

Year One Peer-Evaluation Report

**Seattle Central Community College
Seattle, Washington
Spring 2013**

**A confidential report of findings prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities**

Table of Contents

Roster of Peer Evaluators	3
Introduction	4
Report on Recommendation 2	4
Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report	5
Report on Eligibility Requirements	5
Section One	5
Report on Standard 1.A: Mission	5
Report on Standard 1.B: Core Themes	6
Summary	9
Commendations and Recommendations	9

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Introduction

Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) is a public, two-year, comprehensive community college serving a diverse population in downtown Seattle. During 2011-2012, SCCC served over 18,000 students, of whom 70% were state supported and 57% were students of color. Student FTE declined in 2011-2012 after two years of marked increase. Changes since the Comprehensive Evaluation conducted April 2012 include the hiring of two instructional deans, implementation of a *Pathways to Careers* grant to develop stackable credentials, and adoption of a new Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas.

From March 1, 2013 to May 17, 2013, a three-person peer-evaluation team from the Commission conducted a Year One Peer-Evaluation of Seattle Central Community College in an off-site virtual environment. The structure of the evaluation consisted of a teleconferenced organizational meeting and teleconferenced evaluation meetings through audio conferencing authorized by the Commission. The peer evaluation was conducted based upon the Commission's 2010 Accreditation Standards and Eligibility Requirements.

The accreditation of SCCC was reaffirmed on the basis of their Spring 2012 Comprehensive Evaluation and Year Seven Report. The Commission requested SOCC respond, in their Year One Report, Spring 2013, to Recommendation 2 from the 2012 Comprehensive Evaluation regarding the re-identification of Core Theme Performance Indicators.

Report on Recommendation 2

Recommendation 2 is as follows:

“SCCC has spent considerable effort in identifying appropriate, meaningful and sustainable objectives and indicators. However, in several areas, the indicators appear to reflect easily obtainable, rather than meaningful and sufficient measures of achievement of Core Themes. The evaluation Committee recommends the College carefully reconsider, realign, and where necessary, re-identify indicators that provide more meaningful measures of the fulfillment of the Core Themes and Mission. (Standard 1.B.2)”

Institution Response

After the Comprehensive Evaluation Visit in Spring 2012, SCCC convened college-wide teams to review and update Core Themes, Objectives, Outcomes and Performance Indicators.

The four Core Themes were retained, ten Outcomes were modified, and substantial changes were made to 51 out of 77 Performance Indicators. A more thorough description of the changes made is contained in the Standard 1.B section of this report.

Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report

The Evaluation Committee found the Year One Self-Evaluation Report submitted by SCCC to be useful, clearly written, and well organized. The report and supporting electronic documents were sufficient to provide an understanding of the institution, its compliance with Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3, Standard 1, and its response to Commission Recommendation 2.

Report on Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Requirement Two - Authority

The Evaluation Committee finds that SCCC meets Eligibility Requirement 2 through its authority to operate as a member of Seattle Community College District VI under Washington State Statute RCW28B.50. Additionally SCCC was authorized (RCW 28B.50.810) to offer an applied baccalaureate degree in Applied Behavioral Science in 2008.

Eligibility Requirement Three – Mission and Core Themes

The Evaluation Committee finds that SCCC meets Eligibility Requirement 3 with a Mission and Core Themes that are appropriate for an institution of higher education. The President’s Cabinet and Board of Trustees reaffirmed the institution’s current Mission Statement and Four Core Themes in January and February 2013, respectively. Resources are directed to programs and services that support the Mission and Core Themes of the institution.

Section One

Report on Standard 1.A: Mission

1.A.1 Mission Statement

SCCC’s Mission Statement is “Seattle Central Community College promotes educational excellence in a multicultural urban environment. We provide opportunities for academic achievement, workplace preparation, and service to the community.”

The Mission is consistent with the District Mission and positions SCCC to support both District Strategic Goals 2010-2015 and institutional goals. The SCCC Board of Trustees reviewed and reaffirmed the current Mission Statement in 2000 and 2004. The College is committed to applying resources to support its Mission and Core themes that are defined to serve the education needs of students.

1.A.2 Mission Fulfillment

Mission fulfillment is being readdressed by SCCC as it examines the recently modified institutional effectiveness indicators to develop baselines and benchmarks. In the short time since the Spring 2012 Comprehensive Evaluation visit and ensuing Recommendation 2, SCCC has established an ambitious plan to review Core Theme Objectives and Performance Indicators for their heuristic value in determining mission fulfillment. They are also adding measures of “quality” to the matrix of Performance Indicators that provide the basis of mission fulfillment determination.

While a clear definition of mission fulfillment is not readily apparent in the report, a diagram is provided explaining how an acceptable extent of mission fulfillment is gauged. SCCC has outlined a hierarchical process of incorporating Core Theme Indicators, Outcomes and Objectives into a quantitative model for establishing their mission fulfillment threshold. However, rationale for the percentages used in the process is not provided. For example, 75% achievement thresholds are used in the folding up of “met” status from indicators to the four Core Themes, but an 85% threshold applies to the same set of indicators relative to mission fulfillment. The Evaluation Committee acknowledges the efforts currently being undertaken in reconsidering Performance Indicators and benchmarks, but recommends that SCCC consider the consistency of rationale in relating Core Theme performance levels with an acceptable extent of mission fulfillment.

Concern: SCCC has not clearly defined mission fulfillment as it relates to its purpose, core values, and Core Theme Performance Indicators. The narrative description of mission fulfillment is not yet fully linked to the quantitative model currently under development for assessing an acceptable extent of mission fulfillment based on Core Theme Performance Indicators.

Report on Standard 1.B: Core Themes

1.B.1 Core Themes

SCCC has retained the four Core Themes from their first evaluation cycle: Responsive Teaching and Learning (3 Objectives, 5 Outcomes, 20 Indicators); Catalyst for Opportunities and Success (2 Objectives, 5 Outcomes, 21 Indicators); Diversity in Action (3 Objectives, 6 Outcomes, 22

Indicators); and Communities Engagement (2 Objectives, 4 Outcomes, 14 Indicators). The core Themes are fundamental aspects of SCCC's Mission and effectively provide a comprehensive framework for defining mission fulfillment.

1.B.2 Core Theme Performance Indicators

Core Theme 1: Responsive Teaching and Learning

Objective 1.A *Dynamic and Relevant Programs and Curricula* incorporates measures of programs and courses meeting quality standards (as yet to be determined) and Indicators of alignment of transfer and CTE programs. It is not clear, at this stage, if the Indicators of quality are the rates of programs and courses being reviewed through internal processes or the results of these internal reviews. The alignment of transfer programs is measured indirectly through the GPA of transfer students. The Evaluation Committee is concerned that there is no external industry perspective represented in the measures that establish the relevance of CTE programs in meeting industry needs.

Objective 1.B *Quality and Effective Teaching* contains student success measures in “innovative student-centered” courses and programs as measures of the effectiveness and quality of teaching. Several examples are provided as illustrative of what SCCC means by courses/programs “known for innovation” but a clear definition of what qualifies as innovative is not provided. Also measured in Objective 1.B is student attainment of College-wide Student Learning Outcomes through courses and programs. The Evaluation Committee commends SCCC for striving to use direct measures of authentic student learning as indicators of effective teaching. However, the development of the valid and reliable tools to measure student learning and establish benchmarks is reported as TBD in the report. SCCC is planning to use a new LMS, Canvas, to assist in the considerable work of mapping and reporting on student achievement of CWSLO.

The Indicators for Objective 1.C *Students are Responsible and Engaged Learners*, are very similar to Indicators in Objective 1.B. The Evaluation Team, acknowledging the challenge of separating quality teaching and engaged learning, recommends that SCCC review the Indicators of Objectives 1.B and 1.C for duplication and alignment.

Core Theme 2: Catalyst for Opportunity and Success

The second Core Theme has objectives aligned with the stages of students' educational pathways at SCCC. Objective 2.A *Gateway to Student Achievement* contains many Indicators that provide meaningful information about student progress and success at the institution. While Indicators

and baselines are fully defined, it is not clear if the baselines of 5-year, 3-year or 2-year averages provide meaningful or convenient levels of achievement.

Some Performance Indicators in Objective 2.B *Strategic Innovations and Initiatives* are intended to measure the amount of resources directed to innovations and initiatives and the efficacy of these efforts to improve student opportunities and success. For these Performance Indicators to be measurable and meaningful a clear definition of what SCCC means by “innovations and initiatives” needs to be established.

Core Theme 3: Diversity in Action

For Core Theme 3 many of the Indicators presented are TBD and do not appear to be measurable as stated. For example, Indicator 3.A.1 *Students benefiting from participation in global education activities*, does not appear to be an Indicator that could be measured directly. The Evaluation Committee applauds SCCC for the work it has done to date reevaluating the Outcomes and Performance Indicators for this Core Theme but recognizes that there is much work yet to be done. The “devil is in the details” in the work of creating clear definitions that lead to relevant measurable indicators. The Performance Indicators for Outcome 3.C.2 are a mix of use and satisfaction measures that do not seem to be directly related to the stated outcome of students having access to diverse instruction and learning support.

The measures and benchmarks of diversity of students and staff supporting this Core Theme are assessable, meaningful and useful in assessing achievement of Objectives.

Core Theme 4: Communities Engagement

As is true for Core Theme 3, many of the Indicators for the Communities Engagement Core Theme are TBD and will provide challenging work to fully develop. Definitions for such terms as “cross-program” and “discipline collaboration” will need to be fully defined to allow for valid and reliable measurement of the Performance Indicators. The Evaluation Committee recommends that Performance Indicators intended to gauge the benefits of engaging in community building activities and programs be considered carefully to ascertain if they can be assessed as stated.

Objective 4.B *Building External Partnerships and Relationships* is not yet at a stage of development and refinement that would allow the review committee to conclude that this facet of SCCC’s mission is assessable through Performance Indicators at the time of the Spring 2013 Year One Report.

Concern: SCCC has significant and challenging work ahead to fully develop definitions and tools for measuring the achievement of many newly defined Performance Indicators with TBD status.

Summary

Since July 2012, SCCC has reaffirmed its Mission Statement and Core Themes, and made significant revisions to Core Themes Outcomes and Performance Indicators. The SCCC 2013 Year One Report outlines these important, initial steps in the ongoing work of fully responding to the Commission's recommendations. The institution has had little time to fully evaluate what they learned in their first evaluation cycle and establish a revised framework for the assessment of Core Theme and mission fulfillment - the foundation for their second review cycle.

Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations:

1. The Evaluation Committee commends the good progress SCCC has made responding to Recommendation 2 in the short time since the Spring 2012 Comprehensive Evaluation. While much work remains to be done to have clearly defined, assessable and useful Performance Indicators for all Core Themes, SCCC has made an admirable start in this process.

Recommendations:

1. The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC continue its comprehensive work to create a clear quantitative statement of mission fulfillment related to benchmarked achievement levels of institutional effectiveness Indicators.
2. The Evaluation Committee recommends that SCCC continue the work it has undertaken to refine Core Theme Performance Indicators. Progress has been made but significant work remains to:
 - Look across the core themes to eliminate redundancy of Indicators and find a common voice for descriptions of Indicators, Objectives, and Outcomes;
 - Define terms clearly so that Performance Indicators are measurable and can be reliably assessed over time;
 - Refine Indicators that are designed to assess "quality" to clearly establish if they are measures of the quality of inputs or the quality of outcomes.