Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A REGULAR INTERIM REPORT

Seattle Central Community College
Seattle, Washington

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Introduction

Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) is located in the urban center of Seattle, Washington, and is one of the three colleges that comprise the Seattle Community College District. During the 2008-2009 academic year, the college served a total of 19,306 students of whom 71 percent were state-supported and 57.5 percent were students of color. The official history of the college began in 1966, with initial accreditation status being granted in 1970. SCCC began directing the operations of the Seattle Vocational Institute (SVI) in 1995, which provides short-term job training programs and enrolls about 500 students each quarter.

Recent Accreditation History

A Full-Scale Evaluation and site visit was conducted in April 2005. In July 2005, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) reaffirmed SCCC's accreditation status; the Full-Scale Evaluation Report included five (5) commendations and six (6) General Recommendations. A Focused Interim Site Visit was conducted in October 2006 to address three of the six recommendations from the Full-Scale Evaluation Report; this interim report resulted in four commendations and three recommendations. A Regular Interim Site Visit was conducted in May 2010, and is the subject of this report.

The six General Recommendations from the Full-Scale Evaluation Report, and three Focused Recommendations from the Focused Interim Report are listed below.

General Recommendations (Full-Scale Evaluation Report, April 2005)

General Recommendation #1
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC provide documentation that its evaluation and planning activities are used to set institutional priorities, influence resource allocations and improve college programs and services. (1.B)

General Recommendation #2
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC document that financial planning for the future of the institution is a strategically guided process. (7.A.2)

General Recommendation #3
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC document that its educational programs are based on regular and continuous program assessment in light of the needs of the disciplines, the fields or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution. (2.B and Policy 2.2)

General Recommendation #4
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC identify and publish the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs of 45 quarter credits or more. (2.B.2)

General Recommendation #5
The Evaluation Committee recommends that sufficient professional health care, including psychological health and relevant health education, is made available at the Seattle Vocational Institute. (3.D.12)

General Recommendation #6
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC provide regular and systematic evaluation of faculty performance in order to ensure teaching effectiveness and the fulfillment of instructional and other faculty responsibilities. In addition, the Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC policies, regulations and procedures provide for the evaluation of all faculty on a continuing basis consistent with Policy 4.1 Faculty Evaluation. (4.A.5, Policy 4.1)

Focused Interim Recommendations (Focused Interim Report, October 2006)

Focused Recommendation #1
It is recommended that Seattle Central Community College identify effective processes to communicate the evidence of its institutional effectiveness to its public. (1.B.9)

Focused Recommendation #2
It is recommended that SCCC continue to address the learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs and document that students who complete the degrees of certificates have achieved those outcomes. (2.B.2)

Focused Recommendation #3
It is recommended that the College continue to address methods to ensure that all part-time and priority part-time faculty are evaluated to ensure their teaching effectiveness. (4.A.5)

Regular Interim Report and Evaluation Visit

In response to the recommendations made in the Full-Scale Evaluation Report in April 2005 and in the Focused Interim Evaluation Report in October 2006, Seattle Central submitted a report to NWCCU addressing how the college has comprehensively addressed the recommendations. The evaluators for the current Regular Interim visit found this report and support documentation to be well organized and comprehensive in depth and breadth of analysis, which greatly facilitated the on-site evaluative process.

The Regular Interim Evaluation Visit took place on May 3-4, 2010, over the course of a day and a half, during which the evaluators conducted interviews and reviewed evidence organized by the college. The college had the evidence documents easily accessible in the resource room made available to the evaluators. The evaluators had meetings with the President, the Acting President of the college, the Chancellor and Board of Trustees, the Vice Presidents, Academic Deans, and other Administrators, faculty, classified staff, and students.

The interviews helped the evaluators verify the regular interim report, and also served to confirm whether the perceptions of faculty, staff, and administrators were in alignment with the written report. These interviews, documents provided by the College and documents in the evidence folders were all useful in validating the report.

The remainder of this report is in two parts. Part A is a review of the actions taken in regard to the six recommendations from the Full-Scale Evaluation Visit in April 2005 and the three recommendations from the Focused Interim Site Visit in October 2006. Part B addresses the changes that have taken place within the organization's functional and logistical operations related to the Commission's Standards One through Nine.

Part A: Actions taken regarding recommendations

This section documents the work that the Seattle Central Community College's staff, faculty and administration have accomplished in response to recommendations from the Full-scale Evaluation Report and subsequent Focused Interim Report.

General Recommendation #1
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC provide documentation that its evaluation and planning activities are used to set institutional priorities, influence resource allocations and improve college programs and services. (1.B)

Focused Recommendation #1
It is recommended that Seattle Central Community College identify effective processes to communicate the evidence of its institutional effectiveness to its public. (1.B.9)

After reviewing the report submitted by the college, assessing the documents provided in the evidence binders, and then analyzing the interviews with students, faculty, staff, and administrators, the current evaluators find that not only has Seattle Central made noteworthy and substantial progress in addressing the fundamental concerns addressed in these two recommendations (General Recommendation #1 and Focused Recommendation #1) but also that the campus community is excited by this work.

Here is a sampling of actions taken to address these recommendations:

- Moving from structural planning to strategic planning with clear priorities that appear to be understood by the faculty and staff who were interviewed.
- Annually reviewing and updating the Strategic Plan.
- Developing several Functional Area Plans; e.g. the Strategic Facilities Plan and the Information Technology Plan.
- Instituting the improved Program Analysis and Viability Study (PAVS).

The evaluators found that the college has laid the groundwork for institutional planning, evaluation and resource allocation in an inclusive and transparent manner. Individuals and groups interviewed were fully aware of the college's strategic plans and priorities, the Program Analysis and Viability Study (PAVS), and the process for resource allocation.

There is clear evidence that institutional strategic plans and priorities now drive the work of the college, allocation of resources and staff time. For example, the college has been through serious budget cutbacks due to the reduction in state appropriations – in the past, the college absorbed budget reductions by administering across-the-board cuts; however, this time around, the strategic priorities of the college informed budget reductions.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the strategic planning processes, SCCC has strengthened existing modes of communication and initiated a number of new avenues to ensure college-wide awareness and understanding of the process and outcomes of the activity. Regular ongoing communication is facilitated through various committee activity postings and additional informational postings on the college website and institutional email shared folders. In addition,

there are all-campus gatherings at the President's Day, public forums, and quarterly inservice gatherings on special topics like the budget.

General Recommendation #2
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC document that financial planning for the future of the institution is a strategically guided process. (7.A.2)

SCCC has made significant progress in documenting its financial planning and in strengthening its effectiveness by integrating the financial and budgetary plans with the strategic plans of the college. The college has also developed six financial principles that guide all aspects of their financial planning. Further, the financial planning process is comprehensive and takes into account other institutional plans like the Strategic Facilities Plan, Information Technology Plan, and the Equipment Replacement Plan. The comprehensive and integrated nature of the financial planning system brings clarity to the availability of resources and their use in a manner that supports the institutional strategic goals and priorities. The college is commended for its efforts in this area.

General Recommendation #3
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC document that its educational programs are based on regular and continuous program assessment in light of the needs of the disciplines, the fields or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution. (2.B and Policy 2.2)

After reviewing the report submitted by the college, assessing the documents provided in the evidence binders, and then analyzing the interviews with students, faculty, staff, and administrators, the evaluators find that the SCCC has made noteworthy and substantial progress in addressing the fundamental concerns of this recommendation with the following actions:

- Reviewing, updating, and publishing learning outcomes for all degree and certificate programs.
- Publishing Learning Outcomes for all degree and certificate programs.
- Institutionalizing Assessment on an ongoing basis and with clear benchmarks.
- Creating learning outcomes and assessment that serve as the guiding principles for all curricular work.
- Developing meaningful, data-driven reports that are used to drive change.
- Vastly improving program assessment through the Program Analysis and Viability Study (PAVS).
- Developing a team approach to assessment within the College which cultivates pride and ownership of the work.

The evaluators found that the college has embraced assessment and uses assessment outcomes to drive planning in educational programs. Those interviewed spoke with great pride of the accomplishments to date, and attested to the culture shift throughout the college. Individuals and groups interviewed by the evaluators were fully aware of the College's strategic plans and priorities, the PAVS, and the institutional process for resource allocation. The College has evolved a culture of information sharing that is embraced college-wide. Those interviewed stated that the accreditation process served as the impetus for change. It was universally stated

by faculty and staff interviewed that the institution has changed for the better, and that serving students better is central to the work of the College.

General Recommendation #4
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC identify and publish the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs of 45 quarter credits or more. (2.B.2)

Focused Recommendation #2
It is recommended that SCCC continue to address the learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs and document that students who complete the degrees of certificates have achieved those outcomes. (2.B.2)

After reviewing the report submitted by the College, assessing the documents provided in the evidence binders, and then analyzing the interviews with students, faculty, staff, and administrators, the current evaluators find that the SCCC has made noteworthy and substantial progress in addressing the fundamental concerns of this recommendation with the following actions:

- Establishing program learning outcomes, accessible on the website, for all instructional programs that offer degrees and certificates.
- Integrating learning outcomes assessment into the program review process and other program assessment activities.
- Providing a framework for curriculum mapping by implementing the Stiehl and Lewchuck outcomes assessment model.
- Continuing to review and refine the outcomes assessment process as evidenced by the work of the Instructional Assessment Committee.
- Conducting College-wide discussions on the Instructional Assessment Committee's reviews of the assessment reports.
- Providing mini-grants to conduct demonstrative program learning outcomes assessment projects.
- Developing a timeline during which all programs will update their program learning outcomes to align with the new college-wide student learning outcomes.
- Providing "Possible Instructional Activities" for each learning outcome.
- Publishing the new college-wide student learning outcomes in the 2010-2012 district-wide College Catalog.

The College has implemented a comprehensive three-part assessment program to evaluate student readiness, learning progress, and program outcomes. The evaluators found that the college has invested heavily in terms of human resources and fiscal resources to respond to the recommendation to "continue to address the learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs and document that student who complete the degree or certificate have achieved those outcomes". Individuals and groups interviewed by the evaluators were fully engaged with this process of change and embraced the changes, which are viewed as a natural way of conducting business and is institutionalized within the college.

General Recommendation #5
The Evaluation Committee recommends that sufficient professional health care, including psychological health and relevant health education, is made available at the Seattle Vocational Institute. (3.D.12)

The Seattle Vocation Institute has instituted a well established counseling system in collaboration with the internship program at the University of Washington. The administrators and students interviewed attested to the availability and viability of the program.

General Recommendation #6
The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC provide regular and systematic evaluation of faculty performance in order to ensure teaching effectiveness and the fulfillment of instructional and other faculty responsibilities. In addition, the Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC policies, regulations and procedures provide for the evaluation of all faculty on a continuing basis consistent with Policy 4.1 Faculty Evaluation. (4.A.5, Policy 4.1)

Focused Recommendation #3
It is recommended that the College continue to address methods to ensure that all part-time and priority part-time faculty are evaluated to ensure their teaching effectiveness. (4.A.5)

After reviewing the report submitted by the College, assessing the documents provided in the evidence binders, and then analyzing the interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators, the current evaluators find that the SCCC has made noteworthy and substantial progress in addressing the fundamental concerns of this recommendation with the following actions:

- Conducting routine and timely evaluations of part-time and priority part-time faculty using established evaluation protocols.
- Developing and publishing a comprehensive evaluation schedule.
- Clearly delineating the reporting periods and reporting elements.
- Establishing an optional peer observation process.
- Establishing a peer mentor program.
- Incorporating into the evaluation process the ability of Deans to recommend specific professional development for part-time faculty to strengthen teaching skills and/or make other improvements.

The evaluators found that the college has fully embraced the evaluation of part-time faculty and priority part-time faculty for teaching effectiveness. Evaluations are conducted on a routine and consistent basis through the Office of the Dean. Those interviewed stated that the evaluation process is viewed as a tool for growth as well as a way to make the institution better and stronger. Further, this process is central to how the College better meets the needs of its students by providing the best possible academic experience for each student.

Part B: Institutional changes since the regular evaluation and the focused visit

Standard One: Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness

Since the Full-Scale Evaluation Site Visit, SCCC has updated the Strategic Plan as well as the Program Analysis and Viability Study (PAVS) process and template. The revisions to college planning and evaluation systems have focused on creating timelines that are more suitable to the workflow of the campus; integrating planning, evaluation and documentation; enhancing transparency, and improving participation of the campus community. The evaluators found that these changes are visible to the faculty and staff who have a favorable view of this deliberate attempt to improve transparency and participation.

Standard Two: Educational Program and its Effectiveness

The College has fully embraced program assessment and has established processes to ensure that assessment activities are fully incorporated into the fabric of the institution. The College is engaged in evidence based research and in using the data gathered to drive change. The college has established and published learning outcomes for all instructional programs that offer degrees and certificates.

The College continues to review and refine the outcomes assessment process as is evidenced by the work of the Instructional Assessment Committee. The findings of this committee are made public and discussed in open college forums. The three-part assessment process: 1) ensures proper placement of students, 2) evaluates mid-program learning progress, and 3) validates evidence that the learning outcomes are met. New college-wide student learning outcomes were developed and confirmed in fall, 2009. All programs will update their program learning outcomes according to a college timetable to align with the new college-wide student learning outcomes. The new college-wide student learning outcomes will be published in the 2010-1012 district-wide College Catalog.

Standard Three: Students

The college has provided improvements in all areas of student services through various forms of realignment and revitalization. Innovative strategies such as cost sharing on databases by the Career Services Centers at all three colleges, has improved delivery of service to students. The Advising program has adopted a hybrid model that meets student demand while allowing staff to spend more time with students. The Financial Aid Office has adopted a new system that allows it to more effectively serve the growing numbers of students in need of financial aid assistance. A newly developed Office for Outreach and Recruitment has both increased the number of applicants and increased the opportunity for staff to respond quickly to student inquiries. The introduction of an online registration system has provided greater access for students seeking to enroll at the institution. The online orientation system has provided additional options for students to

move more quickly through the admissions process. The Testing Center has engaged in realignment activities that allow for better service to the diverse student population.

The Student Life/Student Affairs portion of Student Services continues to thrive. The Childcare Center staff, working with parents, has improved the dietary needs of the participants. The Student Leadership program continues to provide a variety of opportunities for students to be engaged with the College beyond the classroom. The International Education Programs have increased services to its expanded international student population. SCCC continues to provide an excellent level of service to all of its students.

The College has made significant progress in addressing the counseling and mental health related services for the Seattle Vocational Institute (SVI) students in partnership with the University of Washington and several community groups. However, there does not appear to be a shared understanding and plan to support the students at SVI, with their unique needs, in progressing to completion of their educational goals. The evaluators recommend that the College clearly understand the profile of the student community served by the Seattle Vocational Institute, and that it provide the necessary courses, pedagogical approaches and services in order to promote the success of students in reaching their educational goals. (3.A.1). Further, the evaluators recommend that the College periodically and systematically evaluate the appropriateness, adequacy, and utilization of student services and programs, and recommend that the College use the results of the evaluation as a basis for change. (3.B.6)

Standard Four: Faculty

The College maintains a cadre of well qualified faculty with outstanding credentials, both full-time and part-time.   SCCC also boasts the largest percentage of faculty of color among the Washington State community and technical colleges. Faculty have received cost of living adjustments for each year since the last review with the exception of this current year (2009-2010) due to state budget reductions. There have been several economic incentives since the last review: the number of non-instructional days was increased and salaries were adjusted proportionately; and stipends were developed to support the peer observation initiative as well as permanent salary increases for those serving as peer mentors.

A systematic faculty performance evaluation process for all levels of faculty has been implemented. The reporting frequency and reporting elements are clearly delineated. A review of documents during the visit indicated that the new process was being followed. Faculty are engaged at all levels of governance and planning throughout the college and collegial consultation is central to the operation of the college.

Standard Five: Library and Information Resources

The Library has introduced numerous innovations to better serve its constituents. Foremost among the changes is an updated mission statement ("to promote the value of the library as an essential resource for academic excellence") which guides the decision making processes. Reference services have been enhanced by the acquisition of QuestionPoint, a national cooperative reference service. The library staff has engaged in more efficient space utilization that not only makes better use of space, but provides for better service to those using the library resources. The library staff has engaged in continuous assessment and has used the feedback to improve on the delivery of service. Two sentences from the Regular Interim Report best describe the efforts of the library staff: "The library is a unique multifunctional entity of the college that plays a vital role in the intellectual life of the campus community. Of utmost importance is the library's ability to provide integrated service that combines access to high-quality print and digital collections with reconfigured physical space to serve all students."

The Information Resources area has undergone major changes and innovations since the last review. IT services and the Information Technology Programs have been separated. The IT Programs have been reassigned to one of the instructional divisions thereby allowing IT Services to focus on campus-wide technology issues. Another innovation was the creation of one college-wide Information Technology Council with six standing committees which replaced the Administrative Computing and the Instructional Computing Advisory Committees. This organizational change has dramatically improved communication, planning, and the decision-making processes. The IT Council provides an effective vehicle for discussion of IT-related issues. Structural changes within the department have improved the delivery of service to constituents.

As a result of capital improvements, the IT Services Division and its staff have been able to secure better facilities. Further capital improvements have resulted in extra computer labs adding nearly 500 computers to the existing workload of IT Services. The separate IT Services Division and the new IT Council serve as excellent resources to address the ongoing challenges of information technology.

Standard Six: Governance and Administration

Although the governing structure has not changed since 2005, there have been changes in administrative leadership both at the College level and District level. In 2009, three new personnel were appointed into senior level leadership—the Chancellor, Chief Finance Office and Chief Human Resource Officer. At the College level, several Dean positions were replaced; the President took a leave of absence in March 2010, and the position is currently being filled on an interim basis as a national search is being conducted. The Vice President of Instruction position is being filled on an interim basis since the retirement of the Vice President in March 2009. The Student Services unit reorganized after the retirement of the Vice President of Student Development, a reorganization that placed the entire unit under one Vice President instead of two, and established two Dean positions and one Associate Dean position with significant reporting changes within the

unit. The changes in administrative leadership are also reflected in changes to the titles of many college-wide committees.

Standard Seven: Finance

Since the last full-scale evaluation visit in 2005, there have been some significant changes in financial planning, including:

- Integrating financial plans into the College's Strategic Plan.
- Improving campus-wide participation in the budget planning process.
- Developing six financial principles that guide the budget development process.

For more details see page 5, General Recommendation #2,in Part A of this report.

Standard Eight: Physical Resources

The college has done substantial facilities upgrades totaling approximately $105.7 million, including completion of major capital projects totaling $37.2 million with approximately $62.6 million in process. In addition, the Facilities Department has completed maintenance projects totaling $2.8 million in the last five years with an additional $3.1 in process. The Facilities Department has been extremely creative in positioning the College to be competitive in the state-wide process for capital funding allocation. The evaluators commend SCCC for its extensive work related to facilities upgrades, which promotes a positive learning environment and supports state-of-the-art instructional and pedagogical approaches.

Standard Nine: Institutional Integrity

The College is in compliance with all District and College policies and procedures. Further, the College ensures compliance through the use of the two union contracts and the student handbook. The college has effectively used technology as a tool for improved communication. The District Office has created a "Document Center" on its intranet where employees can find current information and forms. The College website has been redesigned to further aid in improved communication. The College utilizes social media formats such as Facebook and Twitter as a medium to respond to internal and external constituents.

The Board of Trustees has amended or adopted 76 policies which are available via the "Document Center" on the District intranet. The College is engaged in fair and consistent treatment of its constituents with policies and procedures openly stated in the Student Handbook, the Faculty Agreement, and the Collective Bargaining Agreement for classified staff. Further, there are policies in place to address any matters of concern related to conflict of interest.

General Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations:

1. The evaluators commend Seattle Central for its extensive work related to facilities upgrade. These upgrades promote a positive learning environment and support state-of-the-art instructional and pedagogical approaches. In particular, the evaluators commend the leadership of the College, and the leadership of the Facilities Department in securing significant funding for this endeavor, using an integrated and collaborative approach with the instructional units allowing the goals of instructional plans driving the facilities priorities.

2. The evaluators commend the institution on the development of a comprehensive, systemic process to assess educational programs that is owned by all stakeholders and effectively communicated throughout the college.

3. The evaluators commend the institution on the development of a dynamic program for student leadership, including a variety of co-curricular activities, which encompasses diverse student body representatives.

4. The President, senior executives and Deans of the College, faculty and classified leaders are commended for their commitment to the development of a focused strategic plan, a comprehensive and well understood planning process, as well as a consistent approach to program review through the Program Analysis and Viability Study system.

Recommendations:

1. The evaluators recommend that the college clearly understand the profile of the student community served by Seattle Vocational Institute (SVI), and provide the necessary courses, pedagogical approaches and services that will promote the success of SVI students in reaching their educational goals. (3.A.1). Finally, the evaluators recommend that the college periodically and systematically evaluate the appropriateness, adequacy, and utilization of SVI student services and programs, and recommends that the college use the results of the evaluation as a basis for change. (3.B.6)