

Southern State Community College - OH

HLC ID 1847

OPEN PATHWAY: Mid-Cycle Review

Review Date: 3/30/2020

Dr. Kevin S. Boys
President

Stephanie Brzuzy
HLC Liaison

Randall Fletcher
Review Team Chair

Kate Ferrel
Team Member

Brad Kendrex
Team Member

Carol Perry
Team Member

Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

3/30/2020

Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

- The Year 4 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Biennial Review for Applying institutions

Reaffirmation Reviews include:

- The Year 10 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Review for Initial Candidacy for Applying institutions
- The Review for Initial Accreditation for Applying institutions
- The Year 4 Review for Standard Pathway institutions that are in their first accreditation cycle after attaining initial accreditation

Scope of Review

- Mid-Cycle Review

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

The Mid-Cycle Review of Southern State Community College (SSCC) examined the current plans and accomplishments of the college through the lens of virtual review. SSCC has faced enrollment challenges in recent years perpetuated by a changing student demographic and a transforming and at times uncertain economic environment that surrounding the institution. Improvements in the areas of finance, strategic enrollment and recruitment and assessment of learning were highlighted throughout the Assurance argument and supported by the newly credited strategic plan.

Interactions with Constituencies

Given that the Mid-Cycle review was virtual, little to no interaction occurred.

Additional Documents

N/A

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State Community College (SSCC) is committed to its mission to provide accessible, affordable, and high quality education to serve the demographic profile of the people and industry base in southern Ohio. The college's strategic vision is depicted through an integrated three-legged stool model comprised of Financial Health, Enrollment and Market Expansion, and Student Persistence and Success. SSCC has cast a vision to "Be Your First-Choice College" by delivering on the following aspirations:

- Be your best investment
- Create synergy through partnerships and collaboration
- Be a driving force in innovation and technology
- Advance student success
- Be the best place to work
- Be a dynamic and flexible organization

The mission statement is reviewed annually by the SSCC Board of Trustees. This process falls in line with the strategic planning process and the adoption of the Policy and Information Manual, which last received Board of Trustee approval on September 18, 2019.

With accessibility a hallmark of SSCC's mission, the college is working to balance challenges faced

by serving a vast geographic district populated by relatively few residents. Wise recognition of persistent enrollment challenges, institutional financial strain, and escalating construction costs influenced the college's decision to pivot resources away from additional brick and mortar expansion in Adams County and toward that of leveraged partnerships in early college programming at high schools and a career technical center, in addition to greater resource allocation toward building hybrid delivery capacity.

As evidenced in the 2018 Program Vitality process and ancillary documentation, the college recognizes the importance of a fiscally healthy academic portfolio. While the vitality framework includes five measurement areas: 1. Viability – Enrollment, Retention, Graduation Rates, Net Revenue Margin; 2. Academic Quality – Advisory Committee Engagement, Accreditation Status, Program Assessment; 3. Students – Demographic Profile, Student Satisfaction (where available); 4. Faculty – Credentialing, FT/PT Ratio (where relevant); and 5. Market – Labor Market Outlook, the resulting 4-quadrant matrix analysis rests heavily on enrollment and net revenue margins. This approach provides an easily digestible snapshot of program vitality. It is important to note the value of a measurement that also speaks to programming that may be high cost due to accreditor-mandated low student to faculty ratios, yet critical to the health and vitality of a region. Using the vitality framework, in summer 2019, the college began the heavy lift of closing ten technical programs, suspending or retooling nine others, placing four programs on watch, and realigning to fully support six others. In the most recent program vitality review process (2019), no new programs were identified for closure, however, there were some shifts in the watch and support categories.

Despite the strain on resources, the institution recognizes the importance of providing holistic student supports and as such has structurally aligned support services to provide extensive academic and student supports amidst hiring freezes. With few budget lines reflecting an increase, the 2020 Budget acknowledges the support needed to serve a largely financially-aid supported, first-generation student demographic with a 5.9% increase in Student Services and a commitment to holding even on Scholarship funding.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State Community College's mission to provide accessible, affordable, and high quality education to the people in southern Ohio is evidenced in outward-facing mechanisms such as the college website and marketing collaterals, in the strategic planning documentation, in Board of Trustees communication, and in-ward facing attempts such as all-college meetings. The strategic planning cycle occurs annually and is led by the President and a broad set of stakeholders.

SSCC is fortifying the college mission through a renewed commitment and mutual understanding of core values. Institutional core values include Accessibility, Community Engagement, Quality, Personal Connection, Unity, and Life-Enrichment. Broad statements are complimented with "We Will" statements which clearly identify how the values may be lived out in day-to-day operations, in addition to building cohesion, collaboration, and community among staff. Core values serve as a foundational piece of employee performance, ongoing professional development, and the advancement of strategic priorities.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As an institution of higher education serving a largely Appalachian region, the SSCC student population reflects a high concentration of first-generation students and those who meet the definition of living in poverty. The student body profile data shows alignment with the greater homogeneous region throughout southern Ohio with less than 5% of the community representing a minority population. With the goal of serving all students, the college has leveraged its participation in state and national initiatives such as Ohio's Strong Start to Finish (focused on improving outcomes in gateway math and English courses), Ohio's Student Success Leadership Initiative (persistence focus), and Achieving the Dream (equity) as ways to better prepare students and staff for a multicultural society.

In the context of both employee and student recruitment, SSCC is geographically hamstrung by its mere physical location and proximity to larger population centers. The college uses all regular and customary vehicles for advertising positions, which may be serving basic needs as the argument did not make mention of a high number of failed employment searches. The institution realizes given its commuter nature it must be mindful in recruiting students for athletics, for example, and cited the strong connections to community-based services and vendors in accommodating these students' basic needs. In its 2018 Civil rights Review, the college was advised to address the lack of gender, cultural, and racial diversity in its marketing collaterals. Through evidence produced by the Ohio Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, the college has sufficiently corrected the infraction as of October 11, 2019.

As previously mentioned, serving a population of students and constituents experiencing multi-generational poverty is core to many of SSCC's efforts. Through an equity lens, the college leveraged its Strong Start to Finish Grant funding to support a poverty simulation exercise which featured participants being immersed in the conditions surrounding those living in poverty. The institution is also leveraging grant funding to acquire equipment in technical programs such as Computer Information Technology and Allied Health. These grant dollars not only help to improve the outcomes of traditional student, but all students in all populations.

Acknowledging the need to serve students holistically, the college continues to fund student support services positions such as a Disabilities Coordinator and Counselor. As the number of students engaging in higher education with spectrum disorders and mental health challenges continues to rise,

this is a wise investment in order to serve all populations. Additionally, the institution was recently awarded a planning grant through Ohio State University to serve students with intellectual disabilities. This transitions strategy acknowledges the need to serve this largely under-served population in society. As with so many institutions of higher education mitigating challenges posed by declining enrollment, serving this population may not only bolster enrollment, but will be a key factor in raising the educational attainment in the region.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The argument includes the 2015-16 strategic plan brochure as evidence with a corresponding statement that the college annually reviews the strategic plan, yet the evidence provided is at least five years old. A more recent example of a strategic plan, reflecting the current goals and budget priorities, would be a more powerful representation of current strategy. Positioning itself as the hub for partner institutions to deliver coursework and training, SSCC cited partnerships with other institutions of higher education so they can deliver advanced degrees in Social Work and Engineering. In response to industry need, the institution provides evidence of an Occupational Therapy Assisting cooperative agreement to deliver Shawnee State University's degree on the SSCC campus, utilizing existing facilities and staff.

SSCC exceeds the State Community College average in percent of budget allocation for Instruction and Academic Support as demonstrated in the budget allocation report. In the FY18 report, SSCC allocated 62% while other state community colleges averaged 55%. In recognition of its finite college-going demographic in the southern Ohio region, the college has invested in a new position (Director of Instructional Technology) that demonstrates its priority of growing online enrollment. Through a recent capital appropriation, the college will invest \$3.9M in renovating the health science physical plant to create a state-of-the-art simulation environment.

Advisory Committees are utilized across college programs to ensure that quality standards in general and technical education are met and that program offerings are attuned to community needs. In his monthly report to the Board of Trustees, evidence is provided that enumerates not only the President's community activities and involvement, but that too of the staff at SSCC. The argument suggests that staff members also serve on local boards, Statewide entities, and collaborate on workforce development initiatives. The college provides constituents the opportunity to provide feedback through a web-based mechanism called Complaints, Concerns, and Compliments. The argument did not articulate how people without web access file a complaint, concern, or compliment.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Rationale

Despite enrollment decline and financial uncertainty, Southern State Community College has remained true to its mission and its distinguishable educational role and function. Erecting new scaffolds of support and solvency through prudent budgetary practice will allow SSCC to continue to fulfill its mission for the immediate and long term future in the communities that it serves.

Equity is an evolving challenge for Southern State and through effective visioning, planning and priority setting by the college and its administration, broader global perspectives can be infused into curriculum, staffing and culture at the institution making it stronger and more viable as a higher education option for students for years to come.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Evidence of SSCC's adherence to ethical practices across financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions is widely available in the form of several documents (Board Manual, Policy and Information Manual, College Catalog, annual budget, monthly financial reports), practices (YMCA partnership, Follett agreement), and third party audits (history of unqualified Federal audits). The consistent and ready availability of this information and these actions create a sense of transparency for internal and external stakeholders and increased awareness.

As an overarching tenant, the college is guided by an overt commitment to respecting human diversity and can be found in the Policy and Information Manual. This statement reads as follows:

Southern State Community College is a community dedicated to intellectual engagement. Our campuses consist of students, faculty, and staff from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. By living, working, studying, and teaching, we bring our unique viewpoints and life experiences together for the benefit of all. This inclusive learning environment, based upon an atmosphere of mutual respect and positive engagement, invites all campus citizens to explore how they view knowledge, how they think about themselves, and how they see themselves in relation to others. Our intellectual and social development and daily educational interactions, whether co-curricular or classroom related, are greatly enriched by our acceptance of one another as members of the community.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Rating

Met

Rationale

All links and documents provided in argument point to an institutional commitment to open and accessible data and information for both consumers and staff. Notably, this reviewer was struck by the way the withdrawal procedure was written in a clear, big-picture way which balanced the gravity of a withdrawal in terms of enrollment status and financial aid impact while striking a student-centered, compassionate tone.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Since the 2015 Comprehensive Assurance Argument, there have been no major modifications to the State of Ohio's directive for community college governance or policy. Evidence provided as continued governing board autonomy can be found on the Board Website which serves as a comprehensive, one-stop-shop for statutes, policies, rules, regulations, and resolutions for members. The site offers links to the Board of Trustees Policy Manual, the Policy & Information Manual, College Rules, evidence of members in good standing as granted by the Association of Community College Trustees, Board Committee assignments, and Board Meeting agendas and minutes. Minutes revealed regular and consistent opportunity for the public and students to comment. A five-day notice for public comment is requested. Shared governance and transparency is strengthened by President Boys' succinct, informative, and timely monthly meeting recaps to "Everyone" (all staff).

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Institutions of higher education, with core principles of freedom of inquiry and expression, and a general charge to equip learners with independent and critical thinking skills play a vital role in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. SSCC formalizes this role and this responsibility in the evidence found in the Policy and Information Manual, as informed by the Ohio Attorney General's Office. As iterated in the Academic Freedom Policy, SSCC believes this is a responsibility shared equally by all members of the academic community alike. The student code of conduct is a comprehensive document which clearly outlines acceptable behaviors expected of them and of the staff at SSCC. Sanctions are clearly presented along with an explanation of the appeal process.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Primary to SSCC's mission is teaching and learning, therefore, the need for and frequency of academic research is itinerate at SSCC. When necessary, Shawnee State University, a neighboring university, provides Institutional Review Board assistance.

Accessed more than 32,000 times since 2013, the "Research" Library Guide provides step-by-step instruction on evaluating scholarly material and how to's on constructing a research project. This guide was a collaboration between and among the Ohio network of libraries. Third party tools such as Turnitin, Zotero, and Grammarly are cited as additional resources available to students and staff to ensure academic integrity. Beyond the new student orientation, students may also access a library orientation which includes instructions on how to access resources and tools. SSCC's Tutoring Center provides additional assistance for students completing research assignments and advises on the ethical use of information. The Tutoring Center is influenced by external best practices, holding third party certification from the International Tutor Training Program by the College Reading and Learning Association.

Several policies, processes, and practices ensure academic honesty and integrity at SSCC. The New Student Orientation, for example, urges students to contact the instructor prior to beginning a project, turning in an assignment, or being evaluated, should there be any question of academic dishonesty or misconduct. The college has recently modified the Incident Report Form as a way to gain a more global snapshot of the whole student and raises a flag on any issues that may signal the need for more comprehensive intervention.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Rationale

Southern State Community College carries out its mission by committing itself to high standard of practice and decision making. These standards of effective operation are met and perpetuated through the Board of Trustees Policy Manual. Quality of the institution is accurately assessed and measured in the actions of the elected board members and how delegation occurs from with this governance structure from president to administration.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State follows the Ohio Department of Higher Education's *General Standards for Academic Programs*, as well as specific program accreditation/regulatory guidelines to establish the requirements to earn each degree. The college uses the program review process - as well as advisory boards, where relevant - to monitor compliance with transfer/completion requirements.

Southern State offers two-year associate degrees and short-term certificate programs. The Ohio Department of Higher Education governs general education course distributions and Southern State details those options and details within the annual college catalog. Program goals are outlined on program pages within the college website. Student learning outcomes are required for each courses according the college's syllabus template, signalling that it is an active area of focus in course planning.

Southern State relies upon existing procedures and governance structures to highlight and maintain quality considerations across delivery models/locations. The college was required to complete a monitoring report in 2017 as a follow-up to its accreditation review, in order to outline its work in addressing shortcomings in the college's credit hour policies. Included in that work is a more intentional discussion of how the college approaches the interplay between credits, instructional/class time, and the variations in course delivery. The college utilizes Canvas as the single approved learning management system in order to create a common, accessible platform for online learning experiences. The college's faculty agreement includes requirements for consistency and expert collaboration when engaging in online course development. The *College Credit Plus* early college offering is governed by course agreements, faculty evaluation/monitoring, and the use of a liaison to

coordinate relationships with high school providers. No consortial agreements for academic programs were reported.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State's degrees are built around the standards put forth by the Ohio Department of Education and focus on course transferability, citing the colleges transfer-oriented student population. The degrees include English and Math requirements and 30 hours of major-specific academic programming, supplemented by general studies according to the state transfer formula.

Southern State is in the process of establishing and mapping a new set of general education learning outcomes for the institution as part of its participation in the HLC Assessment Academy. The college continues to participate in professional development in this space and intends to launch new learning outcomes and curriculum mapping efforts in the Fall of 2020.

Southern State's proposed institutional learning outcomes establishes these information skills as core foci in the college's curriculum, however it does not appear that there are processes fully in-place to assess whether – and in which courses – these outcomes are being intentionally taught and successfully met. The college included examples of courses that appear to focus on each of these data and analysis skillsets across a variety of disciplines.

In order to expose students to broader diversity themes, Southern State offers an annual study abroad trip that emphasizes various elements of European culture, history and current affairs, however this experience had grown to only 15 students in the most recent year. The college reports intentional development of co-curricular activities – including theatre performances and guest speakers – to

include a variety of cultural themes and issues, including a recent focus on sexual assault awareness, suicide, and LGBTQ issues.

Southern State emphasizes its institutional focus on teaching and learning, but notes a number of faculty who conduct project-based learning and student research structures in their courses, including the presentation of student research results via poster sessions. It does not appear that the college has a robust mechanism for tracking the scholarly and creative contributions of the faculty or a framework for intentional undergraduate student research at the present.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State has seen a reduction from 54 full-time faculty in 2015 to 44 in 2020, indicative of enrollment and financial pressures over that period. Despite the reductions, the college maintains an 11:1 faculty-to-student ratio (down from 15:1 in 2015), signaling strong levels of student support. Faculty are obligated to participate in governance activities, including oversight of the curriculum and participation in committees focused on academic quality management.

Southern State maintains that all instructors – including full-time, adjunct, and College Credit Plus – meet the Faculty Credentialing Policy, which generally requires a masters degree and 18 graduate hours in the field for academic courses and bachelors degrees/work experience in technical trades. Faculty files were not reviewed to validate that claim.

Southern State maintains policies for the annual observation/evaluation of faculty and the regular (each term) evaluation of adjunct and early college instructors. This policy is consistent with that in place during the last accreditation report.

Southern State offers funding for faculty to participate in conferences and professional development, though it is not clear to what degree these pursuits are able to be funded. Adjunct faculty participate in biannual college symposia and receive an orientation regarding college policies/procedures. The college has recently introduced online resources to better support online course development and instructional technology.

Southern State requires faculty maintain posted office hours and to accommodate student inquiries electronically and before/after class as appropriate. Graduation surveys (2017, 2018) and CCSSE results both suggest student satisfaction with faculty availability.

Southern State maintains its stated commitment to recruiting, hiring, and evaluating employees consistently. Despite budget cuts, the college claims to maintain professional organization affiliations in order to access professional development content and to continue its employee tuition reimbursement program. The college has established a professional development relationship with the University of Dayton's Leadership Institute for access to new programming.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Rating

Met

Rationale

In 2013, the college launched a realignment of student support functions, including advising, retention, career services, counseling, and tutoring. The reorganization is now fully established and staffed and has allowed the college to focus on outreach to key populations and participation in national student support efforts, including the Student Success Leadership Institute. The college cites success in providing additional supports to the College Credit Plus (early college) population through closer relationships with the program's instructors and high school staff in order to better connect these students to the college's support services. Additionally, the college has put an emphasis on developing and growing online enrollment, which has involved the creation of orientation and student success resources specifically focused on the online learning experience in order to equalize success and the quality of experience for those students. The college also cites efforts to support students who intend transfer and to enhance services for military students as part of its current strategic focus.

The college's Adult Opportunity Center provides centralized assistance for incoming students, ranging from refresher classes to full literacy and GED coursework. The college has also committed itself to Ohio's developmental reform effort – Strong Start to Finish – in which they will focus on guided pathways and co-requisite remediation to increase time to completion of gateway math and English courses. It is not clear which elements of the Strong Start to Finish commitment have been implemented or are in development.

The college also offers Success Management Seminars – a form of first year experience – that positions student to succeed with personal management, academic and job readiness skills over five, non-credit seminars.

The college offers a transfer center that advises students regarding transfer programs and pathways for study and that are aligned with academic disciplines, allowing advisors to be generalists but also to develop program expertise. The college's 2018 CCSSE survey results showed that Southern State students met with academic advisors more frequently than average. The Director of Advising works closely with the faculty in order to identify emergent student issues and to consult on the schedule, curricular issues, and other topics that help to smooth the experience for students at the point of advisement.

Southern State boasts a full slate of college facilities, from science laboratories to simulation and clinical healthcare spaces to libraries and up-to-date facilities. The college notes the recent renovation in the college's auditorium/theater and enhancements to engineering lab spaces and equipment as signs of continued investment and relevance. In 2020, the college is planning to build a new Health Science Center to support the college's nursing program with modern spaces and equipment. Lastly, since 2015 the college has invested in a move to more modern, reliable online technology infrastructures, include adoption of Canvas as the college's learning management system.

The college continues to identify information literacy as a core learning outcome and provides a coordinated focus on these skills in English courses (1101, 1102), where library personnel provide instruction related to physical and digital library resources.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State cites academic clubs, honors societies, performing arts clubs, and a small number of varsity sports as co-curricular programming offerings. The college acknowledges that the view of co-curricular programs is evolving as a result of its participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, and expects to embrace a broader definition and offering in the future.

Southern State focuses its advertising on recognizing its diverse mission and seeking to offer students a good value, whatever their intent in coming to the college, deliberately maintaining low tuition rates in order to achieve that end. The college presents a sample of student success stories in an enrollment campaign to illustrate the quality and impact of the rural college for its students. Finally, the college published a 2016 study that outlines the economic contributions to the region, focusing on wages paid and taxes generated.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Rationale

The quality of the courses and programs are well-documented throughout the Program Review process at SSCC. Data gleaned from these reviews has proven very beneficial in developing a new and quite comprehensive assessment of student learning effort. This transformation in how learning is document and also used to enact curricular change has occurred in earnest since 2015 and efforts of the planning of this student achievement mechanism was evidenced in the 2017 Monitoring report. The college has successfully exited the planning phase of assessment and has entered into the closing the loop phase is such a way that assessment of learning is understood by both faculty and students alike and is nicely embedded in the fabric of the courses and programs of study.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State continues to maintain a structured academic program/discipline review cycle. Programs/disciplines are scheduled on a 5-year cycle and are required to fill out a comprehensive report, that takes into account finances, enrollment, program strengths and weakness, faculty staffing and qualifications, and enrollment and completion trends. The process was recently updated and enhanced in 2019.

In addition to the in-depth program review, in 2018, the college implemented annual Program Vitality processes that seek to identify worrisome program indicators and steer decision-making in the near-term in the context of financial and enrollment pressure.

The college has maintained consistent credit/transcripting policies and ensures that practices are aligned with the statewide Ohio Articulation and Transfer Policy and/or best practice as promulgated by national professional organizations, like the American Council on Education. The college also maintains alternative credit options that are reviewed and cataloged by the faculty, administered through the college's curriculum committee, and transcripts are evaluated by the registrar.

Southern State has maintained its transfer policy, which focuses on accepting credit from accredited institutions where the student had a passing grade and was in good standing with the institution. The college has been an active participant in the State of Ohio's efforts to create streamlined, guaranteed transfer pathways within the state. Southern State has received approval for a guaranteed transfer pathway for Business and strives to completed 15 additional guaranteed transfer maps by the end of 2020.

Southern State maintains programmatic certification for their Nursing, Medical Assisting, Practical Nursing, and Respiratory Care programs as is required by the licensing bodies in those fields.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Clearly stated institutional learning outcomes exist and offer foundation for assessment of student learning at Southern State. The blending of both Ohio's Principles of General Education learning outcomes and the establishment of core learning outcomes from the HLC Assessment Academy is how Southern State arrived at institutional goals for assessment of learning and introduced to the campus community in August of 2019. The measurement of these institutional learning outcomes (Clear and Concise Communication; Critical Thinking; Culture and Context and Professionalism) using value rubrics will begin in fall 2020.

Technical programs at SSCC identify and align student learning outcomes to their program assessment plans that are reviewed on an annual basis by faculty, program coordinators and academic administration to determine achievement and need for curricular change. Master syllabi include course-level learning outcomes and are monitored by the SSCC Curriculum Committee.

Annual assessment reports are generated by academic programs to demonstrate and provide clear and consumable evidence of student learning outcomes for Southern State Community College. From the November 2017 Monitoring Report, the participation rate of academic program in assessment planning has increased over 35% to 66%. Further consistency in reporting of learning outcomes is needed by SSCC in order to attain comprehensive feedback to students, curricular change and aligned reporting with budget planning and overall institutional effectiveness.

SSCC has begun to align co-curricular assessment with its formal assessment of learning achievement process and annual planning activities and since the 2017 Monitoring Report has created a recognizable and accepted definition for co-curricular assessment. Reporting of learning outcomes is contained within the Campus Completion Plan and occurs on a bi-annual basis both to the state of Ohio and to the constituents groups making up SSCC. Moving from an indirect model of assessment, such as using survey data to glean satisfaction measures to support the effectiveness of support areas of instruction and academic affairs, more direct measures are being established within

the student support areas of advising, counseling to determine the impact these services have on learning using many of the same value rubrics employed in the direct instruction areas of the college.

Data collected from the assessment mechanism at SSCC is being used to improve learning within the academic programs and courses of the college. Such data has been used to make changes in programs such as nursing by creating remediation units, test testing sessions to improve end of program achievement rates to written communication outcomes in English courses using a department-wide 4-point grading rubric to objectively measure student achievement across all ENG courses.

Through in-service training and department-level workshops, the faculty have ample and available resources to engage in best practice type of assessment for both program and courses level SLO. The academic structure supports participation of faculty both full and part-time to engage in assessment and to receive annual and even-bi-annual feedback and direction on their assessment activities. The college hosts an annual Student Outcomes fair and this has assisted greatly in establishing a culture of assessment at SSCC.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State has emphasized its continued growth and development related to persistence and completion management, in direct response to the 2015 HLC review team's concerns. The college completed 2017 and 2020 monitoring reports related to student data benchmarks and the college participates in a number of local and national organizations focused on coordinating and improving student retention, persistence and completion using data. The college publishes a planning framework and key metrics in its Institutional Effectiveness Plan, in place since 2017. The college reports significant improvement in Math and English completions as a result of this attention, but also notes other areas have not seen the same improvements thus need new approaches beyond monitoring.

Southern State acknowledges that its ongoing program review processes, while consistent, had not proven to be the most robust or timely tool for proactive improvement efforts. The college supplemented program review in 2018 with "vitality reviews" that overlay student performance data with program indicators, like financial health and enrollment, in order to recommend program changes. They report that this approach has led to insights that might have otherwise been missed.

Southern State claims to follow generally-accepted practices for the administration of student data for IPEDS. The college also notes its participation in a variety of national benchmark and survey programs, including the Voluntary Framework for Accountability, Community College Survey of Student Engagement, and many from the State of Ohio, all of which are meant to signal an adoption of common practices and a transparency around reasonable data management practices. That said, the college notes that it has yet to be able to support and hire a trained institutional researcher for the

college, relying instead on experienced leaders in student records and other areas to compile and report data.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Rationale

The college has successfully implemented a new assessment of student learning system that encompasses both courses, programs and co-curricular functions of the academy and the institution. The use of data to impact change in learning and the design of courses and program now serves as the backbone of the entire assessment system. Faculty have a clear understanding of how to not only collect meaningful outcomes data but are now versed in how to use that data to affect change in their classrooms. Embracing state models for general education has also helped to establish institutional level outcomes across all courses which has helped to establish a more consistent approach to assessing general education via a standard value rubric methodology.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Southern State Community College (SSCC) recognizes that it is an institution in fiscal transition. Enrollment declines, restrictions on tuition adjustments, and restructuring of state revenues has provided SSCC with fiscal challenges. The 2019-2020 Strategic Plan recognizes this by establishing three goals; financial health, student persistence and success, and enrollment and market expansion. These goals support the institution's mission statement and realistic. SSCC implemented a program, Program Vitality, to help address the financial issues which resulted in the discontinuance of ten academic programs and six full-time faculty. The focus on the three goals specifically, financial health, has helped SSCC address its CFI ratio with HLC. SSCC needs to continue its focus on improvement of its fiscal resources.

Resource allocations are determined by a process that incorporates the Vice Presidents with input from their direct reports and is based on historical expenditures. For the comprehensive review, SSCC should provide more evidentiary documents.

Policies outlined in the Policy and Information Manual insure the qualifications of all faculty, staff

and administrators that are hired. Annual evaluations are conducted for non-teaching staff and faculty evaluations are conducted as outlined In Article IX of the SSEA/SSCC Collective Bargaining Agreement.

SSCC currently maintains four campuses. Although approved to open a fifth campus, SSCC reevaluated the financial situation and has put this on hold. The focus on financial health has caused SSCC review how programs can be offered more efficiently and costly which has helped improved its financial situation.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The primary artifacts used to determine whether the Southern State Community College (Southern State) Board of Trustees (Board) meets their obligation for oversight are the Chapter 3358: Ohio Revised Code and the Board of Trustees Policy Manual. These two documents lay out the roles and responsibilities of a trustee as well as the level of training required to be a member of the Board of Trustees. Information of regular agenda items including the President's Report and Financial Report were found in the evidence files. Also, samples of annual policy reviews and annual retreats are evidence of the Board meeting its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

As evidenced in the artifacts, Article 15.03 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between Southern State Educational Association (SSEA) and Southern State formally outlines faculty participation in governance. Student involvement is solicited through organizations, conversations, surveys and open invitations to Board meetings.

Committees and work teams provide the most influence in establishing policies and processes. Southern State strives to have equal representation of all constituencies in these groups. An example provided was the membership of the Curriculum Committee and Program Review Committee which, although largely faculty, have included the Registrar and Student Services representatives when extended expertise was needed.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As a result of declining enrollment, restrictions on tuition adjustments, and state resource reallocations, SSCC's CFI ratio for two years was "in the zone." The Institutional Effectiveness Plan that was developed with financial health as a priority has improved the financial situation of the institution but work needs to continue. The resource allocation that was part of the assurance argument showed that allocations are made in alignment with the college's mission and other state community colleges.

SSCC's budgeting process begins with the input from the direct reports of the Vice Presidents after reviewing program assessment plans and reports. An example of how this is implemented is the recognition of the need for students to have simulated experiences which resulted in capital funds being prioritized to meet this instructional support need.

The college has a commitment to shared governance as demonstrated by the notes from the 2010, 2014, and 2018 planning for the strategic plan. Externally, advisory committees and partners such as high school guidance counselors provide input for institutional allocation of resources.

Based on the HLC's 2015 visiting team's feedback, SSCC began taking a more holistic approach to planning. This included looking at enrollment trends, financial indicators, and progress toward goals. Resulting the adoption of an Institutional Effectiveness Plan and ultimately a financial dashboard. Another adoption was the implementation of a Program Vitality Framework to work with the Program Review Committee. These changes as well as replacing contractual research services with resources available through alliances and state entities has helped SSCC anticipate emerging factors for their service area. SSCC appears to be on the right track financially and will need to continue documenting these improvements and sharing the progress throughout the institution and within their external communities and stakeholder groups to show sustained practice and growth.

These achievements will also need to be well documented in the next comprehensive review.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Rating

Met

Rationale

SSCC provided evidence of operations performance documentation in several ways such as the monthly strategic alignment reports to the Board of Trustees and the President's monthly reports on the status of meeting strategic goals. The President's annual evaluation based on goal attainment is the basis for updating strategic goals annually. Recently, SSCC has created an Institutional Effectiveness Plan to help with identifying performance trends that will allow the institution to learn from its experience and apply that learning. This Plan is in its early stages and should have results that can be included in the next comprehensive visit.

Evidence that SSCC learns from its operational experience and applies that learning is evident in academics through its assessment activities and program review. In 2018, SSCC was accepted into the HLC Assessment Academy showing an initiative to continue to improve this area. Ohio's performance-based funding model makes improving effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability an important function for the institution.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Rationale

Enrollment decline has drastically impacted Southern State Community College. Budget planning has shifted significantly to address the ebbs and flows of tuition revenue and state support. The college has remained committed to developing creative yet plausible methods and approaches to increase enrollment by offering more online courses, tailoring programs to industry demand and shuttering programs that are no longer relevant to the current demographic and workforce. Continued planning efforts will be needed by Southern State Community College not only in terms of financial forecasting but also in mission and educational offerings to the public it serves. Strategic planning is warranted to identify priorities both internally and externally for the college and its future.

Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.D	Core Component 1.D	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.E	Core Component 3.E	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.D	Core Component 5.D	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

Review Summary

Conclusion

Despite enrollment decline and financial uncertainty, Southern State Community College has remained true to its mission and its distinguishable educational role and function. Erecting new scaffolds of support and solvency through prudent budgetary practice will allow SSCC to continue to fulfill its mission for the immediate and long term future in the communities that it serves.

Additionally, the college has remained committed to developing creative yet plausible methods and approaches to increase enrollment by offering more online courses, tailoring programs to industry demand and shuttering programs that are no longer relevant to the current demographic and workforce. Continued planning efforts will be needed by Southern State Community College not only in terms of financial forecasting but also in mission and educational offerings to the public it serves. Strategic planning is warranted to identify priorities both internally and externally for the college and its future.

Finally, the college has successfully exited the planning phase of assessment and has entered into the closing the loop phase in such a way that assessment of learning is understood by both faculty and students alike and is nicely embedded in the fabric of the courses and programs of study.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Sanctions Recommendation

No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation

Not Applicable to This Review

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.