>
<td>Advertising in newspapers, other media, brochure printing and mailing</td>
<td>Signage on trailers, Shifting and driving simulator for marketing, shows</td>
<td>Simulator</td>
<td>Custom Training, Industry, other transportation programs (Fire, EMS, Mechanics) Trucking industry</td>
<td>Immediate, high priority</td>
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<td>Use of shifting simulator</td>
<td>Increase in work stations for driving students, reduced load on road equipment</td>
<td>Jay, custom training, industry</td>
<td>NCTC budget as well as other stakeholders</td>
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<td>Simulator</td>
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<td>Use of Driving Range</td>
<td>Safer work area, more student wheel time, recruiting and enrollment increased</td>
<td>Jay, Custom Training, Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement</td>
<td>Contributions from all stakeholders</td>
<td>Develop track and backing area on campus away from other traffic. Skid pad and dock allow more use of area</td>
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<td>Custom Training, Industry, other transportation programs (Fire, EMS, Mechanics) Trucking industry</td>
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<td>Upgrade Tractors</td>
<td>Develop long range plan for replacement of vehicles, upgrade to current specs in industry</td>
<td>Follow through with proposal</td>
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<td>Upgrade trailers</td>
<td>Replace 45 foot trailers with 48 and 53 foot trailers</td>
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<td>Curriculum options</td>
<td>Design course options which allow shorter options for CDL licensure, summer classes, custom training options.</td>
<td>Increase in credits sold to students needing less than full time training</td>
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